



A whale of an exhibit



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PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Forecast: clear ahead

FOR THOSE HEADING DOWN to Wreck Beach this summer looking to get the perfect tan, Roland Stull has developed the perfect tool for you. BY HEATHER AMOS PAGE 3

Thomas Nipen, Dominique Bourdin, and Roland Stull (above).

Social media: Changing the shared experience



PHOTO: BUD MORTENSON

Sociology professor Christopher Schneider is keeping a close eye on how modern living is affected by social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

WERE THE 2010 VANCOUVER WINTER GAMES the first "social media Olympics"?

UBC sociologist Christopher Schneider, who studies social media and their impact on our lives, says coverage of the Games moved far beyond entertainment to become *infotainment*. He says social media technology such as Facebook and Twitter are changing the way that we experience spectacular social events such as the Olympics, and even how we interact with the world.

"News agencies have changed the model and structure of their format to better reflect recent developments in social media," says Schneider, an assistant professor of sociology at UBC's Okanagan campus in Kelowna, B.C.

"With social media, you are in the know in a very real sense, in real time. You can watch television and be in the know with those who are immediately around you, but with social media you can be in the know and interact with others who are in the know anywhere."

Broadcasters reported that about two-thirds of the Canadian population watched the men's hockey gold medal game, the most watched broadcast in Canadian history.

"People were watching live on television, the Internet, on cell phones and participating in real time in other social media venues like Facebook, Twitter and on blogs," says Schneider. "I suspect, in part, that's a big reason why the numbers of followers were larger than they have been — because this really has been the first social media Olympics."

"Information gathering and dissemination, like never before, is now instantaneous through a multitude of outlets from a variety of people, from individual citizens to Olympic athletes," he says.

The International Olympic Committee, for example, had a Facebook page with more than one million followers and Twitter published a list of 'verified' Tweeting athletes.

Social media have dramatically
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IN THE NEWS
Highlights of UBC media coverage in March 2010. COMPILED BY HEATHER AMOS



UBC Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre.

Poverty in childhood can shape neurobiology: study

Thomas Boyce, professor of pediatrics at UBC, found that living in poverty, or other stressful situations, can shape the neurobiology of a developing child. This study was picked up by **ABC Radio, Yahoo News, Agence France Presse, The Times of India, the Irish Times** and the **Globe and Mail**. "Children growing up in a disadvantaged setting show disproportionate levels of reactivity to stress," said Boyce.

Olympic venues offer novel features

The **Agence France Presse**, the **New York Times**, the **Canadian Press** and the **Globe and Mail** reported that UBC's Thunderbird Arena was one of seven venues for the 2010 Paralympic Games, and host to the sledge hockey competition. For the first time ever at the Paralympics, sledge hockey players were able to glide on and off the field of play because the bench areas and penalty box in UBC's arena were filled with ice.

The Vancouver Sun and the **Province** also reported versions of this story.

Anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications increase cataract risks

UBC's **Mahyar Etminan** is the lead author of a study that found that people who take selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) for depression may have a higher-than-average risk of developing cataracts. But Etminan says that's no reason to stop taking antidepressants: "The benefits of treating depression — which can be life-threatening — still outweigh the risk of developing cataracts," as was reported by **Reuters, Nature, the Globe and Mail, The Vancouver Sun** and the **Montreal Gazette**.

Fairness is socially-learned, not innate, research suggests

UBC's **Joseph Henrich** and his colleagues set out to determine if fairness is an evolved psychological tool or a social construct that emerged recently in response to cultural changes. **The Economist, USA Today, the New York Times, Science, MSNBC, Wired** and others reported that the results back a cultural explanation of fairness. People living in communities that lack market integration display

less concern with fairness or with punishing unfairness.

"Markets don't work very efficiently if everyone acts selfishly and believes everyone else will do the same," says Henrich. "If you develop norms to be fair and trusting with people beyond your social sphere, that provides enormous economic advantages and allows a society to grow."

Money can't buy you happiness, economists find

The **Telegraph**, the **Daily Mail**, the **New Zealand Herald** and others reported on research by UBC's **Mukesh Eswaran** and University of Calgary's **Curtis Eaton** that found inhabitants of wealthy countries tend to grow more miserable as their economy grows richer.

The two economists learned that most people in a population, who are unable to afford the latest status symbols, were left unhappy.

"These goods represent a 'zero-sum game' for society: they satisfy the owners, making them appear wealthy, but everyone else is left feeling worse off," say researchers. ■

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Study examines politics of professors

BY LORRAINE CHAN

NEARLY EVERYONE who has gone to university can remember a prof who's definitely more James Dean than Mr. Chips. In the case of this writer, it was an English professor who favoured a black leather biker jacket and opening the "doors of perception" à la Aldous Huxley.

It appears that these types of images contribute to who ends up teaching at universities. UBC sociologist Neil Gross argues in a recent paper that job typecasting may be one of the main reasons why professors tend to lean left. It's a case of like attracting like.

"Over the past 35 years, the professoriate has developed a reputation as people with broadly liberal sensibilities," says Gross, an associate professor in the Dept. of Sociology. "The political typecasting of some occupations as liberal or conservative factors into people's career aspirations."

His research shows that liberal and left-leaning moderates make up more than 80 per cent of professors on U.S. campuses.

While previous research about professors and politics drew heavily on anecdotal evidence, this is the first study to analyze quantitative and statistical data to assess theories on the liberalism of U.S. academics, among them higher levels of IQ and a greater commitment to class struggle.

In 2006, Gross surveyed more than 1,400 American professors focusing on their religious and political views. The results will appear in a forthcoming edited volume of work with co-author Solon Simmons of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia.

With co-author Ethan Fosse, a Harvard PhD student, Gross also compared the social characteristics of professors to other Americans, and linked these to politics. Their study used data from the General Social Survey of opinions and social behaviours collected between 1974 and 2008.

Their results indicate that professors are more liberal than other Americans because a higher proportion possess advanced educational credentials, identify as Jewish, non-religious or non-theologically conservative Protestant



Sociologist Neil Gross has found that liberals and atheists are more likely to pursue advanced degrees as well as careers as professors.

and express greater tolerance for controversial ideas. Fosse and Gross speculate that underlying these findings is the fact that liberals and atheists are more likely to pursue advanced degrees as well as careers as professors.

Gross first became intrigued about the politics of professors in 2006 when he joined the faculty at Harvard.

a "flashpoint" for larger political tensions, says Gross.

He explains that there has been growing scrutiny on the influence of professors on youth. This is not surprising given that higher education in the U.S. is vast with a work force of about 1.2 million teaching at more than 4,000 institutions. As opinion leaders, academics help to shape

case showed how much 'political correctness' there was on campus, that the issue of gender and cognitive ability couldn't even be raised. I wanted to see if the whole debate could serve as an opening for reconsidering some longstanding sociological questions about intellectuals and politics."

A recent New York Times story

lock on who gets hired."

Although Gross has not gathered any data on Canadian professors and politics, he observes that, "the whole issue has less intensity here than in the States, in part because the broader Canadian conservative movement is a very different beast than its American counterpart."

He says the vehement American debate over the influence of professors reflects the polarized politics between Democrats and Republicans and a particular American view of college as not merely a means to earn credentials, but an important rite of passage.

"Our study shows that the most elite research schools in the U.S. are also the most liberal," says Gross. "So when conservative parents in the U.S. send their offspring to top-ranked institutions, their children may well receive an education at odds with their worldview, prompting fears of indoctrination and undue influence."

To read the working paper "Why Professors are Liberal" by Fosse and Gross, visit: <http://bit.ly/8Gm74j>. ■

"The political typecasting of some occupations as liberal or conservative factors into people's career aspirations."

Shortly after arriving, Gross was pulled into countless meetings about the freedom of academic debate.

In 2006, then-Harvard University President Lawrence Summers resigned his position following a "lack of confidence" motion by the faculty prompted by his comment that women might be underrepresented in science and math because of innate differences in cognitive abilities. Summers' departure was

agendas and as a political force, they can prove a valuable linchpin. "For example, educators contributed more to Obama's presidential campaign than any other occupational group except lawyers.

"I really didn't enter this issue as a partisan," says Gross, a San Francisco Bay Area native who has also taught at the University of Southern California. "Conservatives were claiming that the Summers

discussed the findings by Gross and Fosse, triggering indignant responses across the political spectrum.

"I've been as criticized by those on the left as on the right," says Gross. "For many, to be even asking why professors are liberal is to suggest somehow that conservatives' arguments have validity. Conservatives take our results to confirm suspicions about discrimination, that liberals have a

UBC forecasts clearer weather picture

continued from cover

BY HEATHER AMOS

FOR THOSE HEADING DOWN to Wreck Beach this summer looking to get the perfect tan in all the places the sun doesn't usually shine, Roland Stull has developed the perfect tool for you.

Since 1996, Stull, a professor in the Dept. of Earth and Ocean Sciences, has been using his expertise and complex computer programs to make extremely accurate, high resolution weather forecasts for British Columbia. And now, just in time for spring, Stull and his lab have found a way to digest this complex data and make the forecasts available to the public.

And for those looking for a bit of fun in the sun here at the University of British Columbia, there

is a forecast available just for the Vancouver campus.

"Sometimes I use it to plan when I should go for a run, in the morning or in the evening," says Thomas Nipen, a 3rd year PhD student in Stull's lab, who has been helping to develop the program that spits out a two-day forecast.

"It shows a little bit more information; you can see the changes during the day. This will tell you when it will be warm and when it will be rainy."

Stull's weather forecasts are more accurate than the ones available from a weather channel or website, he says. To generate a forecast, Stull breaks the province up into a 3-D checkerboard; each square is 1.3 kilometers wide. These areas

are smaller than the ones routinely used by Environment Canada and have very detailed information about the mountains. The result is a high-resolution forecast tailored for western Canada.

A computer runs different codes to generate forecasts for each checkerboard square. Each code, or model, gives Stull a different opinion of what the weather will be like. All these different forecasts often get plotted onto a spaghetti diagram, a map covered in loads of thin, colourful lines. For the public to understand it all, Stull and his team summarize the results as diagrams that show the range of possible forecasts.

"We're proud to be in British Columbia making British Columbia

forecasts — it seemed a shame that the general public couldn't benefit from them," says Stull.

"It didn't happen by accident though," he says. "I kept working with my students to fine-tune the forecast diagrams. It took a lot of tweaking to get it to the point where it worked."

The easy-to-read weather predictions were not just developed for UBC staff, students and community. Last year, Stull and undergraduate student, Dominique Bourdin, developed a program to generate 14 day forecasts for 60 different geographic locations in the province for an energy company.

Now as a master's project, Bourdin is trying to generate easy-to-read wind predictions for these areas. The company will use this information to

make decisions about wind-power development in the province.

"You have to forecast for wind power because you can't store it. The best way to integrate wind-generated electricity is to have really high-quality forecasts," says Bourdin.

Although Bourdin describes generating a forecast as "whipping it up," the process required her to learn five new computer languages.

Stull and his team will continuously improve and tweak the system but overall he's "delighted" that his forecasts are now available to everyone.

To have a look at Stull's forecasts and work visit: <http://weather.eos.ubc.ca/wxfct/>, and use the links for the "UBC 2-Day Fcst" or the "YVR 2-Week Fcst." ■

2010 Games: What a party

BY BASIL WAUGH

THIS FEBRUARY AND MARCH, the University of British Columbia was a host community for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. And what a party it was.

Over 17 days of competition and 37 games, more than 250,000 spectators crowded into the new Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre to watch the world's top athletes compete in hockey and sledge hockey. Another 15,000 gathered to greet both torches on campus.

UBC Robson Square was more than simply a state-of-the-art international media centre for the Games, it was the beating heart of the city, a place where thousands of people gathered to celebrate every day.

These important legacies – a new 7,000-seat multi-purpose facility and a modernized downtown campus – are major additions to the social fabric of UBC and the city.

But perhaps UBC's greatest Games legacy will be how students, faculty, staff and alumni chose to engage with this major world event, says Stephen Owen, Vice President, External, Legal and Community Relations. "We witnessed a powerful expression of

all the things that make UBC great – research, teaching, learning and community engagement," he says.

The UBC Olympic Games Impact Research Study, for example, will articulate the economic, social and environmental impacts of the Games. Like all projects in the new UBC Centre for Sport and Sustainability, it will contribute to the sustainability of future mega-events. UBC researchers also contributed to Canada's

performance enhancement program Own The Podium and tracked the Games' carbon footprint.

As the Games approached, UBC's Winter Games Event Series provided a public forum for dialogue and debate. These 50 events, culminating with the Sport and Society series, asked provocative questions to advance our understanding of what the Olympics and Paralympics mean to society.

Students worked as anti-doping agents, built the medals podia, welcomed visitors, performed in the Opening Ceremonies, and garnered amazing work experience in organizations like NBC, CBS, CTV, VANOC and Tech Cominco. In total, UBC Career Services helped connect UBC students with more than 6,000 paid or volunteer opportunities.

Through the UBC Learning Exchange, as many as 1,000

community service learners and volunteers worked in Downtown Eastside schools and other Vancouver non-profits during and around the Games.

Under UBC's Jack Taunton, Chief Medical Officer of the Games, UBC doctors, dentists and scientists led health care for the Games, anti-doping screening and emergency response preparations. The UBC 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Secretariat worked to create opportunities for the UBC community to engage with the Games, while minimizing campus impacts.

And when the world's media came calling, UBC faculty were there to provide expert commentary and analysis on sports science, psychology, the weather, civil rights and myriad other topics.

Very few universities have participated in a global event of this size and complexity. "The knowledge we gained from this experience will enrich UBC in perpetuity- from keeping students safe to engaging in critical dialogue to creating a vibrant campus life," says Michelle Aucoin, Director of UBC's 2010 Secretariat.

"It's fair to say that the legacy of these Games stretches well beyond the corridors of the Arena." ■



Games reflections

"UBC welcomed the world as a host of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Doug Mitchell Winter Sports Centre will remain as an important legacy to UBC and the community."

STEPHEN OWEN

UBC VICE PRESIDENT, EXTERNAL, LEGAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

"The knowledge we gained from this experience will enrich UBC in perpetuity, from keeping students safe to engaging in critical dialogue to creating a vibrant campus life."

MICHELLE AUCOIN

DIRECTOR, UBC 2010 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC AND SECRETARIAT

"Hosting the Paralympics has energized our conversation about universal design and our efforts to create welcoming and inclusive learning, working and living environments for people with disabilities at UBC."

JANET MEE

DIRECTOR, UBC ACCESS AND DIVERSITY

UBC DOUG MITCHELL WINTER SPORTS CENTRE

- 17 days of competition
- 250,000+ spectators
- 17 ice hockey games
- 20 sledge hockey games
- 200 practices and pre-game skates

TORCH RELAYS

- 15,000+ greeted Olympic and Paralympic torches at UBC

EDUCATION

- 50+ campus Games-related educational events
- 6,000+ volunteer and paid opportunities

UBC 2010 VISITORS CENTRE

- 200+ campus visitors daily

"Our goals were to create academic activities, community engagement and lasting legacies. University of Utah's experience with the 2002 Games confirmed that the positive impact could be broad, deep and lasting."

BRIAN SULLIVAN

UBC VICE PRESIDENT, STUDENTS

"This was a great opportunity for UBC to produce important research on a poorly understood global phenomenon, with massive impacts, as it unfolded right before our eyes."

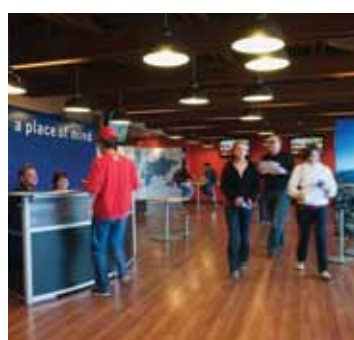
ROBERT SPARKS

DIRECTOR, UBC CENTRE FOR SPORTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

"My Olympic and Paralympic experience was something that I will remember forever, especially interacting with journalists and athletes at the international level."

SAMANTHA JUNG

NEWS EDITOR, THE UBSSEY STUDENT NEWSPAPER, WHOSE GAMES COVERAGE WAS LAUDED BY THE BOSTON GLOBE.



PHOTOS: MARTIN DEE AND DON ERHARDT



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PATKAU ARCHITECTS AND DEREK TAN / ANDREW TRITES / DEPT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS



Architectural rendering of the Beaty Biodiversity Museum atrium. The blue whale skeleton will be suspended in the species' signature lunge feeding pose (top); artists and scientists put the finishing touches on the whale skeleton in a Victoria workshop (far left); the first-ever x-ray of a blue whale flipper and the assembled flipper skeleton (centre); 1987 ariel photo of the beached blue whale near Nail Pond, PEI (above).

A whale of an exhibit

BY BRIAN LIN

THE SKELETON of a blue whale that washed up on Canada's Atlantic shore 23 years ago will finally move into its permanent home next to the Pacific Ocean this month as the centerpiece of the UBC Beaty Biodiversity Museum — the largest blue whale skeleton to be displayed in Canada and the largest skeleton in the world to be suspended without external support.

The 25-metre-long whale beached and died near the town of Tignish, PEI and was buried on provincial land nearby. With the help and support of the Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN) and the Government of PEI, UBC assembled a team of marine biologists from both provinces and exhumed the skeleton in May 2008.

Since then, the blue whale skeleton has made its cross-Canada journey and undergone degreasing and cleaning in Victoria, BC and, under the masterful hands of skeleton articulator Michael deRoos, assumed the species' signature

lunge-feeding pose, ready to again inspire wonder and awe.

"Visitors will be amazed by the blue whale's size," says Wayne Maddison, museum director and a professor of botany and zoology. "More importantly, the whale will help us tell the story of biodiversity to the public — how the earth's species are interconnected ecologically and genetically."

The UBC blue whale skeleton is one of only six such exhibits in North America — the only other Canadian exhibit is also being unveiled at the CMN in Ottawa this summer. Andrew Trites, director of UBC's Marine Mammal Research Unit who led the

ambitious project, says the process of unearthing the blue whale has also uncovered secrets of the mysterious leviathan.

"Blue whales are the biggest animal to ever live on Earth, bigger than any dinosaurs. Yet we know surprising little about them," says Trites. "When the whale was exhumed, we were surprised to find that most of its skin, blubber and muscle remained intact after being buried for 20 years."

While the condition of the whale presented substantially more work in skeleton preparation, it also provided

a rare opportunity to examine the bone structure of the whale's flipper.

"Most blue whale skeletons unearthed so far had been heavily decomposed, so reconstruction of the flipper — which consists of 34 bones and is the most complex structure in a whale's skeletal system — has been a bit of a guessing game," says Trites.

With its skin fully intact, Trites and his team were able to perform the first-ever x-ray on a blue whale flipper and use it as a roadmap to reconstructing the exhibit. The UBC blue whale display will therefore be the most accurately assembled in the world.

Trites and Pierre-Yves Daoust, a

wild-life pathology professor at University of PEI's Atlantic Veterinary College and part of the exhumation team, also conducted a CSI-like investigation on the whale's heavily damaged skull — which has since been replaced with a replica made with fibre glass and plasti-paste.

"Based on the extent and type of damage, we concluded that the whale likely died from a collision with a mid-sized vessel," says Trites, adding that the most common cause of death for large whales in the wild is interaction with humans.

Even in its untimely death, the blue whale is teaching visitors a valuable lesson: the interconnectedness of all living forms on earth, which happens to be the central theme of the museum and the Biodiversity Research Centre, a research network of more than 50 internationally renowned scientists from multiple departments at UBC.

"The current rate of species extinction is 100 to 1,000 times higher than the normal rate of extinction in earth's history before humans became a primary contributor to extinctions," says Sally Otto, director of the Biodiversity Research Centre. "We are losing species faster than we can

document them.

"In other words, there are species that have existed and then disappeared on this earth that we will never get to know."

The challenge this presents is akin to piecing together an incomplete set of jigsaw puzzles, Otto explains. "We may never get a fully complete picture of our world — and how each species, from the largest animal to the tiniest microbe, contributes to that picture."

That's why the research centre's endeavours range from curiosity-driven basic research to conservation

policy assessment, answering some of the most fundamental questions while mitigating risks faced by species and ecosystems.

And that's why the museum must strike a fine balance between supporting research and educating the public in designing the exhibit of its collection of more than two million specimens — including the second largest fish collection in Canada.

The museum staff are ramping up public programs, set to begin mid-September, that aim to engage school children with hands-on experiments that engage all their senses. "Kids of all ages can see, smell and touch whale bones and other specimens, hear stories about their lives in the wild and how they're connected — down to their DNA — to other living beings," says Maddison.

"They will also get a sense of what biodiversity researchers do, what sort of questions we're striving to answer, that will hopefully inspire them to be part of the solution." ■

Major funding for the Beaty Biodiversity Centre, which houses the Biodiversity Research Centre and the Beaty Biodiversity Museum, has come from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Government of British Columbia and a gift from UBC alumni Ross and Trisha Beaty.

The Beaty Biodiversity Museum is scheduled to commence its school and public programming, including guided tours of select collections, laboratories and exhibits, this fall. For more information, visit www.beatymuseum.ubc.ca.

Global issues up close and personal

BY LORRAINE CHAN

WHAT EXACTLY is global citizenship?

For UBC students Mace Mateo and Meghan Price, it means being ruthlessly honest about their role in developing countries.

After visiting an orphanage while living in Guatemala last term, Mateo and Price questioned "poverty tourism."

"We asked ourselves whether our presence actually helps anyone in those situations, or are we there more for ourselves?" recalls Mateo, a third-year student in Asian Studies.

"We talked everyday among ourselves about these issues," adds Price, a second-year Arts student who is focusing on international relations. "Quite a few of us had already volunteered for international organizations. Some had already done work in places like Kenya and Romania."

Price and Mateo were among the 26 participants selected for the Faculty of Arts' Term Abroad in Global Citizenship (GCTA) in Guatemala during September to December 2009.

In its second year, the GCTA invites students to experience service learning while earning credits for UBC courses in sociology and philosophy. The initiative allows faculty and students to assess their commitment to social justice and to understand more fully the global impact of individual choices. GCTA combines class lectures, course work and engagement with non-profit



Meghan Price (left) and Mace Mateo combined service learning with a term abroad in Guatemala.

organizations and citizens groups. For example, a popular GCTA volunteer activity is helping out at a coffee cooperative run by former guerillas.

Mateo and Price started their GCTA term in Guatemala by volunteering with the non-profit organization Habitat for Humanity. While living in Xela — Guatemala's second-largest city with a population of 300,000 — they helped one family

lay the foundation for a simple four-room house. In addition, Mateo and Price helped some families build brick and stone stoves with chimneys to replace open fires in their kitchens.

"These stoves burned hotter and quicker and didn't pollute the indoor air so people's lungs were healthier," says Mateo.

Sylvia Berryman, an associate professor in the Dept. of Philosophy,

says she's drawn to the intense and engaging nature of hands-on teaching and learning that the term abroad fosters. She is currently in Guatemala organizing a second GCTA for the summer term.

"It's one thing to read about poverty, justice or violence in distant places, it's quite another to work with a poor family inside their home or to see the exhumed skeleton of a massacre

victim," says Berryman. "GCTA is demanding, but many faculty feel the impact on students is worth the effort. Experiences like these really complement UBC coursework."

Overall, the program gave her great hope that things can change, says Mateo. In particular, she was inspired by a local initiative that supported the poorest of the poor — women and children who scavenged for a living at the city dump. Called "Camino Seguro" — Spanish for safe passage — the organization helped the children attend school, while providing skills training for their mothers.

"It was wonderful to witness how they evolved, from picking over garbage to making and selling jewelry from recycled materials."

Mateo says she saw many parallel struggles in Guatemala with those in her native country. In 2007, she had immigrated to Vancouver with her family from the Philippines. "I hope to do graduate work in the arena of Asia Pacific policy studies and contribute to social change that way."

Price, who recently performed as a dancer in the opening and closing Olympic ceremonies, says even as she's settling back into life in Canada, the experience in Guatemala continues to direct her attention to larger global issues. "It's very sobering to consider that 11 per cent of Guatemalan children are in danger of starving to death over the next six months."

Mateo and Price, plus a third roommate Anthony Ecclissi, all roomed together while in Guatemala and are currently renting a house together in Kitsilano, which has become a de facto gathering place for GCTA alumni. Their discussions continue, she says, as does the clarification about their support for those in the world struggling to survive.

"We're not there to rescue people who are helpless or passive, but to support expert citizens who are expert problem-solvers," says Mateo.

Price concurs, "We acknowledge the complexities of what it's like in the world, but we make a commitment and take action in the ways we can." ■

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Junior Doctor of the Year

BY BRIAN LIN

EVAN WOOD HAS AUTHORED more than 300 peer-reviewed papers, supervised 37 graduate students and sits on editorial boards of eight scientific journals. His groundbreaking research has resulted in major revisions in HIV treatment guidelines, demonstrated the benefits of supervised injection facilities, compelled pharmaceutical companies to offer free antiretrovirals to HIV-positive pregnant mothers in Africa, and most recently, shown conclusively that offering HIV treatment to injection drug users can reduce HIV incidence at a community level.

Wood's long list of accomplishments would be impressive for a senior academic, but having all these achievements under his belt at the "tender" age of 36 is why the BMJ Group — publisher of the prestigious *British Medical Journal* — conferred its inaugural Junior Doctor of the Year Award to Wood. The international award, chosen from more than 100 nominees and given to a young physician who has "done the most to improve the world we live in," tops the list of other early career honours already bestowed upon Wood by the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the Canadian Association for HIV Research.

Wood is a clinical associate professor in the Faculty of Medicine's Division of AIDS, chief medical resident in the Dept. of Medicine and co-director of the Urban Health Research Initiative at the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE). In his relatively short academic career, he has established



Evan Wood is the BMJ Group's first Junior Doctor of the Year award recipient.

"For several decades we've been looking at drug addiction through moralistic and criminal justice lenses," says Wood. "But there is now a mountain of evidence showing that drug law enforcement, including mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences, through a 'war on drugs' approach, simply doesn't work.

"As a parent myself, I'm concerned by the evidence that youth have

through prioritizing prevention and treatment would reduce demand for illicit drugs while treating people with dignity and respect, according to Wood.

It would also make economic sense, especially for a country with a publicly-funded healthcare system, he says.

"HIV outbreaks commonly occur in prison and transmission has been directly linked to policies that

the population health aspects of the disease."

Born and raised in Vancouver, he can't imagine working anywhere else in the world, especially when one of the largest concentration of expertise in HIV/AIDS is right here in his backyard.

"UBC and the BC-CfE have one of the most well-regarded research clusters in the world when it comes to HIV/AIDS research and how we address issues that surround and impact infection and survival rates," says Wood, who received his PhD from UBC but didn't get into medical school on the first try.

"In retrospect it was a blessing," says Wood. "Instead of going to medical school right away, I was recruited to stay at UBC as an assistant professor and received a large grant from the US National Institutes of Health to continue doing clinical research while I pursued a medical degree in Calgary."

As for his mounting accolades, Wood says they are recognition of his teams at BC-CfE, St. Paul's Hospital and UBC.

"It's flattering and humbling, but none of it would be possible without my colleagues, the participants in our research, who give willingly of their time and experiences, and the fantastic team of graduate students who are so passionate and hardworking," says Wood.

"We're fighting such an uphill battle here, the more people we can get working in this area the more quickly we can turn this Titanic around." ■

"The evidence to support harm reduction intervention is extremely clear."

himself as a leading authority on HIV prevention and treatment issues among drug-addicted populations. Published in top journals including the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Wood's evaluations of *Insite*, North America's only supervised injection facility, have demonstrated that the program reduces overdose deaths, lowers HIV transmission rates and increases uptake into addiction treatment.

Yet he still finds time to engage in public discourse, having commented in nearly 300 news stories and written almost 30 editorials in the past decade.

"The evidence to support harm reduction intervention is extremely clear — I would say even clearer than the science supporting climate change in many respects," says Wood. "But much like climate change, there is an impression within the political and public spheres that it's still 'controversial.'

"The fact is that scientific evaluations of harm reduction have been systematically reviewed and unequivocally endorsed by the World Health Organization and all other international scientific consensus bodies that have considered these interventions. And I feel it's part of my responsibility as a scientist to communicate that to the public."

Wood has also communicated passionately about treating drug addiction as a public health issue.

easier access to marijuana than tobacco and alcohol. If the stated goal of law enforcement is to decrease supply, it obviously hasn't succeeded," Wood says.

Instead, tackling drug addiction

prioritize law enforcement over public health," Wood says. "The taxpayer is the obvious loser, footing \$250,000 in estimated medical expenses for every case of HIV infection."

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**Lionel E. McLeod
Health Research
Scholarship Winner**

Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions, funded by the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR) Endowment Fund, is pleased to announce that Heidi Noel Boyda has received a 2010 Lionel E. McLeod Health Research Scholarship. The award honours Dr. Lionel McLeod, the founding president of AHFMR.

Ms. Boyda is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the Department of Anesthesiology, Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. She has received numerous awards and scholarships during her academic career from organizations such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and BC Mental Health and Addictions Research Services. Ms. Boyda's research focuses on the metabolic side effects of antipsychotic drugs. More knowledge in this area could help provide better treatments in the mental health field.

The Lionel E. McLeod Health Research Scholarship is given annually to an outstanding student at the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, or University of British Columbia for research related to human health. Patrick Stenkowski at the University of Alberta and Braedon McDonald at the University of Calgary also received awards this year.

Dr. McLeod was the Head of Endocrinology at the University of Alberta, Dean of Medicine at the University of Calgary, President of AHFMR from 1981-1990, and President and Chief Executive Officer of the University Hospital, Vancouver.

Funded by the ALBERTA HERITAGE FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH Endowment Fund

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SOCIAL MEDIA continued from cover influenced how messages are modified, packaged, shaped and disseminated to various audiences, and Schneider points out that these messages communicate values and cultural norms.

"They have moved communication and information beyond the scope of traditional media such as print, radio and television," Schneider says. "As a result, audience expectations have shifted coverage of the Olympics and other social events from an entertainment-oriented format to an infotainment-driven format."

The emergence of social media is driving dramatic changes in social interaction and communication.

"Many of us already interact daily with others in a mediated context — for instance, we play hockey, bowl, golf and even exercise with others, to name a few activities," says Schneider.

For people using social media, the once-primary role of face-to-face communication becomes relegated to a secondary feature of social interaction. "For the first time in history, the possibility exists for all human interaction to occur in a mediated realm," he says.

CONTROLLING THE MESSAGE

The expansion of social media into our everyday lives has altered the political and cultural landscape, says Schneider, explaining that this has led to changes in social control — the ability to define a situation so that people behave in a particular or desired manner.

Social media are directly responsible for the emergence of the omnipresent citizen journalist, for

example. Spectators, athletes, and others now disseminate messages associated with social events like the Winter Games, often in real time.

"Seemingly everyone has become a journalist, a reporter or narrator of events, while control and sponsorship of information has become increasingly important," says Schneider. "Consider recent changes in police surveillance tactics. For example, Indigenous activist Dustin Rivers was questioned by police over

some critical content posted on his weblog www.liberatedyet.com in relation to the 2010 Olympics."

The control and spread of information has also been a recent issue for organizations like the police. Examples include the citizen video-recorded death of Robert Dziekanski at the Vancouver airport, and a somewhat lesser-known incident in which a video posted on the social media site YouTube exposed an undercover police operation at the


2007 Montebello summit in Quebec.

In these instances, surveillance — a basic feature of social control — becomes a normalized, routine feature of everyday life. The spread and acceptance of social media have helped to promote and normalize surveillance while also eliminating traditional barriers between public and private life, and Schneider contends that all life is becoming mediated, "the long-term consequences of which are unknown."

Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan, creator of the expression "the medium is the message," argued essentially that the delivery medium of information is, in fact, more important than the delivery of the information itself.

"In this sense, technology is the message," Schneider says. "And it has increasingly changed the way in which people consume the Olympics and other social events." ■

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