Access to the Internet and exposure to the world was limited when I attended high school. We didn’t question everything or think much ‘outside the box’. In some ways, this was comforting, but in other ways, it left me wondering if I was missing something important.

In the spring of 2000, I was accepted at UVic. I had never been away from home and hadn’t ventured much outside Kelowna. Although I had never seen UVic before, I felt at home immediately. The emphasis on smaller class sizes, actual teaching, and the importance of the individual allowed me to find my voice.

During my four years at UVic, I discovered the importance of inquiry, learned to read, write, and speak in many languages, and identified the links between differing academic disciplines. I found what I loved, studied things I had never considered before, learned new ways of thinking, and challenged many of my preconceptions. I suffered the worst grade of my life on an assignment and learned to come back stronger.

Outside the classroom, I experienced my first love and suffered my first heartache. I cooked, cleaned and did laundry. I learned to keep and make appointments, manage my time, maintain life-long friendships, and stay true to my word.

Perhaps the greatest gift from UVic came in the spring of 2003 when I took a class on Dante’s Divine Comedy. I admit I only chose the course because it fit nicely into my schedule and the professor seemed engaging.

A few weeks into class, I found myself gazing up and counting the perforations in the ceiling tiles. Eventually, a numerical pattern emerged and I noticed a similar one in the text we were studying. I told the professor, Dr. Lloyd Howard, about my discovery. He encouraged me to pursue my idea and helped me turn it into a term paper. Then he arranged an independent research class for me and backed my application for a scholarship that funded the extra associated costs. That research class led me to graduate work in the same area and, ultimately, to teaching where I hope to inspire others as Dr. Howard did me.

I am sure if I praised him for helping me find my true passion, Dr. Howard would tell me he would do the same for anyone. Therein lies the spirit of UVic – a place that provides opportunity and challenges students to find and live their passions freely with encouragement.

When I consider what my life has become because of UVic, it occurs to me how important it is that others have a chance to find what I did. In my own humble way, I want to give back to a school that has given me everything.

Through a gift in his will, Braden has established a Humanities scholarship in Medieval Studies.
Murray Russell Dawson: Putting others first

Murray Dawson spreading cheer

A man who valued education, never hesitated to help others, and loved to laugh has gained a place in the hearts of UVic Humanities students for generations to come.

The late Murray Dawson received his B.A. from UVic in 1989, majoring in Political Science and minoring in English. Soon after, he went to live in Vanderhoof, B.C., close to his sister Marion Mills and his much-loved nieces and nephews. Marion says one of his most rewarding life experiences occurred there, working with adult students who were finishing their GEDs.

Murray remained single most of his life and had no children, but that didn’t matter. “He always ended up with crowds of friends, no matter where he lived,” says Marion.

Toward the end of his life he was involved in an accident that resulted in a leg amputation. Despite this hardship, he maintained his sense of humour and love for helping others. This impressed the administration of his rehab facility and they asked him to visit and encourage other amputees and victims of trauma, which he gladly did.

By this time, Murray had been living on Vancouver Island for many years. He moved back here from central British Columbia to be near the ocean he loved. Murray kept boats at the French Creek and Quadra Island docks and was well known in those two places. He found the Island environment motivated him to hone his gardening skills and pursue his artistic endeavours. He was a gifted musician, wrote poetry, and had a passion for painting. “His celebration of life was more like an art show,” Marion recalls.

His family is delighted about the legacy he left to University of Victoria students. They feel it perfectly represents the person Murray was and is a truly fitting way to pass on his dedication to education and serving others.

Murray set up gifts in both his will and in a trust that are directed to the Faculty of Humanities for student awards and projects. Dean of Humanities Chris Goto-Jones says he was moved by this generosity. "While it’s so sad to find out in this way, it is wonderful to learn that Mr. Dawson felt his time in our faculty changed him; his gift is truly transformational for us now."

Legacy Giving by the Numbers

Over the last

5 years, legacy gifts from

51 donors totalled

$ 11.9 million in new funding for people and projects in

The audience burst into laughter when UVic graduate student Greg Pearcey showed them a photo (above, lower right) of an elated dog. “That’s how ecstatic I was when I found out I’d received a scholarship,” he said.

Greg spoke at the annual luncheon of the T. S. McPherson Legacy Society in November 2017. After expressing his gratitude for the Cameron Memorial Scholarship, he went on to describe his work in UVic’s Rehabilitation Neuroscience Laboratory. Greg and his colleagues show survivors of stroke and brain injury how to use their arms to learn to walk again; a unique technique using simple exercises and inexpensive equipment.

Later, UVic alumnus Robert “Lucky” Budd shared stories from the largest oral history collection in the world. Lucky helped restore and preserve its recordings, which are housed in the Royal BC Museum. This work inspired him to complete a master’s degree in History at UVic, to write a book about the project, to become a CBC broadcaster and to set up a business recording other people’s memoirs. Most recently he has collaborated with artist Roy Henry Vickers on four award-winning children’s books known as the Northwest Coast Legends series.

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It was the largest turnout for a T. S. McPherson Society lunch ever and, if the noise level and happy faces were any indication, everyone had a great time.
T. S. McPherson Legacy Honour Roll

Donors who are committed to leaving a future gift to the University of Victoria are invited to join the T. S. McPherson Legacy Society. These supporters recognize the impact legacy gifts have on UVic’s ability to maintain and exceed its standard of excellence. Some of them have graciously allowed us to publish their names on the list below. This is a mere fraction of the more than 260 members of the Society, but these donors have agreed to this publicity in the hopes that it will encourage others to leave a legacy gift to the University of Victoria. Thank you!

Ilka Abbott
Frank G. Ainsworth
Anna I. (Bunty) Allen
Pamela Allen
Dr. Lewis and Mrs. Caroline Bartlett
Lin and Doug Beardsley
Kay and Judd Buchanan
Gerald W. Burns and Lorraine E. Burns
Doreen Chadwick
Haji Charanania, P. Eng.
Joyce Clearhue
Gary Corbett and Consuelo Corbett
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Douglas and Patricia Whalley
Beverly Anne White
Dr. Diana White and Dr. Patrick White
Allister Wilmott
Audrey Woodward
Eva Wynand
Prof. Derk Wynand
M.W. Yeats
Patricia M. Young
John H. and Betty M. Youson

For more information about leaving a legacy to UVic students, contact us:

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