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We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

On the cover: Nicholas Baingo and Lauren Isherwood, photo: UVic Photo Services
This page: (left) Nicholas Baingo and Lauren Isherwood, photo: UVic Photo Services; (top) Kat Craats, photo: Kat Craats Photography
Message from the Dean
Charting a Positive Path Forward

FALL MARKS THE BEGINNING of the academic year and a time to both look forward and reflect back. We are coming out of a year filled with many changes and challenges, but with a renewed sense of optimism. It is an opportunity to celebrate the amazing work and achievements of everyone at the Gustavson School of Business during what has been an unprecedented and transformative time. The strength and resiliency of our school is a testament to the efforts and work of our faculty, staff and students.

This September marked the return to face-to-face activities at UVic. After a year and a half of a largely empty campus, it is a pleasure to see and feel the energy and vitality of a bustling community of students again. With a priority to ensure a safe return to classes, UVic has put in place new guidelines for campus learning. With these changes, we are moving ahead to build a new future and not to simply return to the old normal.

This fall we celebrate 10 years of our Master of Global Business (MGB) program. Over the last decade, the MGB has set a standard in applied and international learning. It continues to showcase a unique approach to management education that was once again recognized among the top 100 master in management programs in the world and fourth in North America (Financial Times). The MGB focuses on developing a global mindset and equips graduates with the skill to tackle the world’s complex challenges.

We also launched our new Master of Management program this year—a 12-month, pre-experience master’s degree that provides intensive, hands-on experiential learning for those looking to make a positive impact on their organizations and communities. We saw increasing interest in our MBA in Sustainable Innovation, and our BCom enrollments hit a new high, both demonstrating the value that prospective students see in our unique approach to management education.

In this issue of Business Class, you will find stories of alumni charting new paths and advancing their careers and businesses, even in the midst of a global pandemic. From organizing music festivals to developing start-ups or setting up at farmers’ markets, our alumni’s ingenuity, perseverance and dedication provide inspiring examples to follow.

As we approach the winter break, I want to wish all our readers the best for this holiday season. May you enjoy a safe and happy holiday and a wonderful 2022! ☃️

Dr. Saul Klein
Dean, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business
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Senator Jim Munson Joins Gustavson

Upon completing his time in the Senate in July of 2021, Jim Munson joined Gustavson as an executive in residence and special advisor to the Victoria Forum.

“We are proud to welcome Senator Munson to both of his new roles at the school,” says Saul Klein, dean of the Gustavson School of Business. “His deep expertise in government, communications and international relations makes him an incredible asset to the Victoria Forum, and our learning and research environment more generally.”

Cory Stephens Receives Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations

Cory Stephens, BCom ’96, received the 2021 Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations, presented by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and CIBC.

Stephens serves as an instructor, learning enhancement officer and manager for the Northwest with the Indigenous Advancement of Cultural Entrepreneurship (IACE) program. IACE, a collaboration between the Tribal Resources Investment Corporation (TRICORP), the Gustavson School of Business, and Indigenous communities and government

has been offering community-tailored entrepreneurship training for over eight years throughout Northwest Canada.

“I’m humbled to receive this award,” says Stephens. “But one of the things that’s always been true for me is that while these awards are certainly an amazing honour, in the end we always want to recognize the success of our students first. That’s what guides us in the work we do: building capacity among First Nations communities in Canada towards becoming more active participants in Canada’s economy.”

STUDENTS’ DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

UVic’s Students’ Dialogue on Democratic Engagement was recognized with an International Association of Public Practice (IAP2) Core Values Award this summer. The dialogue took place in fall 2020 and fostered student engagement through an innovative technique known as a deliberative mini-public, which brings together a true cross-section of a particular community for the purpose of dialogue on a given topic (in this case, democratic engagement).

Over 7,500 randomly selected students across the university received an invitation to participate in the dialogue. Interested students completed a short, anonymous survey gathering demographic data. The final 24 students who would take part as student body representatives were then randomly selected.

Undertaken by UVic’s Community and Government Relations team and Gustavson professor Simon Pek, in partnership with The Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of BC and 24 students from across campus, the project was a true collaborative effort.

“Whether on campus or in the workplace, there are so many useful applications for deliberative mini-publics like this one,” says Pek. “We learned a ton and are looking forward to taking this type of project forward in all kinds of new contexts.”

Investing for a Clean Future

This summer UVic announced a new partnership with Foresight, Canada’s cleantech accelerator, to support the growth of the cleantech ecosystem by helping ventures attract the capital they need to commercialize, scale-up and accelerate the transition to an inclusive, net-zero future.

One campus initiative supporting this partnership is the new Vancouver Island Impact Investing Hub (VI3Hub), led by Gustavson’s Basma Majerbi in collaboration with other faculties and centres. The impact investing hub supports research and education to promote investments in climate solutions.

“We are facing a huge opportunity for the finance industry to use its expertise to move capital into the right areas,” says Majerbi. “Impact investing will help the industry attract the best talent among a new generation of students who are passionate about making the world a better place. Our impact hub at UVic will connect and collaborate with investors of all types, entrepreneurs, start-up incubators and accelerators, businesses, government and policy makers, non-profits, community organizations as well as academics and students.”
If there is one educational qualification or degree that has an almost mythical status, it’s a doctoral degree (PhD). But what exactly does a PhD entail and is it something you should consider pursuing? In this piece I attempt to answer these questions from the perspective of a business and management scholar.

If the pursuit of new knowledge (i.e., conducting research, publishing papers in top academic journals, writing academic books) as a life-long career and calling sounds exciting to you, then a PhD might be the right step. A PhD program aims to impart the knowledge, skills and values required to embark on a career in academia. Contrary to popular belief, a PhD is not required for teaching per se, but it is indispensable for learning to conduct academic research. A doctoral degree allows you to dive deep into a specific discipline that you are passionate about and lets you become a specialist in your field.

An often asked question is what careers a PhD prepares you for? A focus on research and teaching means that PhD students are often preparing for an academic career at a university. But what does a career as an academic look like? A normal trajectory for a PhD student upon completion of their degree might typically begin with a job as a lecturer or an assistant professor. In “tenure-track” positions this period might last for five to eight years during which, one is expected to publish a required number of journal articles, books and book-chapters while delivering high-quality teaching. If a person is able to meet the required research and teaching standards, they are offered a ‘tenured’ position by the university, which often coincides with a promotion to an associate professor or senior lecturer. Yet it is not uncommon for universities to deny tenure to an assistant professor after five to eight years, thus forcing the person to look for another job, and hence the notorious expression ‘publish or perish’.

The process of securing admission into a PhD program often involves a lot of preparation, from ensuring you have an excellent academic record, to making sure you have the right research experience and background. Admission to a program can then mean four to six years of study, in which you will be tasked with developing and defending a proposal of original research under the supervision of an experienced professor.

PhDs are a big commitment, and undertaking years of grueling study and research isn’t for everyone. It requires a high degree of self-motivation, academic excellence and, above all, curiosity to ask questions and push the frontiers of knowledge. For such people, however, nothing could be more satisfying than a PhD degree and a career in academia. In the words of Professor James March of Stanford University, ‘Higher education is a vision, not a calculation…a commitment, not a choice. Teaching is not a job, it is a sacrament…and research is not an investment, it is a testament.”

Ravee Chittoor is an associate professor and academic director of the PhD program at the Gill Graduate School.

Do you have a question for a Gustavson professor that you’d like to see featured in a future issue of Business Class? Email bizedit@uvic.ca for consideration.
When he started his undergraduate degree at UVic, Jack Campbell already knew he wanted to use his wide range of interests to make a positive impact on society. But like many undergrads, Campbell faced the dilemma of deciding which path to pursue. After taking a wide range of classes in his first year, Campbell decided to undertake a Bachelor of Arts in Technology and Society, a unique program that allowed him to combine his interest in political science and tech.

Yet, he still felt something was missing from his undergraduate experience. A keen start-up-minded student, Campbell soon stumbled on Gustavson’s business minor program and knew it would be the perfect fit for his career ambitions.

Now, a few months away from graduating and with a range of experience under his belt, Campbell knows he made the right choice.

Campbell still recalls feeling frustrated before starting the business minor program; he wanted to create change but was uncertain how to do so. “I didn’t understand business models or accounting, both of which can make you stand out and help make projects happen,” he says. After starting his business minor, Campbell joined the Prime Minister’s Youth Council, an experience that cemented his drive to use his business and tech knowledge to make government resources more available for young people.

Campbell credits the business minor program for giving him a sense of purpose and direction. “It made me think bigger and more strategically,” he affirms. It was that type of thinking that spurred him to take on a new project aiming to help prevent drug overdoses by using tech solutions. “I lost a very close friend a few years ago to an accidental overdose, and since then I’ve been set on trying to come up with micro-solutions to the opioid crisis.”

In 2016, Campbell started work on NaloxSafe, an app to help combat the opioid crisis. In an attempt to find more funding from the provincial and federal governments, he came across Lifeguard, a start-up technology company that was working towards the same goal and had already received government backing. “After looking through the application and seeing the similarities, my business partner and I approached the CEO to see if he would be interested in working together. Initially, we were interested in putting some of our features in his app purely because we believed it would save more lives. After our first meeting, we realized there was an opportunity here to help them reach more young people and recreational users.”

Lifeguard’s core application is the Lifeguard Timer. “The way it works is individuals using drugs can adjust a timer to one, three or five minutes and if they become unresponsive and cannot turn off their alarm, the app assumes the user has overdosed. From there, our technology uses geofencing to track down the exact coordinates of where the phone is located and alerts local health emergency services,” says Campbell. Lifeguard has saved over 45 lives since its inception in early 2020 by sending ambulances to individuals in the midst of an overdose. The application has expanded to include other features, including a “services near me” tab that makes navigating harm reduction, recovery and mental health services straight forward by placing them on a map.

Campbell initially joined the team as a consultant but after impressing Lifeguard CEO Jeff Hardy, he was offered a full-time position. “At first, my job was to help build out Lifeguard’s social infrastructure and engagement. Within the first three months, the internal marketing team and I grew our social media accounts to reach thousands of followers.” From there, his role at the company expanded. “I began sitting in on almost all the major meetings, from software development to sales and financing. The only way I can describe the job description is by analogizing a Swiss army knife—no two days are exactly the same.”

As he prepares for his last semester at UVic, Campbell is thankful for what he learned. “Getting the business minor helped me understand the basics of business, from financial statements to what makes a healthy business grow. The business minor hasn’t changed the direction I want to go; it has just sped up the process,” he adds. “If anything, it has made me think bigger and made me want to do more than when I started.”
Finance student puts in the effort to land her dream job

by Suzanne Bowness
Few people can identify the eureka moment when they saw their career pathway unfold, but Alicia Armstrong, BCom ’20, is one of them. Now an associate in public markets for British Columbia Investment Management Corporation (BCI), Armstrong was at a networking event in her third year at Gustavson when she happened to sit at a table with senior analyst Johann Kuntze, and senior portfolio manager Kenton Freitag. Both work at BCI and are advisors for the Applied Portfolio Management Program (APMP), an investment program that offers a key experiential learning opportunity for UVic students interested in careers in finance.

Even though she did not yet know about APMP, they encouraged her to apply. “That’s how I got started in the Applied Investment Management Course, or AIMC, required as a first step,” recalls Armstrong.

That and a lot of hard work took her to where she is today.

By third year, Armstrong successfully applied and started the AIMC, a seven-part course held over eight months that’s designed to prepare students to be portfolio managers. A non-credit course for select UVic economics and BCom students, AIMC is held monthly and is taught entirely by industry professionals. Along the way, Armstrong was also completing the intensive third-year BCom core coursework, and taking the accounting, finance and HR courses required for her degree. She had also completed her first co-op term in the Ministry of International Trade.

Her AIMC experience put BCI on her radar, and she set her sights on serving her next co-op term there. But it wasn’t without challenges.

By her own admission, Armstrong bombed the first interview in the fall. Importantly, though, she didn’t give up—she not only asked for a follow-up interview but actually did the suggested reading and resume tweaking. By this time, her determination was apparent. “I got an interview in January. I called up the professor of the AIMC program, and then the week leading up to the interview I worked with him for suggestions on how to prep,” says Armstrong. “If you are interested and want to go that extra mile, you have a lot of people willing to help.”

The BCI interviewer also saw a big difference in her second interview and that effort got her into the co-op, working for the BCI Canadian small cap team for two semesters. She was then hired into BCI’s US small cap team before her last academic year, completing her degree via night courses. By that time, she had also been accepted as a student portfolio manager with the APMP, one of only nine students chosen. Student managers are responsible for a $1.2 million portfolio of stocks and bonds, originally funded by the UVic Foundation and private donors.

Now nearly three years into her role at BCI, Armstrong has confirmed the field is a great fit. “It’s a logic puzzle,” she says of her work. “A lot of it is taking 1,000 different pieces of information and trying to figure out what makes sense, what fits together, what doesn’t make sense and where could I be wrong?”

“I would say that the best thing to do would to not be contaminated by how much noise there is out there—about what you currently don’t know. If you decide you want to try to do it, commit to learning a little bit more,” says Armstrong. “I find that the biggest barrier is when people think that if they just started finding out about finance in third year, it’s too late.”

In terms of her own future plans, Armstrong has completed the second level of the Chartered Financial Analyst exam and is planning to write the third level exam next year. She fields questions from current students, and advises networking as another best practice. “Put yourself out there. Try to learn from the people in the industry. Most of us are actually really nice,” she laughs.
It seems appropriate that German train station announcements keep interrupting my phone conversation with James Toy, MGB ’16—it speaks to an international setting befitting a globetrotting Master of Global Business (MGB) grad.

Toy, who lived and worked in six cities during his two years in and immediately after UVic’s MGB program, remains modest about his language skills. “I’ll confess I don’t understand what they’re saying,” he laughs from his seat on Essen’s commuter train. But the culture shock isn’t a problem for Toy (who’s studying up on his German diligently). In fact, it’s this curiosity for new experiences in new places that’s driven him to country-hop so extensively throughout his education and career.

Today, he’s on his way home from his job in change management communications at Evonik, a world leader in specialty chemistry. Toy’s been in Essen since November 2020, transferring from the company’s New Jersey headquarters mid-pandemic. But prior to that, you might have found him in Taiwan, Singapore or Austria—each location far from his previous career in his hometown of San Francisco.

“I was in the non-profit sector, and while my work had some international impact, I never really got to leave San Francisco,” says Toy. “My tasks touched on international and cultural perspectives, but I wanted to dig deeper and broaden my horizons.” Feeling stuck, he started looking at a pivot, and soon found UVic’s MGB program. Relocating to Canada’s West Coast, as it turns out, would be the first global jaunt of many in the years to come.

The program’s focus on experiential learning appealed deeply to the hands-on Toy. “There’s so much you can’t learn from a book,” he says. “The opportunity to really go to another country, study, work with local companies, work with students from other companies...It was special.”

He spent his first term in Victoria and then headed to Kaohsiung, Taiwan for a semester. Next, it was off to Linz, Austria to begin his first internship abroad. In order to complete his degree, Toy secured an internship with Evonik’s Singapore team, helping with HR operations on the Asian and Australian continents. A second Evonik internship followed, this time with the corporate HR compensation and benefits team, before he landed a full-time role in the US for the corporation. (Funnily enough, his stint in Parsippany, New Jersey would wind up offering a culture shock of its own for the California native: “It’s really a totally different world on the east coast,” he says.)

“Living in all these places and having to adjust every three months really tests you, and makes you figure out if you’ve got what it takes,” he says. “You learn if it’s the lifestyle for you.”

Each place gave him a chance to explore his interest in cultural work...
attitudes, a personal passion that grew out of his upbringing as an Asian American and second-generation Chinese American. “I was interested in investigating my own assumptions about how people in Asia work,” he says. “What I’ve learned is to transition between being objective and using my own experience and own feelings to be a moderator and a mediator.” The variety of locales has also proved to Toy that global business is as appealing as he thought it would be.

Wherever he’s working, his international experience has helped challenge and strengthen Evonik’s global policies and attitudes toward performance, compensation and benefits. “Sometimes I think I’m a translator: not in terms of language, but customs,” he says. Currently, Toy’s handling internal communication for a global reorganization and technology transformation that’s about to impact Evonik’s 33,000-employee workforce. His experience working in other countries has set him up with the empathy and perspective to handle communicating concepts across more than 30 nations.

This latest move has been a unique one, given the global pandemic. Toy was all set to move back to Germany in April 2020: he’d already given up his lease and car when the borders shut down. The limbo period was a stressful one, even for the resilient and resourceful world traveller; then, when he actually arrived in Essen, adjusting to a new life in a locked-down city was a struggle. “It was sad,” Toy laughs. “I just sat in the apartment.” There was no travel around Europe on weekends, no chance to explore.

The pandemic-ified Essen offered a heightened experience of the loneliness and rootlessness that can be an unfortunate side-effect of an international career track. As much as Toy loves the learning and growth that comes with making a go of it in a new place, he acknowledges that being a foreigner can have its challenges: it can be hard to make connections or form relationships when you’re new in town or just passing through.

Luckily, Germany has since opened up again—hence Toy’s train commute. He’s happy to be building a new life and putting down some roots in this most recent city he’s calling home (at least for now). And he’s been hard at work applying all that he’s learned, both in and out of the lecture hall.

All these years later, Toy thinks back to his time in grad school and is a little shocked by all that he has accomplished in such a short amount of time. “I don’t even know where this drive to travel came from…maybe a Seventeen magazine quiz?” he laughs, as the train pulls up to his home station. “How crazy is it that I signed up for a one-year grad school program and ended up traveling to all these countries? That’s what an MGB can do.”
MIKE RUSSELL BRINGS YOU: THE NEWS by Emily Dobby

Photos: (top) Courtesy of Mike Russell (bottom): Courtesy of Mike Russell and Great News Publishing.
Mike Russell, BCom ’99, tapped into a viable market—community-driven news—and discovered his true path as a media entrepreneur. But it wasn’t a typical journey to get there.

A goal-driven athlete, Russell was a national team sprint kayaker while at the University of Victoria. When he didn’t make the Olympic team as he had originally hoped, he pivoted his energy and set about creating new and lofty career goals for himself. Russell credits much of his success in achieving those goals to his time in the BCom program.

“My professors were so receptive and understanding of my education, athletic and career goals. I took responsibility for my own learning at UVic and feel as though I self-actualized during my time there. I ended up loving the experience of being on campus. Some of the best memories of my life were formed at UVic,” says Russell.

Soon after graduation, Russell landed a highly coveted position at Lehman Brothers in San Francisco as an investment banking mergers and acquisitions analyst in the tech sector. During his time in the US, Russell soon found himself missing Canada and ready to return north. In 2006, he decided to return to pursue an MBA at the Richard Ivey School of Business in Western Ontario.

Fast-forward to 2009, Russell was working 80 to 100 hours a week at National Bank Financial in investment banking and was growing weary of the demands of the industry.

“I was going down a career path that didn’t meet my need for freedom. The time commitment that investment banking requires takes a lot of your freedom away as you are always at the office or on call,” says Russell.

He decided it was time to pivot his focus as an entrepreneur. His years in the industry had given him the budget to invest in and buy a business, and after a long search that included looking into over 35 different businesses, he discovered the media company that would become Great News Media and decided to go all in.

Great News Media is very much an outlier in the Canadian media landscape. It publishes 89 monthly community newsletter magazines that cover 155 communities in Calgary and the surrounding area. With Russell at the helm, Great News Media has tripled in size, expanding to reach over 410,000 households. With a model aiming to deliver high-impact stories, mixed with low-cost print advertising, Russell has changed the goals of his news company: “We are giving communities a voice and a communication tool for free,” he says.

As the pandemic unfolded and travel restrictions began, Russell found communities were more connected than they had ever been. Moreover, the need was greater for the types of services Great News Media had provided for over 10 years.

“Residents were more interested in developing relationships with their neighbours, supporting local businesses and creating a greater sense of connection between themselves and their communities,” says Russell, adding that the pandemic has caused most people to significantly decrease their vacation habits and, correspondingly, increase the value placed on their homes and in their local communities.

“With a renewed focus on the home environment comes an increased interest in hyperlocal community news, which is generally not covered by larger media outlets,” says Russell. Today, residents want to stay more informed about local events, local services and local crime activity.

“Residents also want to stay more informed about the initiatives of their local politicians and development plans within their proximity,” adds Russell, noting that compared to national newspapers, local community magazines are better able to provide this information.

The success of Great News Media has provided Russell with the professional freedom he always wanted.

“It has been a dream come true. I have a great team in place and I’m happy to be working on the business, rather than in the business,” he says.
WELCOME TO GUSTAVSON’S
Farmers’ Market
Meet the locals
by Sydney Hucal

Kat Craats, BCom ’20
KAT CRAATS PHOTOGRAPHY
Kat Craats is a lifestyle and wedding photographer whose business is to make people and places look their best. Want to see her photos? Turn to page 30 to see more.

WHY FARMERS’ MARKETS? One of my major goals has always been to be more involved in the community and farmers’ markets are a great way to be involved and network with other small business owners and artisans, as well as to create meaningful connections with customers.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF FARMERS’ MARKETS?
Participating in farmers’ markets has allowed me to build a community with organizers, other vendors, and customers in a way that you just can’t do online. My favourite part of the markets has been getting to see all my work laid out in a beautiful display—it’s something I feel really proud of. As a photographer, so much of my work is digital so it is incredibly fulfilling to see people engage with my work in real life.

Katie Gamble, BCom ’18
NATURE BEE WRAPS
Nature Bee Wraps makes handcrafted beeswax wraps from 100 per cent natural ingredients, and helps reduce single-use plastic waste from entering our landfills and oceans.

WHAT ROLE DID FARMERS’ MARKETS PLAY IN YOUR BUSINESS STRATEGY?
Farmers’ markets played an important role in our initial growth. We did not originally plan to attend many farmers’ markets, but because our product had an educational component to it (we explain what natural ingredients our wraps are made of and how to use them), farmers’ markets became critical to our success.

People were able to learn and ask questions on the spot. Often they would come back to get more because they knew where we would be. It also helped us expand our brand reach because tourists who were travelling would take their wraps home and then purchase more from our website.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF FARMERS’ MARKETS?
Participating in farmers’ markets has allowed us to build a community that is incredibly supportive and uplifting. My favourite part of farmers’ markets is just getting to interact with our community. It makes all the difference getting to have face-to-face interactions. I love getting to know new people!
Adam Conlin, BCom ’20  
JUSTO’S CRAFT DIPS
Justo’s Craft Dips is a zero-waste vegan hummus and dips craft company. Justo’s strives to have a positive impact on the earth, our local community and your taste buds.

WHAT ROLE DID FARMERS’ MARKETS PLAY IN YOUR OVERALL BUSINESS STRATEGY?
Initially, we used farmers’ markets to get feedback and trial our product. Our first farmers’ market season in 2020 allowed us to test the market acceptance of our new business, which included a closed-loop return system of our used glass jars. Our farmers’ market community helped us get a clear idea of how well that return system would work.

HAS PARTICIPATING IN FARMERS’ MARKETS ALLOWED YOU TO BUILD A COMMUNITY?
The market community has been immeasurably impactful for growth in our brand awareness. The “support-local” movement has been key to our success, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we were restricted from undertaking strategies that businesses like ours would typically implement, such as sampling, trade shows and demos. With limited spending on marketing, organic growth and word of mouth has been the key for us.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF FARMERS’ MARKETS?
Seeing customers resonate with our story. Sometimes we explain who we are and why we do what we do and someone will want to buy our products, even forgetting what we sell!

Michela Byl, BCom ’11  
ROOTSIDE BITTERS & MIXERS
Rootside Bitters & Mixers is a botanically brewed bitters and mixers provider based in Victoria, BC.

WHY FARMERS’ MARKETS?
We kind of fell into farmers’ markets; we tried out a few when we were based in Vancouver, but we really started attending them in 2018 when we moved to Vancouver Island. We realized that the face-to-face interaction was going to be really important to educate new customers. In 2019, we were doing between seven and nine markets per week all summer, and we continued to push our products at markets and events through the fall and winter season. At that point, markets made up about 60 per cent of our business revenue.

HAS PARTICIPATING IN FARMERS’ MARKETS ALLOWED YOU TO BUILD A COMMUNITY?
Having a consistent market schedule allowed us to chat with our customers regularly, rather than selling only to wholesale accounts and never actually directly interacting with our customers. Another big benefit has been getting to know our fellow vendors. Some of our best friends are people we’ve met and worked alongside at the markets, and being able to build a network of small business owners and friends has been incredible. Farmers’ markets have helped us see the immense benefit of supporting small local businesses, and shifted the way we spend our money.
By combining their foodie passions, entrepreneurial vision and sense of purpose, one couple found the recipe for a thriving business

by Aaren Madden
Most people can tell you about at least one unforgettable meal they have had in their lives, but few can claim a meal to be as life-changing as Nicholas Baingo and Lauren Isherwood, both MBA ’10.

At a Buddhist vegan restaurant in South Korea in 2009, the couple was presented with an array of tantalizing dishes. “There was such a variety of textures and flavours, mouth feels, colours; everything was so broad and varied and new to us. It opened our minds to what vegan cuisine could be, especially in respect to flavours that were not very common in North America yet,” Baingo recalls. Says Isherwood, “It was a decade later that we started thinking back on that experience and how we could bring such delicious vegan flavour to our products.”

Enter Vumami Foods and its range of Umami Bomb shiitake chili oils.

Back in 2009, Baingo and Isherwood had no idea they would become specialty food purveyors. Both were working on their MBAs at UVic, after moving from Calgary to Victoria together to begin their studies. In fact, their very presence in South Korea was for a work-study component of the program that also included travel to China. After graduation, the pair married and embarked on their careers.

Today, Baingo is a business development strategy consultant, Isherwood consults in human resources and recruitment, and they run a thriving food business. Their plates, forgive the pun, are truly full, but they are deeply motivated by shared values.

Environmental and animal welfare concerns compelled the pair to become
vegan about three years ago. Initially, they longed for those seductive, savoury umami flavours found most easily in this part of the world in meat- or dairy-based dishes. Then they cast their minds back to South Korea. “We just thought, let’s test every ingredient that we know is delicious and drives the umami experience without including any animal products,” says Baingo. In 2020, after about four or five months of recipe development, Vumami Foods was born.

Living in Osoyoos, BC at the time, their initial strategy of direct sales at farmers’ markets was scuttled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Luckily, the farm and fruit stands that are so ubiquitous in the Okanagan were a viable and supportive alternative. Local tourism and a resurgence of home cooking brought about by the pandemic were a silver lining for early sales.

Farmstands are seasonal, however, so Baingo and Isherwood moved back to Vancouver Island (they are now based in Sidney) to focus on specialty markets and grocery stores in western Canada. Today—barely one year later—Vumami Foods’ shiitake oils are sold in upwards of 115 shops. Expansion plans are in the works, including new products, wider reach and a facility to ramp up production.

Such rapid growth wouldn’t have been possible without the security of consulting work, even if it is double-edged. “It would be too hard to draw salaries out of such an early-stage company that requires capital to grow,” Isherwood explains. Both worked full time during development, then took time off to focus on product launch. Once the ball was rolling, they went back to consulting part-time—albeit, often with gruelling seven-day work weeks. “We know it’s not sustainable and we’re not going to be able to do it for too much longer,” Baingo admits. “We think once our new facility is open we will be able to scale way back.
and just focus on our venture.”

In the meantime, the pair is energized by living their values. In addition to helping facilitate a more earth-friendly diet, they have donated to Food Banks BC ever since they sold their first jar of Umami Bomb shiitake chili oil. Baingo explains, “We have a sense of pride of ownership where we get to build something and grow something that to us is quite meaningful.”

Isherwood concurs. “The thing that makes us so much more passionate about the business is that it’s purpose-driven. It’s a tough, long road to build a business from scratch and when you’re exhausted, just thinking about that positive impact you’re having can really get you through those darker times. Developing new products and having that end connection to customers who are as excited about our food as we are, that really helps to propel us,” she adds.

The couple frequently draws from their Gustavson days, and laugh about how they never expected to refer to the entrepreneurship case studies so frequently. Baingo remembers an early class where students were reluctant to share their ideas, lest they be stolen. “The professor said, ‘Ideas are the easy part. It’s the execution that makes a business successful.’ Now we hyper-focus on successful execution in everything we do. We think that has helped us grow really quickly,” he says.

Their approach seems to be working. “We have customers reach out all the time telling us about the ways they spice up their dishes with our products. Just today we had an independent retailer in Alberta reach out to us because a number of their customers had been asking them to carry our products,” Baingo says. Gratifying moments like that make the long hours worthwhile and show Baingo and Isherwood how their drive, passion and vision are paying off.
For many years, artists and entrepreneurs were considered two very different entities. When artists entered the world of business to sell their creative work, they often struggled to make their artistic dreams become a reality.

While the disconnect between “the artist” and “the entrepreneur” has lessened, it still exists. However, recently published research by Gustavson Associate Professor Sara R. T. A. Elias and her co-authors is helping shine a light on the arts entrepreneur and the role of imagination.

The paper, “Entrepreneurial imagining: How a small team of arts entrepreneurs created the world’s largest traveling carillon,” is the culmination of 25 months of work in which the team of researchers dived deep into gaining a better understanding of entrepreneurial imagining in the world of the arts (an often-overlooked sector, Elias says) and how it unfolds. The paper offers a unique insight into what it takes to maintain resilience and achieve success in what is undoubtedly often a tough world full of rejection.

To do this, Elias and her co-authors investigated the imagination process of a small team of arts entrepreneurs who created the world’s largest traveling carillon (a pitched percussion
instrument that is played with a keyboard and consists of at least 23 cast bronze bells), and gained a better understanding of how it all comes together to generate novelty and make a difference in the world.

“The motivation behind my research started because I have always been fascinated by how entrepreneurs come up with an innovative idea and then have the resilience and drive to pursue it, even in the face of so many nos, as is common in the creative world,” explains Elias. Rather than looking solely at entrepreneurial thinking, Elias wanted to dive deeper into the exacting process and enter into the imagination of her research participants, while experiencing this phenomenon herself. “While thinking and imagining are intertwined, imagination goes beyond rational thought. It goes into the emotional and sensorial layers of experience, and sometimes gut feelings. Thinking, perceiving and imagining all work in tandem. Imagining also includes unconscious processes that result in those ‘aha’ moments,” she explains.

The two focal points for her research were her sister Ana Elias and father Alberto Elias, who alongside Elias co-founded CICO—a Portuguese non-profit arts venture headquartered in Constância, Portugal—and created the world’s largest and heaviest traveling carillon, the LVSITANVS Carillon, comprising 63 bells.

“It’s a project that faced many challenges before becoming a success, requiring buy-in from external sources, including the mayor and the people of the town. It was fascinating for me to explore how it came to fruition through the eyes of my father and sister,” she says.

This research used a case study method that comprised one-on-one discussions and interviews, immersive fieldwork and interactive participation to dive into five areas of imagination: experiencing, early creating, reaching an impasse and gestating, (re)creating and evaluating imagined futures, and choosing and enterprising. Elias says

the two focal research participants, while family, engaged in critical discussions with her, allowing her to fully examine entrepreneurial imagination and even question her own assumptions. “I would talk about imagination as a linear process, and they would challenge that, as it was not how they experienced it. For them, in the world of imagining, you are considering many different elements all at the same time.”

Elias’s research depicts how entrepreneurial imagining unfolds, as an interconnected, continually changing and open-ended process. Her research captures how the dynamic and indeterminate character of imagination can be a powerful driver of entrepreneurial practices.

Elias says she was surprised by how the imagination of an arts entrepreneur is sparked by so many different elements. “The imagining process is not linear, in fact, it’s very fluid and can be influenced by conversations and interactions with others. Interactions with material artifacts, for example, working on a completely unrelated project with your hands, may evoke imagination and also gut feelings.”

Through this research, Elias and her co-authors were able to gain further insight into the complex process of entrepreneurial imagining, looking at it as a conscious and unconscious, self-reflective and embodied process. Key to their idea of imagining was the metaphor of the rhizome, a plant stem that grows horizontally, extending roots in different and unexpected directions.

“The biggest takeaway for me was the nuance of specific processes within entrepreneurial imagining. It involves multiple layers of experience to land on an end result. Of course, as an entrepreneur, you need structure, but this research showed that it’s also okay to let go and just let it unfold,” she says.

Engaging imagination is essential in business, but the research shows that it’s important to realize that you won’t pursue everything you imagine, and that’s okay.

“It’s important as an entrepreneur to understand that you may come up with a great idea, but it may not be the right time, so giving yourself the freedom to re-imagine allows you to pivot and remain resilient. Whether you’re an arts entrepreneur, or an entrepreneur in another field, imagination is critical for realizing a dream as it allows you the space to step back and imagine different alternatives. No process needs to be linear, or even the same!”

Sara R. S. T. A. Elias
HIRING as a force for good
Sasha Ivanov drives change one recruit at a time
by Natalie Bruckner
Confronted with the reality that everyone has unconscious biases, it can be tempting to exclaim, “Not me! Never!”

That was the response Sasha (Alexandra) Ivanov, MBA ’19, owner of recruitment agency MaverickHR in Richmond, BC had as well…until one day, while interviewing a potential candidate for a job, she had a serious wake-up call.

“As they began telling me their story, I realized I had built up an entirely different story about their situation in my head and was operating from my own experiences and biases,” says Ivanov. “That was a pivotal moment for me. As humans, our brains naturally recognize something different as a threat.”

As hard as it can be to accept our own biases, her belief is backed up by many studies on the subject. A paper entitled “The Evolution of Cognitive Bias” suggests that because information-processing time and ability are limited, humans must use shortcuts or rules of thumb that are prone to breakdown in systematic ways. The result? Bias.

As someone who strives to see things from others’ perspectives, and a self-proclaimed empath, Ivanov felt it was destiny that she found herself in the world of HR.

Having grown up in Russia with a propensity for language and learning about different cultures, Ivanov always wanted to get out and explore the world but wasn’t sure what her calling was. “I remember being 13 and telling my mom I was going to live in Canada…she laughed at the idea.”

But sure enough, after completing her master’s degree in linguistics in 2005 from the Vladivostok State University of Economics, she saw an immigration ad for Canada, applied, and was soon flying over the Pacific to start a new life. She landed a job as a junior HR assistant within five weeks of setting foot on Canadian soil.

“I just fell in love with HR. I found I had a natural propensity for it. Nothing gives me as much satisfaction as helping people, and HR is exactly that, when done right.” She threw herself into the role, taking her Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) among other qualifications, and quickly worked her way up the corporate ladder from HR coordinator to HR manager and eventually general manager overseeing everything from HR to operations.

However, she had a feeling that she needed to go out on her own. And this feeling was cemented as she earned her MBA at UVic in 2017. It opened Ivanov’s eyes to the world of entrepreneurship, and she credits her education for allowing her to take the leap to open her own recruitment firm in 2020; although, it’s a recruitment firm with a twist.

“During my MBA we delved into strategic partnerships, finance accounting, consultancy and so many other aspects of running a business. It made the transition to being a business owner a breeze,” she says. “There was also something deeper that I took away from my studies, and that was the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, and how business, no matter how small, can have an impact on environmental, social and governance considerations. I realized that while I can’t do too much about the environment in my line of work, I can most certainly affect societal change and governance. This got me on the diversity track and made me realize how we as HR people can create a safe psychological space for people to thrive.”

Last year, Ivanov decided to take the plunge and opened the doors to MaverickHR. “Everything became a little chaotic during COVID. I had my work and my children. I realized it was time to branch out on my own. I considered what I’m best at, which is figuring out people’s strengths, weaknesses and potential, and I realized recruitment was calling me.”

And so, MaverickHR was born: a recruitment agency that lives by BCorp values, and aims to use business as a force for good.

Today, Ivanov is at the helm, advocating for DEI in the world of HR.

When clients come to her asking for potential candidates, she draws up summaries that list the person’s skills. Clients won’t know the sex, age or personal background, thus allowing them to make an almost unbiased opinion. She says “almost” because she’s a realist.

Ivanov understands that biases, whether we want to believe it or not, exist, and cannot be 100 per cent extinguished…but that doesn’t mean she won’t try. “When I recently selected five candidates for an office admin position that were all female, I took a long hard look at why. Once you open up that can of worms, the results are fascinating.”

As far as Ivanov is concerned, recruitment has a real chance to combat the issues of inequality and exclusivity.

“It’s incredible how much we can achieve when we don’t limit ourselves.”

We’re saying Cheers to 10 years of graduates
from the Master of Global Business (MGB) program, which has sent students on journeys around the globe!

A lot has happened since our first MGB cohort wrapped up its epic adventure to Kaohsiung, Taiwan at Sun-Yat Sen University, and Linz, Austria at Johannes Kepler University in 2011. We caught up with a few of this first graduating class and asked them to share where they are now.

What was your favourite memory from your time in the MGB?

There are too many to choose from and it’s hard to pin down just one! We learned Mandarin, in Taiwan, and we had the opportunity to do group-consulting projects on real issues with big companies in Austria, which was an incredible experience. Of course, all our opportunities to travel around Asia and Europe during our off time with friends were beyond memorable.

Professional/personal update:
I was lucky to have an internship opportunity that allowed me to remain abroad, and it really changed the course of my professional and personal life. I began working for a non-profit, and then worked as a representative of the BC government in Hong Kong. Over the last five years, I transitioned into the private sector. Currently, I am the regional marketing manager for Therabody, a leading tech-wellness company using cutting-edge technology to deliver scientifically validated natural products and services.

Since coming to Hong Kong for my internship as part of the MGB program, I’ve never left. It’s now my 10th year living and working here. I met my husband, who is also an expat, during my time here, and we’ve made Hong Kong our second home.

What was your favourite memory from your time in the MGB?

My favourite memories during MGB came from the multi-cultural experiences we had. Learning different cultures from books is one thing; breathing and touching different cultures always brings me great memories.

Professional/personal update:
As part of the MGB internship program, I took a job at Metaio GmbH, a German augmented-reality (AR) company. In 2012, I started a subsidiary company of Metaio in China as a partner. In 2015, I supported Metaio in getting acquired by Apple. A year later, I invested in another AR company, named RealWear, a global leader in industrial AR solutions. I am currently chairman of the board for RealWear China and board director for RealWear Inc. I also serve as a strategic advisor to IDG Capital, and work as an investment partner to Tencent, Baidu, Xiaomi and SDIC, the largest state-owned investment holding company in China.

I am currently living in Vancouver, BC. I was married the same year I graduated from the MGB program and now have two lovely daughters; one is eight and a half and one is seven. The MGB ended up being the starting point of my career and my family.
What was your favourite memory from your time in the MGB?

Daniel McCombe

My favourite memory was working with my classmates on our capstone project in Austria; the long nights and early mornings gave us a chance to make deeper connections and, when we finally delivered our project, we made sure to celebrate our achievements as a team with a memorable night out.

Professional/personal update:

Shortly after the MGB program I took a leap of faith to join Airbus as a young professional in Bangalore, India. It was there that I met my now-wife Meera, mother to our daughter, Leela, and with another child on the way. We truly live in a globalized world, and in my case, that starts right at home with my multicultural family.

After nearly 10 years at Airbus, I recently joined Jeff Bezos’ space venture, Blue Origin, where I am a finance executive leading our New Glenn Orbital Launch Vehicle program. Our mission is to “build the road to space” for future generations to prosper here on Earth.

Helen (Yanjie) Han

UVic’s MGB gave me the chance to travel to so many beautiful cities and immerse myself in the local culture (particularly its food!). The program gave me the opportunity to see the world. All the professors I met were very knowledgeable, and the classmates I met were all very nice and helpful. Not only did the MGB program help me gain academic knowledge, but I was also inspired by how different cultures did things, which made me reflect on the purpose of my life and shaped me into who I am today.

Professional/personal update:

After my MGB, I became a regulated Canadian immigration consultant, which is still my profession today. I also became a permanent resident of Canada, got married and am now settled in beautiful BC.

Guilherme Kleinert

It was definitely the people I met, the incredible atmosphere we had, the trips we took and the hands-on projects we were assigned. Living in those three countries and being able to experience their business culture was one of the most enriching experiences I ever had.

Professional/personal update:

The MGB path led me to the field of capital markets, and helping financial institutions expand their business in the Latin America region. I now work for a Danish bank in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I help it expand its investment platform among institutions such as banks, brokerage firms and investment funds.

My job requires a lot of travelling in the Latin America region and the experience I have had dealing with other cultures in my time with the MGB program helps me better perform at my job every day.

I am now married, with one daughter and a boy due this year!

Julian Legazpi

I really enjoyed the camaraderie I had with my cohort. We had such a diverse set of backgrounds, and everything was equally memorable—from spending time with them in the classroom to eating late-night beef noodles in Taiwan or taking skiing trips in Austria.

Professional/personal update:

I ended up turning my MGB thesis into a full-time job at KTM—a motorcycle and sports car manufacturer based in Austria. I became the managing director for the Asian region, and started a joint venture factory in the Philippines. I have since left them and become an entrepreneur. In 2020 I started an electric motorcycle company based out of Singapore and I spend my free time working for my other start-up—a Fintech business that empowers digitization across Southeast Asia.

Having lived in seven countries since the start of the program, I have now settled in Singapore as my home!
Becoming the CEO of one of BC’s biggest musical festivals right before a major pandemic would send most people running for the hills. But really, uncertainty is always built into event production—so in a way, Neil MacLeod, MBA ’21, the new CEO of Shambhala, has been training for this chaotic time over the course of his eight years with the company. From the threat of wildfires to weather or mercurial guests, live shows are subject to a smorgasbord of threats, even during the best of times.

And, while he’s been adapting and pivoting ever since he started with the company in 2013, today, MacLeod’s MBA allows him to roll with the punches in a new way, as his business savvy brings a layer of stability into an oft-unstable industry. “You get criticized: ‘oh, you’re too much of a business.’ But if it’s not run like a business, it won’t be around for long,” says MacLeod. “The industry needs more business-like people. You find a lot of individuals who go to business school and wind up working with an organization like banking or insurance. But that’s often a missed opportunity for the arts.” It’s not about making massive profits, necessarily, says MacLeod: it’s about sustainability and survival, enabling the event to come back again next year.

It’s still up in the air if the next Shambhala will feature its usual six stages and 18,000 participants, but MacLeod and his team are hoping...
for the best, particularly because of the community impact the annual event has. Just before the pandemic, MacLeod initiated an economic assessment—and even he was shocked by the results. “We were within the top 12 events in the province,” he says. “The number of jobs the event supports is massive, and 75 per cent of the audience comes from outside BC.” Having these hard numbers on hand during the COVID-19 pandemic was a lifesaver, as it allowed the organization to win some grants and financial support to weather the storm. But the impressive stats were also a powerful reminder about the economic impact of the arts.

While Shambhala may look like a feel-good dance party, it’s also a highly successful company. (Shambhala’s scheduled 2022 festival will be its 23rd). Over the years, producers of the event have developed vertical integrations to maximize efficiencies and streamline cost; for example, they started their own security company after years of struggling to get reliable help, and run Nelson’s Savoy Hotel to accommodate travelling artists and volunteers.

MacLeod, back in 2012, was one of those volunteers. He, his partner and his kids arrived in Canada that summer looking for a change of pace from their life in the suburbs of Edinburgh. With no destination in mind, they started their great Canadian adventure by visiting a friend in Nelson—a friend who just so happened to be doing some engineering work for Shambhala. Though MacLeod’s background was in banking and finance, he agreed to do some construction work in exchange for some free tickets… and quickly found himself with a broken hand. “The owner felt pretty bad and asked if there was anything else I’d like to do,” recalls MacLeod. “They happened to need someone to work in payroll.” MacLeod quickly found himself reviewing expenses, helping with HR issues and soon, taking over as head of finance. Over the next few years, he got a crash course in Shambhala’s operation, going wherever work was needed. “I got to understand the business from every perspective,” he says. “I wasn’t looking for a career, but it was so enjoyable.” It was that sudden pivot to a career as a festival organizer that convinced MacLeod to start his MBA, and the pandemic suddenly proved to be a perfect opportunity.

“As I was starting to spend more time in an executive position, I just felt I needed that additional education,” says MacLeod. “When you’re actually working, you do get a lot of experience, but you don’t always get that ability to learn from others around you.” UVic’s MBA ended up being a natural fit. Shambhala already did as much as possible to keep things green and minimize impact but exploring sustainability on a bigger-picture level had a lot of appeal for MacLeod.

He likens the event industry to being a farmer: “There’s so much logistics and planning, but then you actually get to enjoy the fruits of your labour, and see the impact of your efforts on the customer,” he says. “Yes, there are some long days once the festival gets underway, but those moments of taking a beat and soaking up the event itself, watching the joy on your guests’ faces: it’s something special.” He recalls a night from the early years, finally looking up from a busy day running the smoothie bar: “It was 10 p.m. The lights were going, the music was playing, everyone was dressed up. It was the moment where everything was coming alive, and I fell in love with the industry at that moment.”

With moments like these put on pause over the course of the pandemic, MacLeod is even more convinced of the value of the arts. “Movies, a nightclub, theatre… It doesn’t matter what you have in your life, those things have been gone for the last 12 months, and we’ve seen high rates of anxiety and depression. There’s a lack of connection. I believe the arts and culture are the key parts to what’s missing right now,” he says. Seeing the joy on people’s faces as in-person events return has only proved his hypothesis. “You take away the arts, and what are you left with in society?”

Photo: Divisuals, courtesy of Shambhala Music Festival
The World Economic Forum has listed it as one of the top 10 skills to master to ensure long-term business success. It’s a key behaviour demonstrated in 90 per cent of top business performers and it even increases earning potential; and yet it’s also believed to be the hardest (and most uncomfortable) skill to master, because it requires you to dig deep within yourself.

That skill is emotional intelligence, also known as EQ. While the term was originally coined back in 1990 in a research paper by two psychology professors, it has taken more than a decade of further research to better understand why EQ is one of today’s critical business skills.

EQ has always been a part of classroom learning at Gustavson, but in September 2020 Gustavson and the Business Co-op and Career Centre—with generous support from the RBC Foundation—launched a two-year pilot program called Career EQuip to shine a spotlight on EQ, enhancing program delivery through the integration of emotional intelligence tools and career development best practices.

“The program came about because we felt we could do more to proactively support the career and EQ development of our students,” says Andrée-Anne Leroy, Gustavson career educator and project lead for Career EQuip. “We wanted to give them the opportunity to differentiate themselves from other students entering the market, and to feel ready and competent to launch themselves into a career that is meaningful to them.”

Second-year business students are randomly selected to be a part of the program, which is delivered by instructors trained as practitioners in the Emotional Capital Report (a UK-based intelligence tool used within educational establishments and designed to measure an individual’s emotional intelligence that builds career readiness).

Through the program, students learn to develop the following areas: self-awareness around their unique strengths, interests, values and skills; a better understanding of labour market trends and the skills needed to be “future ready;” an understanding of the value of emotional intelligence as a key area for skill development; and the ability to identify opportunities to develop EQ competencies by building goals and an action plan.

So far, 100 students have gone through the program, and in the 2021/2022 academic year 125 students will have the opportunity to further their EQ and career readiness skills through the Career EQuip program.

Determining the program’s success and the exact change in student’s emotional intelligence, career readiness and confidence will come later, but a mid-point evaluation has already yielded very positive results.

“We have observed that a higher number of students within Career EQuip have successfully pursued their co-op term this summer, and the quality of those co-op terms has been higher. We can already see
positive shifts in their understanding of the importance of social and emotional skill development for career outcomes—something many of our students are usually unaware of at this stage,” says Leroy.

“The Career EQuip program definitely helped me develop my career readiness,” says Sydney Woods, a third-year BCom student who has been involved in the program for the last year. “The learning and skill building opportunities allowed me to feel more confident going into my summer job search as I was able to better articulate how I could be an asset on teams in different organizations. Tools like the Roche Martin EQ assessment allowed me to gain insight to my strengths and weaknesses that I wouldn’t have known otherwise. Knowledge I was able to use in my job search and eventual interviews to secure a job.”

Hayden Gray, BCom ’18, associate at RBC Dominion Securities and RBC’s local youth champion, who is actively involved in Career EQuip, agrees. He says, “Seeing the confidence change in the students in one year has been amazing. Listening to student stories and seeing their transformation has been impactful and demonstrates the importance of this program.”

Gray, a Gustavson alumnus, has a unique perspective on the program and sees its many benefits. “When I was starting my career I was like a fish out of water—emotional intelligence wasn’t something I was thinking about. You don’t often give yourself space to examine EQ because you are so focused on other goals. But developing these competencies early on—the importance of building trust with people, to be relatable and not get defensive—make you better equipped to handle those ‘shades of grey’ because nothing in business is ever black and white,” says Gray.

For RBC, being actively involved in developing tomorrow’s leaders through support and resources is extremely important—and it’s why it has provided funding for Career EQuip and renewed its support for the flagship RBC Case Competition in 2021. “The workplace is shifting and changing drastically, so for us it’s about better preparing the future workforce of Canada,” says Gray.

As Leroy and Gray get ready for year two of the program, they are excited to further empower Canadian youth to be better prepared for the future. They are also excited that many of the events that were online due to the pandemic will now be conducted in person. Leroy adds that the wonder of this program is that it’s not a “one and done,” as students are paired with their instructors for the next three years to further develop those skills.

“We’ve seen in research that building awareness about what EQ skills are and why they are important can already put them at an advantage. While the impacts aren’t always immediate, building your EQ toolkit allows you to delve into it when you need it most, even if that’s five years from now. The benefits of better understanding EQ are long-term—not only to your career development, but your own personal well-being, which is especially relevant right now.”
SURFING IN JORDAN RIVER
“This night was pure magic. The tide was way out when we arrived in Jordan River, with the tiniest little early-March peelers rolling in. We were the only ones in the water and as the sun started to set the sky just exploded with colour. We surfed party wave after party wave until we could hardly see each other out in the dark ocean. We had a fire on the beach to warm up and talked all night about how much we love Vancouver Island.”

FREEDIVING AT OGDEN POINT
“How cool is it that there is an entire ecosystem just below the surface of the water? Purple starfish, green anemones, iridescent jellyfish and so much more live just off shore in a surreal, quiet world. This year we’ve taken up the sport of freediving, exploring the kelp forests and urchin barrens on Vancouver Island. Ogden Point in Victoria (just a 30 minute bike ride from UVic) offers so much diverse sea life just a few feet off the Breakwater!”

CAMPING AT CAPE SCOTT
“A classic North Island landscape in some moody west coast weather. We ran away here after losing our jobs to the pandemic in early April of 2020 and spent weeks existing off the grid. Falling asleep to the sound of waves, discovering old fishing nets repurposed as hammocks and turning buoys into rope swings makes my inner child scream with excitement!”

THE WORLD LOOKS DIFFERENT
Kat Craats, BCom ’20 and owner of Kat Craats Photography, takes Business Class on a photo tour around Vancouver Island.
“We reached the summit of Mount Septimus just after 9:30am, following a big morning of climbing up snow, ice and rock. We navigated up a gully at almost a 70 degree angle, traversed an immense glacier and scrambled up loose rock for hours before this incredibly rewarding moment was reached. I had been in my head for most of the ascent, terrified of taking one wrong step and sending myself flying off the glacial bluffs far below us. Moments like this make it all worth it.”
THE FUTURE IS NOT OPTIONAL

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