

# UBC REPORTS

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## 3-D Gaming Brings Classics to Life *Students' brainchild allows learners to enter world of Plato*

BY LORRAINE CHAN

**What gets UBC classics graduate** Michael Griffin really stoked is the idea of providing people with an experience much like the popular game, *The Sims* — where players assume cyber characters — but all set in antiquity's great cities of Athens, Rome or Babylon.

"It would be quite fun and exciting, where hundreds or thousands of people can interact in the simulated society, simulated economies and politics of the ancient world," muses Griffin. "For example, we've always wondered how the Athenians, despite being desperately outnumbered by the Persians, won the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC.

"Well, with Ancient Spaces you could enter that battle and solve the mystery."

Ancient Spaces is a UBC website and innovative teaching tool created by Griffin and Jo McFetridge, who graduated with a MA in classical archeology, and Dieter Buys, a computer science student with a passion for online gaming.

During 2003, Griffin, McFetridge and Buys were all working as summer staff at the Faculty of Arts IT help desk. They hatched the idea of using 3-D gaming technology to animate long-ago worlds. For example, students could design virtual replicas of Acropolis structures instead of just reading about them.

"The idea is to put ourselves in the shoes of an architect, philosopher, priest or playwright in ancient Rome and Greece," says Griffin.

During fall 2003, the three students proposed Ancient Spaces to Shirley Sullivan, then head of the Dept. of Classical Studies, Near Eastern and Religious Studies.



Michael Griffin envisions students creating and sharing their 3-D virtual models of ancient Rome, or Greece.

Sullivan immediately backed the project. The initiative also won over Ulrich Rauch, Director, Arts Instructional Support and Information Technology (ISIT), who gave \$10,000 seed money.

At that point they hired professional IT modelers to create basic building blocks, explains Griffin. "These were like 'Lego' pieces so students wouldn't get bogged down in the technology. They could quickly master the basics and start

designing."

To use the program, students start by viewing a 3-D representation of the Agora, the marketplace and heart of ancient Athens, as empty terrain. They choose a site for their buildings and click on an icon to create a round or geometric shape. Users then fine-tune the structure's proportions, surface and lighting. To decorate the interiors, students can select from a diverse inventory of 40 objects that

include vases, bread, coins, beds and hammers.

During 2003 to 2004, the Dept. of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies successfully piloted Ancient Spaces. Eighteen first-year students produced virtual models of eight Agora buildings, among them the mint, museum and theatre.

"This brings a wonderful channel of learning that's in tune with kids who have grown up in a video game society," says Dietmar Neufeld, the

department's associate head.

"Not everyone learns in the same way so this approach really works well for visual or auditory learners," says Neufeld, whose strong support helped the project garner a \$31,000 UBC Teaching Learning Enhancement Fund grant.

He says the hands-on approach of Ancient Spaces requires students to present a rationale for their designs. "Students realize quickly that it's not

*continued on page 4*



Silvana Costa and other UBC Bridge Program students are interested in the health of mining town residents.

## Boom or Bust: Hard on Miners' Health

A new study links prosperity to health in B.C. mining towns. BY HILARY THOMSON

**It's either boom or bust.** Extreme economic cycles are a fact of life for residents of many B.C. mining towns, but how do these shifts in prosperity affect the health of residents?

That's what an interdisciplinary team of UBC researchers wants to find out. In a three-year study funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), they will look at how risk of cardiovascular disease, mental disorders and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are linked to economic indicators in B.C. mining communities.

"We hope to provide the mining industry with baseline data they can use to include community issues as part of sustainability planning," says Mieke Koehoorn, an assistant professor of Health Care and Epidemiology and principal investigator on the study. "We're looking at both short-term and long-term health effects and how economic cycles affect the entire mining community."

Students in the Bridge Program, a UBC interdisciplinary graduate fellowship program, prepared the CIHR proposal as part of their course work. Some students in the group had a background in mining engineering and knew that research into health effects was needed. This is the first study in Canada that relates economic indicators to health outcomes in mining communities.

Negar Elmieh, a third-year PhD candidate at UBC's Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, is co-investigator on the study.

"This project interests me because it means working with an interdisciplinary group," says Elmieh, who is a Bridge Fellow. "A diverse team of investigators allows for

a much more comprehensive study that examines the real pressures a mining community can face."

Mining is the second largest industry in B.C. It directly employs more than 6,500 people and generated \$4 billion in revenue in 2003, according to the Mining Association of British Columbia.

The first part of the study involves creating a B.C. Mining Health Atlas. Investigators will study anonymous health data of almost 127,000 residents — both mine workers and other community members — aged 15 years and older in 61 mining communities.

Using data from 1991-2002, researchers will compare health risks of these residents with that of individuals living in communities with a diverse economy. Data will be drawn from the B.C. Linked Health Database that records medical services for B.C. residents. Researchers will track acute and chronic health problems, including doctor visits or hospitalizations for heart disease and high blood pressure, depression, anxiety and suicides as well as STIs. They will also review rates and type of prescription drugs dispensed.

The second part of the study will look at the relationship of the health problems to boom and bust economic conditions in the mining and comparison communities.

Sites include Tumbler Ridge in the Peace River district, where currently closed Quintette and Bullmoose coalmines may re-open because of the recent boom in coal prices; Williams Lake, the site of Gibraltar copper mine; and sites in the East Kootenays, including the zinc and lead mining town of Kimberley, magnesite mining

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## IN THE NEWS

Highlights of UBC Media Coverage in September 2005. COMPILED BY AI LIN CHOO



Prof. Neil Cashman is an expert in neurodegenerative diseases and directs the Vancouver Coastal Health ALS Centre.

### Did Feeding Human Remains to Cattle Start Mad-Cow?

Mad-cow disease may have developed because human remains were fed to British cattle in the 1960s and 1970s, according to a disturbing hypothesis presented in *The Lancet*.

"All I can say at this point is it's plausible. It's not out to lunch," UBC neurology professor **Neil Cashman** said in an interview with *The Globe and Mail*.

"But it's also not clear whether this hypothesis is true, or even if this hypothesis can be tested."

### Sauder Ranks Among Top Canadian Business Schools

The Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia ranked third among Canadian graduate business schools in terms of the "return on investment" attained by

graduates, according to a *Forbes Magazine* ranking.

The school posted a five-year gain of US\$85,000. A "five-year MBA gain" was determined by averaging post-MBA salary, then by subtracting tuition and any salary the student gave up to attend school.

The MBA program at York University's Schulich School of Business in Toronto ranked top with a gain of US\$104,000, followed by Queen's School of Business, with students reporting a gain of US\$93,000.

### Surveillance Legislation Proposed

Police and security agencies will be able to track Canadians via their cellphones, BlackBerrys and laptop computers, under a measure contemplated as part of the federal government's planned electronic surveillance bill.

Ottawa made the proposal during consultations this year on a legislative package that is anticipated to be unveiled this fall, reports *The National Post*.

"The assumption is that we should be trackable whether we want to or not," said **Richard Rosenberg**, a retired University of British Columbia computer science professor. "It's very creepy."

### The Demise of Salmon

Pacific salmon will become extinct over the next century, a group of 30 scientists, policy analysts and advocates have concluded.

In an interview with the

*Associated Press*, **William Rees**, a population ecologist at the University of British Columbia, said the extinction of salmon is inevitable as long as human populations continue to increase, leaving less energy and resources for all other species, including the fish.

He added that the decline of salmon is a minor regional symptom of a global problem.

### Private Insurance Undermines Medicare

A Supreme Court of Canada ruling that cleared the way for private health insurance in Quebec will see Canadians "pay, pay and pay," said **Morris Barer**, founding director of the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research at UBC.

Barer told a major academic conference that the ruling ignored research on the impact of private insurance in a public health-care system, reports *The Globe and Mail*.

### Canadians Don't Know Enough About Nutrition

A new study shows that Canadians don't know enough about the importance of protein-rich foods, such as meat, fish eggs or dairy products.

"The reality is that too many Canadians could be jeopardizing their health by not eating enough meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk, cheese or yogurt," said UBC professor **Susan Barr**, reports the *Victoria Times Colonist*.

"In addition to high-quality protein, these foods are important sources of many essential nutrients, such as iron, zinc, calcium and many B vitamins." □



## LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I very much enjoyed the story "UBC an Innovator in Cross-Discipline Learning" in your September 7 issue - however, one of the features of the Arts One program is that the team members (five for each 100-student cohort), do all the teaching in the program, which includes leading the four-person tutorials. Many students in the program have commented on the positive impact of having close weekly contact with the same people who give the lectures and lead the seminars.

The instructors in this program are all highly qualified teachers; the group is also extremely productive in a variety of research fields, including classics, literature, political science, science studies, and philosophy.

Sincerely,

Margery Fee  
Director  
Arts One Program

## Boom or Bust: Hard on Miners' Health

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community Radium Hot Springs and Sparwood, a coal mining site.

Also included on the project team were: Malcolm Scoble, head of the Dept. of Mining Engineering, Aleck Ostry, associate professor in the Dept. of Health Care and Epidemiology; and Bridge students Jennifer Ardiel, Silvana Costa and Eric Mazzi.

The Bridge Program links the faculties of medicine, applied science and graduate studies. For more information, visit [www.bridge.ubc.ca](http://www.bridge.ubc.ca). □

## UBC REPORTS

Director, Public Affairs  
**Scott Macrae** scott.macrae@ubc.ca

Editor  
**Randy Schmidt** randy.schmidt@ubc.ca

Design Director  
**Chris Dahl** chris.dahl@ubc.ca

Designer  
**Sharmini Thiagarajah** sharmini@exchange.ubc.ca

Principal Photography  
**Martin Dee** martin.dee@ubc.ca

Contributors  
**Lorraine Chan** lorraine.chan@ubc.ca  
**Ai Lin Choo** ailin.choo@ubc.ca  
**Brian Lin** brian.lin@ubc.ca  
**Bud Mortenson** bud.mortenson@ubc.ca  
**Hilary Thomson** hilary.thomson@ubc.ca

Advertising  
**Sarah Walker** public.affairs@ubc.ca

**NEXT ISSUE: NOVEMBER 3, 2005**

**UBC Reports** is published monthly by the UBC Public Affairs Office  
310 — 6251 Cecil Green Park Road  
Vancouver BC Canada V6T 1Z1

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UBC Public Affairs Office  
(address above); by fax to 604.822.2684; or by e-mail to [randy.schmidt@ubc.ca](mailto:randy.schmidt@ubc.ca) or call UBC.NEWS (604.822.6397)



# A Better Way to Share Patient Information

\$1.2 m grant establishes first Canadian inter-professional health network in B.C.

BY AI LIN CHOO

Days after her first son Quinn was born, Heather Fowlie realized she would have to take his health into her own hands if he were to get any better.

It wasn't that she didn't trust local health professionals; the problem was getting them to communicate with each other.

While still in hospital, Fowlie was told her son had multiple birth defects. His esophagus, the body's swallowing tube, had not grown properly during pregnancy and had attached itself to his trachea, or breathing tube. This meant that any milk or food in his stomach could get into his lungs.

"We realized from very early on that Quinn would require attention from many different health professionals, and we knew that strong teamwork would be key to his recovery," Fowlie says. "But we found that while there was some collaboration between the various professionals, there was really very little."

She decided to face the challenge



Heather Fowlie (with son Quinn) is pushing for changes in the way patient information is transferred between professionals, educators and families.

The college, established in 2002 as academic headquarters for the inter-professional activities of seven UBC faculties engaged in health and human service programs, is now steering the network with the intent of bringing about systemic change in the way health care providers work together to meet patients' needs.

develop online curricula for students and practitioners; and assess and demonstrate the impact of these projects for patients and communities.

For her part, Fowlie says her experience taught her that much improvement to the health system can come about simply by including

**"When you have so many people attending to a child in a day, things can be duplicated, missed or can easily go wrong."**

by making sure that meetings were arranged whereby all sides could sit down and discuss Quinn's health.

"It sounds so basic, but it really wasn't done enough. When you have so many people attending to a child in a day, things can be duplicated, missed or can easily go wrong," she explains.

"What was most frustrating was that it took all health professionals involved a long while to include even us. One of our main struggles was simply getting them to talk to us and tell us what was going on."

Now, eight years later, Fowlie is drawing on her experience to ensure that parents like her will never have to go through what she did.

As a patient representative on the newly-formed Interprofessional Network of B.C. (In-BC), Fowlie is pushing for change in the way knowledge is transferred between professionals, educators, patients and families.

In late May, UBC's College of Health Disciplines received \$1.2 million from Health Canada to develop this province-wide network – the first of its kind in Canada – made up of partnerships between health and post-secondary education organizations in B.C.

John Gilbert, principal of the college, explains that numerous studies have shown interprofessional teams enhance patient safety and satisfaction, and improve the work life of many health-care professionals.

In addition to developing new projects in the province, the network is building on a number of programs already underway in B.C., including primary health care, chronic disease management, the Collaboration for Maternal Newborn Health, and the Interprofessional Rural Program of BC.

Gilbert says the network is also looking to change the way students in health faculties approach and understand their professions.

"What we're trying to do is essentially bring about a shift in mindset where health professionals feel they can admit there are certain things about a patient they simply do not understand, and more importantly, admit when one of their colleagues is more qualified to deal with a particular problem."

Over the next two years, the college will be working to coordinate groups across the province to gather key findings about how knowledge is exchanged among health and education organizations;

and communicating with patients and their families.

"When Quinn was in hospital, he had surgeons, nurses, the intensive care people, ear, nose and throat specialists, physiotherapists, social workers, you name it. We were the ones who were actively getting information from everyone, and we felt we were in the best position to try help co-ordinate things," she said.

"With this new network, things could really change by having professionals think about what's best for patients beyond their disciplines, and beyond the individuals who wear the white coats. Sometimes the patients or families themselves can help as well."

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.health-disciplines.ubc.ca/index.php> □

## Where's the Patient's Voice in Health Professional Education?

A conference will take place at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites at Stanley Park on November 3-5, 2005, to explore practices that embed the patient/client voice in health professional education.  
[www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca). □

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The Iona Building at Vancouver School of Theology on the UBC campus. Photo: Perry Danforth

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UBC Okanagan social geographer Jose Carlos Teixeira moved to the Okanagan with his wife Maria in early 2004. He says the mountains of the region remind him of his childhood home in the islands of the Azores. “They give me inspiration,” he says.

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

## UBC Okanagan Geographer Earns Portugal’s Highest Honour

BY BUD MORTENSON

“My father asked what my plans were and I told him I wanted to go to the Americas.” It was 1978, and a young Jose Carlos Teixeira was about to leave the archipelago of the Azores. Many from these nine islands, a thousand windswept miles west of the Portuguese mainland, went somewhere else to chase their dreams.

“You had no choice,” he recalls. “You had to emigrate.” Emigrés would revisit the islands with tales of a larger world and new horizons that excited him with possibilities.

Teixeira became a social geographer passionate about studying the migration of ethnic groups and how they shape their communities. On Oct. 15, this UBC Okanagan assistant professor will receive Portugal’s highest civilian award, the *Ordem do Infante D. Henrique* — Portugal’s equivalent to the Order of Canada — for his contributions to the Portuguese community abroad.

It’s a big community. Take the Azores alone — about 250,000 people live on the islands, but another 1.5 million Azorians live in North America. Teixeira soon joined a growing number of expatriates in Canada. Three aunts and an uncle had settled in Montreal and he found himself living in that city’s Latin Quarter.

“I was living in the port of entry for Montreal. I felt at home — fortunate to live, eat, shop in a very ethnic part of Montreal. It shaped my way of viewing and experiencing the city,” he says.

His time in the Latin Quarter’s immigrant neighbourhoods raised questions central to his work ever since. “I wanted to know how they affected the internal structure of our cities. I was interested in the evolution, growth and decline of some of these neighbourhoods,” he explains.

Teixeira believes being part of the communities he studied — a geographer in the field — gives him valuable perspective as a teacher.

“It’s relatively easy for me to translate this experience to my students because I lived it,” he says. “I saw the communities decline and grow.”

From Montreal, he moved to Toronto where he completed a PhD in urban social geography. It didn’t take long for him to gravitate to the city’s Kensington Market area.

“Kensington Market was an

ethnic island. It was — and still is to some degree — the United Nations of the world,” he says, affection for this part of Toronto evident in his tone. Two years ago, he nominated Kensington Market to become a national historic site. He expects that nomination to be approved later this year by the federal Ministry of Environment.

Over the past century, Kensington Market has seen many transitions. Just when it appears to be on the wane, “suddenly you have another wave of immigrants and life is rejuvenated,” says Teixeira. The latest wave? A decidedly up-market trend — “it’s somewhat gentrified with more upper-class, white-collar people,” he says. “They are bringing more life and vitality to the area.”

And while the area is morphing into something new yet again, Teixeira says that’s key to long-term salvation for this historic neighbourhood. “It will become more trendy when it is a national historic site. That will preserve it. It has the history behind it and nobody can take it from that neighbourhood. I felt a richer Torontonian, any time I did a field trip to Kensington Market.”

Since arriving in the Okanagan in early 2004, he has been researching the Portuguese in the southern reaches of the valley — Penticton, Oliver and Osoyoos. “Now I want to look at the temporary migrants and other immigrant groups that have left their imprint on the South Okanagan,” he says.

The Okanagan and UBC have both impressed Teixeira. “We are in a small paradise and UBC is in a great position to attract more students, including international students. All the ingredients are here,” he says. “We are one of the best institutions in North America, and students know that. We have the location in this beautiful valley, with the lakes and mountains — you can do a thousand things here.”

Teixeira turns 46 just three days after receiving the *Ordem do Infante D. Henrique*. Most of those invested into this order are much older, but Teixeira sees the honour as a call to do even more with the rest of his life’s work.

“I am relatively young to receive it — and I see it as an incentive to work harder and harder. I will continue working to promote my group and research the rich tapestry of this country, Canada.” □

## Gaming Software Brings Classical Studies to Life

continued from page 1



about memorizing dates.”

This technology, says Neufeld, helps students connect the dots between past and present and see life in a larger framework.

“By building the world of the ancients, they’re able to see how

those historic concerns are still driving humanity today — questions of identity, survival and territoriality.”

Neufeld says he sees a huge potential for UBC to be at the forefront in developing this educational model.

“This groundbreaking project can

create virtual classrooms and online collaboration between institutions.”

This is exactly what Griffin has in mind. Currently a Commonwealth scholar, he’s now at Oxford, in his second year of an MA in classics. While in the U.K., Griffin will continue to work for UBC Arts ISIT in co-ordinating Ancient Spaces.

Griffin says he’ll be looking for ways to foster collaboration between UBC and Oxford. “The plan is to develop a common platform for all universities so it’s dynamic and anyone can edit it and add to it.”

His ultimate vision is to see Ancient Spaces encompass research, teaching and outreach, in addition to the gaming aspect. For example, Griffin says he would love to post the exciting research underway by world-renowned UBC Egyptologist Thomas Hikade in Egypt.

“Prof. Hikade is now excavating at the City of Horus. It’s probably the most important Egyptian site that a Canadian is directing. Quite soon, we’ll be able to post his findings on the true origins of the Egyptian kingship.”

For more information, visit: [www.ancientspaces.com](http://www.ancientspaces.com) □

### Celebrating Portugal’s Culture

Assistant Professor Jose Carlos Teixeira will receive the *Ordem do Infante D. Henrique* from the Portuguese government during a special day of celebration at UBC Okanagan on Saturday, October 15.

Events begin at 1 p.m. in the Student Services Centre and will feature a conference on the role and impact of the Portuguese in the Okanagan Valley since 1955. The medal of the order will be presented to Teixeira at 5 p.m. by Joao Laranjeira De Abreu, Portuguese Consul in Vancouver. Also present will be Gonçalo Nuno, Portugal’s member of Parliament elected by Portuguese living outside Europe. □



# Marijuana and Youth Culture

Ground-breaking study looks at teenage attitudes

BY HILARY THOMSON

Is it therapeutic, harmless or addictive? Adult opinions about marijuana vary widely, but what do teenagers think about using marijuana and how do their perceptions influence their use?

That's what Nursing Prof. Joy Johnson wants to find out in a three-year study that begins this month and involves interviews with 30 male and 30 female youth aged 14-18 years who use marijuana several times per month or more. Interviews will be conducted in Vancouver, Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, and Nelson in southeastern B.C.

It is the first study in Canada to include adolescents who are frequent marijuana users.

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about the health effects of marijuana, says Johnson. New research is needed particularly since the drug is more potent and available than it was even 10 years ago.

"This study is a way to start a real conversation about marijuana," says Johnson, who is an expert on tobacco use among youth. "We want youth and adults to be fully informed about the drug and how adolescents understand and experience it."

Young researchers, who can establish rapport with students, will stay about three weeks at each research site. They will explain the project to parents, teachers and community members and collect data from them using focus groups. Researchers will then conduct confidential interviews in local schools and libraries. Personal interviews will be supplemented by using web logs where research participants



PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Teens' perspective on their use of marijuana is the focus of Nursing Prof. Joy Johnson's B.C.-wide study.

can sign on and comment on posted research information and summaries of findings.

She and the research team want to examine the sub-culture and community norms that influence teens' understanding of marijuana use. They also want to find out what teens know about the physiological effects of the drug, their understanding of drug dependency, and their attitudes about the health and social consequences of frequent use.

In addition, the team will investigate gender differences in how the drug is used, and how teens distinguish marijuana use from use of other mood-altering substances such as alcohol or crystal methamphetamine.

In 2004, Johnson completed a study that surveyed 8,000 teens about tobacco use. Many respondents referred to marijuana use.

A 17-year-old girl said that she started smoking marijuana at 14 and continues to smoke both tobacco and marijuana at least daily. A 16-year-old male who never smoked cigarettes reported smoking marijuana since 13.

Many survey respondents stated that more teens smoke marijuana than tobacco. Often teens described using marijuana to combat feelings of depression, loneliness or social isolation.

Johnson is confident youth will share information with researchers. "Our work so far suggests that young people welcome the opportunity to tell their stories to a non-judgmental listener."

Participants will be asked about their attitudes toward marijuana, why and when they started using, what re-inforces their continued use and what concerns they may have about the drug.

The many subgroups of youth culture can produce different patterns of use, says Johnson. Boys often use marijuana in groups as a social activity whereas girls tend to smoke it alone. Asian youth in Vancouver use tobacco and marijuana less frequently than Caucasian youth.

Johnson expects some study participants may have parents who use the drug regularly or operate marijuana grow-ops.

She hopes the research will

spark local action among students, parents and educators. Local initiatives could include buddy groups for students wanting to talk about drugs, or developing clear messages about marijuana use for parents and schools, or customized learning modules on marijuana use.

"People should be fully

informed about using this drug, both its benefits and risks," says Johnson. We need an integrated provincial policy that looks at the role of all recreational drugs with clear messaging that adults and kids find relevant and credible."

Updates on the project will be posted to [www.nahbr.nursing.ubc.ca](http://www.nahbr.nursing.ubc.ca). □

## The Straight Dope



**Marijuana use among youth** decreased slightly from 1998 to 2003.

- THC in marijuana triggers brain cells to release dopamine — commonly associated with the "pleasure system" of the brain that provides feelings of enjoyment.
- Regular use of marijuana may play a role in some kinds of cancers and respiratory and immune system problems.
- Some research shows a decline in sex hormones in young boys and possible menstrual cycle disturbance in girls, with regular use.
- Cannabis cannot be detected by

a roadside breathalyzer test.

- The majority of young cannabis users do not progress to harder drugs but many cannabis users smoke tobacco.
- In larger quantities (or with stronger strains) the effects may feel similar to LSD or mushrooms. Users may experience nausea, mild hallucinations, anxiety, or paranoia.

**Sources:** Health Canada; U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse; Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse; McCreary Centre Society, DanceSafe. □



## The Purr-fect Touch

Robotic "cat" helps us understand that "warm, fuzzy" feeling. BY BRIAN LIN

Steve Yohanen never cared much for cats. That is, until his girlfriend's cat laid a paw on him.

"One day soon after we moved in together, I found myself home alone with her cat for the first time. It hopped onto the couch next to me, tentatively put one paw on my leg then started purring, and I just went 'aww...' I've loved cats ever since," says Yohanen, a PhD student in the Dept. of Computer Science.

The experience ultimately inspired Yohanen to design the Hapticat — a soft, pillow-shaped robot with a number of behaviours suggestive of a cat — to find out what it is about cats and other animals that gives people that warm, fuzzy feeling.

"The Hapticat is a tool to help us bring out the essence of tactile communication and learn what makes us tick," says Tim Oxenford, an undergraduate engineering physics student who is helping improve the mechanics of

the Hapticat, future versions of which will include an automated response mechanism and sensors to interpret user interactions. The data collected through the Hapticat will help computer scientists find new ways for humans and robots to interact.

While vital to the human experience, haptics, or the sense of touch, remains largely unexplored in terms of its potential as a communication medium in human-computer interaction (HCI), says Karon MacLean, a UBC computer science professor and Yohanen's supervisor in the field of emotional communication.

"This is an area of research that looks at both the psychology and robotics of HCI," says MacLean, who began haptics research in the early 1990s, before the discipline was even called 'haptics.'

"Anyone who's been in an intimate relationship is familiar with the abundance of information that can be conveyed in a simple pat on

the back or a squeeze of the hand," says MacLean, whose research has been supported by industry giants such as Nokia and Nissan.

"What we're trying to do is decode that information and apply it back into the world so that technology can help us restore some of the connectedness we seem to have already lost to it."

"There's a wealth of tactile information afforded to us in interpersonal communication but much of that is lost when communicating through technology like cell phones and computers," says Oxenford.

By recreating tactile behaviours such as purring, breathing and body heat, and by isolating them from other visual and audio cues, Yohanen was able to observe how study participants reacted to this unique form of communication.

Preliminary results confirm that emotions can indeed be conveyed by touch using the Hapticat and that the subtleties aren't lost when



PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

PhD student Steve Yohanen is now working on the second version of the Hapticat under the guidance of computer science professor Karon MacLean.

visual or auditory messages are missing, says Yohanen.

"The only resemblance the Hapticat has to a real cat are the perky ears and a non-working tail," explains Yohanen. "Even those features are pretty abstract, so we can incorporate other animal or even human behaviours in the future."

"Despite that, people were able to identify fairly accurately which behaviours corresponds with which emotional state, such as purring pointing to a state of contentment or rapid breathing linked with being upset."

While knowledge derived from the Hapticat project could be

applied to the development of surrogate pets for people who may not have access to real pets due to medical or environmental concerns, Yohanen, who has since discovered he is allergic to cats, says the Hapticat is not meant to be a replacement for house pets, but to help understand how humans communicate emotion through touch.

"Technology has done a lot to bring people closer together; however, in many ways it has also isolated us. I'd feel I've succeeded if, eventually, my research contributes to something that people can derive comfort from, where it's otherwise impossible," says Yohanen. □





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# Indigenous Teacher Education Planned for Okanagan

BY BUD MORTENSON

They've gathered input from indigenous education experts in New Zealand, Australia, Labrador, and B.C.'s Okanagan Nation. Now two members of UBC Okanagan's Faculty of Education are ready for the next step.

Program co-developers Sharon McCoubrey and Wendy Klassen are working on an Okanagan-grown Aboriginal teacher education program.

UBC has prepared Aboriginal teachers through the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) for more than 30 years. The Okanagan program is a separate initiative that had its start at the former Okanagan University College. Development continues at UBC Okanagan in partnership with the Okanagan Indian Educational Resources Society's post-secondary institution, the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, to prepare aboriginal teachers for teacher certification.

Over the past year and a half, McCoubrey and Klassen have traveled Canada and the Pacific researching indigenous education models. Klassen recalls a visit last year to Geelong, near Melbourne, Australia, where an Aboriginal teacher education program has students spending a lot more time at home than on campus.

"The Aboriginal students go back to their homes and do their practica and some coursework in their own communities," she says. "They are only on site every two months for a week or two on campus."

Learning at home means education students are doing more than preparing themselves to become teachers. "We are not only training Aboriginal

students to be teachers. They are involving their own community in their learning," says Klassen.

They've also determined through their research that indigenous languages need a higher profile in teacher education programs, at home and abroad.

"The more we've looked around the world, the more it has become clear that language is very important," says McCoubrey. The vision for the Okanagan program is to offer teacher education common to all participants, and language components that link into language education in the home region of each student.

This special integration of indigenous languages, the possibility of practica in First Nations schools, plus a mix of on- and off-campus study will differentiate the Okanagan program from those offered elsewhere.

The program has a strong supporter in Bill Cohen, UBC Okanagan associate professor of indigenous studies. Cohen is a member of the Okanagan Band and was education director for the En'owkin Centre before becoming the first faculty member of the Indigenous Studies program at Okanagan University College in 2002.

Cohen was involved early on in exploring an aboriginal teacher education program. Currently, he is completing a doctorate in education at UBC, working on an Okanagan pedagogical framework for an Okanagan cultural immersion school. In January, he'll lead indigenous studies seminars for the UBC Okanagan teacher education program.

"The seminars engage students in indigenous methods for building

community, inclusive and respectful of diversity and difference – looking at what informs attitudes, perceptions, and teaching practices," he says.

One of the issues an Okanagan-based indigenous teacher education program may help address is the scarcity of culturally and geographically relevant indigenous people's content in schools.

In a study of the education experiences of Okanagan Nation students, coordinated by Cohen on behalf of the En'owkin Centre and all Okanagan Nation Bands, it became clear that Okanagan peoples' knowledge, culture and history have been lacking in the classroom.

"What was taught was not relevant to students' lives, experiences or personal histories and identities," Cohen says. "There was no content that connected them. Okanagan students were, and are, in their own homeland, and there was nothing about the Okanagan peoples' history, culture or knowledge, and it doesn't leave a good feeling."

"Okanagan students did not, and do not, feel loved or cared for by the school system, and the sad statistics concerning academic underachievement, dropout, and graduation rates are reflections of this."

The Okanagan indigenous teacher education program will be part of the solution, Cohen believes.

"We are promoting an indigenous teacher education program for the Okanagan informed by Okanagan pedagogy, and traditional ways of teaching and learning – not just in the classroom, but at home, in the extended family and community, and the territorial ecology," he says. □

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# Institute Makes Grad Studies More Accessible

BY BUD MORTENSON

Indigenous studies courses will form the core of a new summer institute for graduate students at UBC Okanagan next year.

Over the span of two to four months, students in the Summer Institute for Indigenous Graduate Studies take a common six-credit Indigenous Studies Method and Theory course. Then they pursue more focused interests as they work toward interdisciplinary Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Fine Arts (pending Ministry

and Canada Research Chair.

The program is structured to address an emerging need among mid-career professionals from indigenous communities. "As the number of certificate and bachelor's degree holders within communities has grown, communities have been increasingly successful in taking both authority and functional control of their own institutions," says Evans.

"These successes have come at a cost, however, and at a cost often

ments," Evans says.

Stephen Foster, an Aboriginal media artist and associate professor of fine arts at UBC Okanagan, says the program will attract well-established artists who, although highly talented, lack formal recognition or a graduate degree.

"Though they may be well-recognized among their peers they have not been recognized in the larger community. That is important," says Foster. "Having the credentials allows them to take

**"Because of the tremendous demands on educated [indigenous] community members, options to pursue advanced degrees have been limited not by ability, but by both time and resources."**

approval), or PhD degrees.

The program, which just received \$50,000 from the Ministry of Advanced Education's Aboriginal Special Project funding, will deliver a compressed, intensive on-campus experience for two to four months each summer — a combination of location, timing and curriculum that could draw students from near and far.

"We hope to attract indigenous students regionally, nationally and internationally," says Mike Evans, UBC Okanagan associate professor

borne by individual service providers and leaders themselves. Because of the tremendous demands on educated community members, options to pursue advanced degrees have been limited not by ability, but by both time and resources."

Conducting a graduate program over a few short summer months may present some unique opportunities. "The compressed nature of the program makes it possible to bring in scholars and thinkers of renown from all over the world for short, intense, teaching engage-

their skills to other settings, too, such as teaching."

He sees the program offering a path to graduate degrees that can advance careers, bringing status to people and the programs they work for — but without the upheaval that often comes with studying away from home for long periods.

"This will appeal to people who would otherwise have to quit or leave their community completely," he observes. "This is career development, but also community development." □

## Not Your Ordinary Tool Shed

School cob shed project helps engineering student build world view

BY LORRAINE CHAN



Sometimes real-life learning isn't as neat and tidy as a planned curriculum, but the pay-off can be infinitely richer.

That's what UBC engineering student Garth Howey discovered last year in his Learning Exchange Trek project to build a cob tool shed at Vancouver inner-city Grandview Elementary School. Cob is a traditional building material made from a mix of straw, sand, water and clay.

Between 2004 and 2005, Howey — like 1,000 UBC students this academic year — opted to include community-service learning as part of his university experience. Established in 1999, UBC's Learning Exchange is the first initiative of its kind in Canada to help students translate their expertise into projects that benefit inner-city schools, community centres or non-profit organizations.

Howey and his peers consulted with Grandview students and teachers to come up with a project that would meet their engineering design course's requirements and teach children math and science skills.

"The old shed in the school's



Grandview Elementary students dig the tool shed foundation in the school's community garden. (l) UBC Engineering student, Garth Howey.

community garden was falling apart," says Howey. "I thought it'd be neat to do something larger in scope and use cob since it's cheap and energy efficient."

He adds, "In England, cob buildings built 400 years ago are still standing."

To his chagrin, Howey also realized that cob structures face a snarl of permit and zoning red tape, especially if they're public or school board buildings. After running a gauntlet of seismic and engineering reviews, the tool shed is finally ready to go.

This month, with the help of 40 enthusiastic Grandview students, Howey is digging the foundation, shaping cobs the size of softballs and stacking them to build the structure.

"This isn't part of class time, so essentially I'm volunteering. But we did promise to build it and I'm going to," says Howey.

It was this attitude and resourcefulness that impressed Daan Maijer, Howey's professor of Applied Science 330: Intermediate Engineering Design. Maijer gave the cob tool shed project an "A" based on the group's effort, although construc-

tion was delayed past the end of term.

"Garth really drove this project and he got a lot out of this experience from interacting with people and taking on a management role," says Maijer, noting, "Hands-on learning is much better than just classroom alone."

Howey says he was able to grow in other ways beyond the academic and professional. "I suppose being at Grandview has made me a lot more empathetic. It's a lot different over there than the kind of idealism we have about education here at UBC. I learned that they lose several students a year to drugs and prostitution."

Grandview's community liaison officer Jen Harrison says that half of the 185 students are Aboriginal and 70 per cent of the students' parents live at or below the poverty line. However, she says the school's three-year partnership with UBC's Learning Exchange has brought gifts to both sides.

"Our kids love having UBC students here," says Harrison. "They bring so much energy and focus."

"Lots of the children don't  
continued on page 8

THE UNIVERSITY OF  BRITISH COLUMBIA

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

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Associate Dean - Equity

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This person will serve in an advisory, policy making, educational and problem solving capacity regarding gender and equity issues. A demonstrated track record in leadership in an academic health environment is a strong asset. Opportunities for skill development related to the portfolio will be provided. Applications from all health related disciplines are welcomed.

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Technology Could Transform Urban Landscape for Disabled

BY BRIAN LIN

Navigating the urban jungle could become much easier for people with disabilities thanks to a team of UBC electrical and computer engineering students.

Answering a challenge to “go beyond the boundaries” by the 2005 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Computer Society International Design Competition, the five-member team developed a way to allow people with disabilities to control everything from building intercoms, to elevator keypads and crosswalk buttons right from their cell phones.

“We came up with the protocol to turn any Bluetooth-enabled cell phone or hand-held computer into a remote control that adapts itself to the device the user wishes to control,” says Michael Luk, who, with teammates Larix Lee and Kelvin Poon, has since enrolled in graduate studies at UBC.

“While Bluetooth technology has been widely available for a number of years, this is among the first Bluetooth applications that directly benefit the disabled,” says David G. Michelson, an assistant professor in electrical and computer engineering and the team’s advisor.

“Various firms, including Burnaby-based IMAG RF Technologies, already make Bluetooth access control devices that would work seamlessly with this kind of universal remote control,” says Michelson. “The team’s software is the missing piece of an application that could potentially benefit millions of people.”

Instead of pre-programming the cell phone in order to operate various devices – much like universal remotes available now for home entertainment systems – the team’s software enables the cell phone to learn and display the interface and command set of any compatible device.

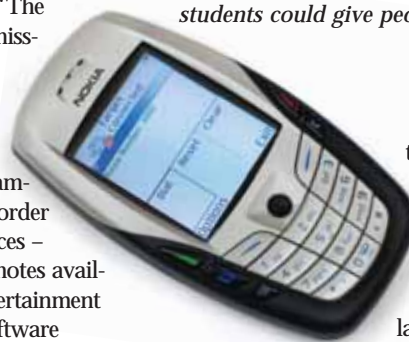
“For example, if the phone comes into range of a building intercom, it automatically provides a number keypad and asks the user to enter a suite number,” explains Lee.

“If the user approaches a crosswalk, the phone’s interface will change into a single button that represents the crosswalk device.”

What’s more, the interface changes according to the status of



The Bluetooth universal remote invented by a team of UBC engineering students could give people living with disabilities more freedom.



the device.

“When using the universal remote with a lamp, for instance, the ‘button’

would be labeled ‘turn lamp on’ when the lamp is off, and vice versa,” says Poon, who was recently reunited with teammates Justin Wong and Derrick Yeung, who are currently attending Stanford and Cornell universities, respectively, at the recent IEEE Telus Innovation Competition in Vancouver.

Michelson is not the only expert who has been impressed by the students’ invention. The team competed at the final rounds of several stu-

dent competitions and has won the communications award at the UBC IEEE student project fair. Wireless industry leader Nokia has invited the team to publish an article on its web site. The Neil Squire Society, a B.C.-based non-profit organization that promotes the use of technology to help people with disabilities, has provided funding for further research.

Poon says the protocol can be customized to work with any mobile device with any wireless connection, and the cost associated with embedding Bluetooth transmitters in public facilities would be minimal.

“The next step is convincing policy-makers and corporate citizens to use the protocol,” Lee adds. “We really believe this will make a difference in people’s lives.” □

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## KUDOS

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Among the appointments are professors emeritus James Hogg, former UBC librarian Basil Stuart-Stubbs, former chancellor Bill Sauder, architect Peter Busby and donor Wally Chung.

The Order of Canada was established in 1967 to recognize outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavour. It is the country’s highest honour for lifetime achievement. □

## The Value of Real-Life Learning

continued from page 7

graduate from high school so this gives them a sense of what’s possible, that there’s a world outside the Commercial Drive area.”

Looking around at the vibrant murals and the palpable sense of

loving care and pride that radiate from the school premises, Harrison concludes, “UBC projects leave their mark forever. And those university students also change their lives while they’re here. They learn what’s important.” □

## Happy Fifth Birthday: UBC Learning Exchange

When UBC launched the Learning Exchange in 1999, 30 students signed up to do volunteer work in Downtown Eastside organizations. When the Main Street storefront opened in the fall of 2000, a handful of residents came to the computer drop-in. Since then, Learning Exchange programs have grown exponen-

tially. This year, 1,000 students will volunteer in Eastside schools and community organizations. Now, more than 50 people come to the storefront every day, for computer training and Internet access, to take part in an ESL program and to access UBC Library resources and other UBC services. □

## Quarter Century Club

A total of 32 UBC faculty members were recognized at this year’s Quarter Century Club annual dinner, held Oct. 6.

Established in 1996 by then President David Strangway, the Quarter Century Club recognizes full-time faculty members and librarians with 25 years of service.

In addition to the Quarter Century Club inductees, this year’s dinner also honoured 30 faculty members and librarians who have worked at UBC for 35 years. In 2003, the club began recognizing these active members, known collectively as Tempus Fugit, or “time flies,” who reached the additional milestone.

For information on this year’s inductees, please visit: <http://www.ceremonies.ubc.ca/ceremonies/honours/quarter-centuryclub/#dinner> □