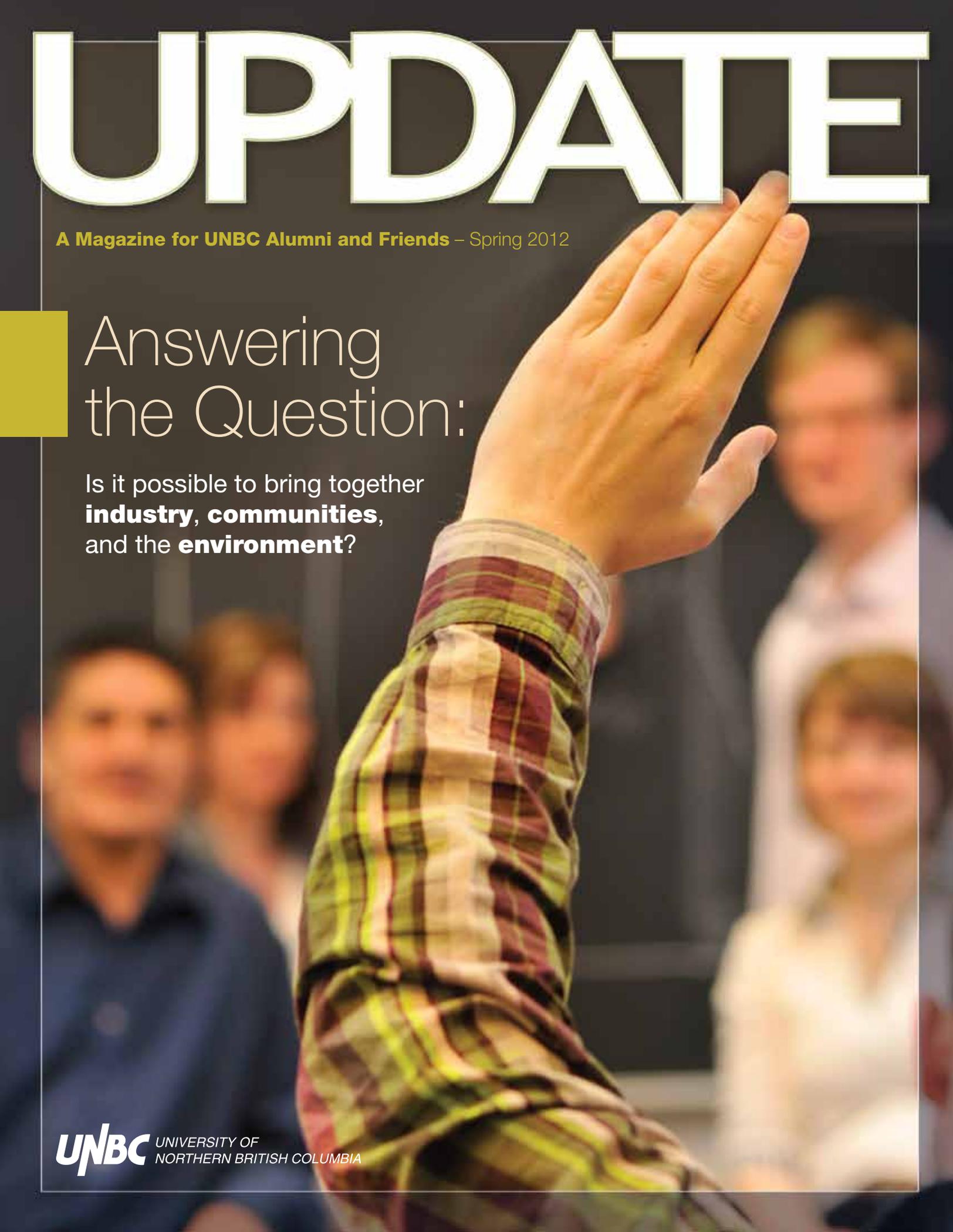


UPDATE

A hand is raised in the foreground, wearing a plaid shirt. The background is a blurred audience of people, suggesting a classroom or lecture hall setting.

A Magazine for UNBC Alumni and Friends – Spring 2012

Answering the Question:

Is it possible to bring together
industry, communities,
and the **environment?**

President's Message



George Iwama
President and Vice-Chancellor

Since I arrived in northern BC nearly three years ago, I have been fascinated by the prospects for economic development that are part of everyday conversation. For example, the BC jobs forecast for this decade shows that three of the four regions with the greatest growth in employment will be in northern BC. More recently, Central 1 Credit Union predicted northern BC will lead the province in economic performance. We are starting to witness a new era characterized by enormous resource development projects: mines, liquefied natural gas plants, hydraulic fracturing, bioenergy, pipelines, and new opportunities in renewable energy.

The citizens of this region are incredibly passionate about their homes and communities. It's partly through the excitement, promise, anxiety, and fear northerners feel about resource development projects that I've come to appreciate why people wanted UNBC in the first place: to apply locally – derived knowledge to the challenges and opportunities of the region. Global forces indeed affect our resource-based communities, but our own citizens – many of whom are educated at UNBC – are actively steering these forces for maximum benefit. We're not just spectators.

We have dedicated a large section of this UPDATE to a few UNBCers – faculty, students, and alumni – who are bringing together industry, the environment, and communities. Their UNBC experience is giving them the sensibility and sensitivity to balance multiple factors and values to come up with “made in the North” solutions that are ultimately about sustainability: sustainability of jobs, sustainability of communities, and sustainability of the environment. Our region deserves nothing less.

Addressing the skills shortage... together

There isn't a conversation about northern BC's economic prospects these days that doesn't include a sense of urgency about educating northerners on how to achieve all that is possible. Along with a sharp rise in trades, strong growth is expected in health professions and applied sciences, such as engineering. Among those requiring university education, there is more proof than ever that educating people in the North results in having them work in the North after graduation. A survey of recent BC university graduates shows that UNBC grads are much more likely to live and work in Northern BC after graduation. In fact, every year now, UNBC produces more grads for northern BC than all of the other universities in the province combined. In part then, the answer to having more skilled people in the North involves having them attend UNBC and other post-secondary institutions.

Give now | Give online | unbc.ca/giving

Help more students attend UNBC and become the future of the North. Some options to consider:

- Join the **Wolf Club** and support student-athletes competing against the top athletes in the country as we join Canada West and CIS.
- Support the **Northern Medical Programs Trust** and its expansion in supporting future nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, and new physicians.
- Fund **scholarships, bursaries, and special awards** that enhance opportunities for community-based learning that solidify the relationships between students and the region.

“I want students to be challenged in school and know they can succeed. Thank you very much for your support.”

– Beverly Isaac BEd '12



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UNBC won two prestigious employment awards for the first time this year.

A Road to the Future

An award-winning collaboration highlights UNBC's role in bringing First Nations and industry together.

Can an energy company seeking to drill gas wells collaborate with a First Nation eager to preserve its land and culture? Watching the news lately, you might think not, but a recent partnership involving the University of Northern British Columbia is demonstrating that industrial development can stimulate environmental sustainability and the preservation of traditional knowledge. ▶



Brian Wolf
Prophet River First Nation

Jane Young
UNBC

Cathy MacKay
EDI-Environmental Dynamics

Sam Barnes
UNBC Graduate

In 2007, Encana wanted to build an all-season road to connect gas lines in the Peace River region of northern BC. “We are a natural gas company, so the ultimate goal is to drill wells and create supporting infrastructure,” says Angela White, the Surface Land Representative for Encana who worked on the project.

The road was on Fort Nelson and Prophet River First Nations (PRFN) land. “When we found out both Nations were interested in cataloging plant life in the area we wanted to help. We view the First Nations we work with as key stakeholders. This means appreciating what is important to them.”

As part of her investigation, White consulted with Brian Wolf, Junior Lands Director of the Prophet River First Nation. “We need to pass on our traditional knowledge to the younger generation before it’s too late,” says Wolf, who was part of a presentation on the project for undergraduate biology students at UNBC recently. “In the last decade, we’ve lost half of our Elders and knowledge-holders, so there is a real sense of urgency.”

White, in discussion with Wolf and Cathy MacKay, Senior Biologist and Managing Partner at biological consulting firm Environmental Dynamics Inc (EDI), concluded that the project needed to be much more broad in scope than a single road. “We realized that, in order to do a thorough job, we needed to collect all of the ecological knowledge in the area,” says White. “At that point, we chose to involve UNBC. The University was absolutely essential to the process. UNBC had no agenda other than to collect — and protect

— the knowledge of the First Nations. This gave the process a lot of credibility.”

“In a partnership like this, UNBC can make all parties comfortable simply by virtue of the ethical manner by which we research,” says Jane Young, a professor of Ecosystem Science and Management at UNBC who was the lead researcher. “We created a submission to the UNBC Research Ethics Board and PRFN Chief and Council that was approved by both parties.

This submission included a Traditional Knowledge Protocol, signed by all four partners, with objectives, guiding principles, deliverables and benefits, as well as a guarantee of confidentiality and ownership of knowledge. It was a guide to carrying out research responsibly and respectfully and it set the tone for the entire project.”

The Fort Nelson First Nation later withdrew to conduct its own study, after which the partners, with financial support from the Science and Community Environmental Knowledge Fund, enlisted the aid of Elders, other knowledge-holders, and PRFN youth. They collected the knowledge about plants and ecological life—from the blueberries they harvest to the medicinal ratroot—that are a cornerstone of cultural life in the community. The group also produced a community booklet, *Communicating Traditional Knowledge: Prophet River First Nation*, and a “Spatial Data Decision-Making Tool,” (SDDT) which the community can use to aid the referral process for future industrial development.

“They’ll be able to quickly refer to the SDDT to locate the areas that have important sites and say, ‘this isn’t the best place to build a ▶

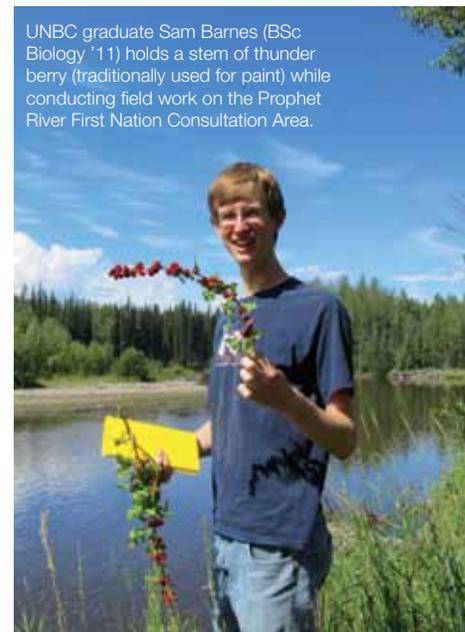


The partnership was recently honored with the Collaborative Research Award at the Northern British Columbia Business and Technology Awards. L-R UNBC Research Officer Harold Hume, EDI President Bob Redden, Jane Young, Sam Barnes, Angela White, and Brian Wolf.

“The University was absolutely essential to the process. UNBC had no agenda other than to collect—and protect—the knowledge of the First Nations. This gave the process a lot of credibility.”

— Angela White, Encana

Angela White of Encana learns about the medicinal uses of ratroot from Elders of the Prophet River First Nation.



road, but over here it's okay,' which makes the process much smoother," says Dr. Young. "All of the traditional ecological knowledge from the study is in the system, and it can also predict areas that may be important in the future."

The study also presented numerous opportunities for teaching and research for Prophet River youth and students at UNBC. Recent UNBC graduate Sam Barnes worked as an undergraduate research assistant on the project. "I was so impressed when working with the Elders at how friendly and forthcoming they were," says Barnes, who accepted a position with EDI soon after graduation.

"It was exciting to go from the classroom right out into the field. I came to UNBC for the small class sizes, but left with a deep appreciation for unique undergraduate research opportunities like this."

Brian Wolf says this is just the beginning. "We want to continue working with UNBC, EDI, and Encana to catalogue regions that are only accessible by horseback and add locations such as grave sites and hunting lodges," says Wolf. "I'm also very interested in reclaiming industrially developed land with traditional plants to keep foreign invasive species at bay. We made a big step forward with UNBC, EDI, and Encana and I want to keep moving forward."

White adds that although the all-season road is not yet under construction, "this collaboration is a perfect testament to the fact that, when building the foundations for a prosperous future, the most important development is done on your relationships."

Below from top: Brian Wolf digging for a medicinal aquatic plant known as beaver medicine.

Brothers James (left) and Brian Wolf point out the location of traditional plant gathering areas on a map.

Dr. Young brings the field research from Prophet River First Nation back to her students at UNBC.



Bringing It All Together

UNBC alumni and researchers are uniting industry, communities, and the environment.



Bioenergy: Research for Industry and the Environment

According to a team of researchers at UNBC, what happens in nature should stay in nature - including ash. Researchers Michael Rutherford, Steve Helle, Hugues Massicotte, Kerry Reimer, Michael Jull, David Claus, and Bill McGill are working with nutrient-rich ash from bioenergy production at Canfor Pulp's Prince George mills and the University's bioenergy facility to investigate its applications for local forestry and agriculture.

"The components in biomass ash originated from soil. We would like to close the loop and return the nutrient components back to their rightful home: the Earth," says Dr. Rutherford. "It's great to be part of a research project that encourages us to develop practical solutions to current economic and environmental issues facing our community and the region."

Other options, such as the use of ash as a source of energy, are also being investigated. The results of the study promise to be a benefit to other ash producers and to government regulators. The collaboration between Canfor Pulp and UNBC will also provide a unique learning experience for the students who work on the project.



UNBC Produces Minister of the Environment and Economic Development

How does it feel to go from the classroom to one of the most challenging political portfolios in the North? Ask 26 year-old UNBC grad Currie Dixon (MA Political Science '11) who - just months after graduation - was named Yukon's Minister of the Environment and Economic Development.

"Some think it's counter-intuitive to be Minister of both the Environment and of Economic Development, but we need to develop our resources in sustainable ways," says Dixon, whose portfolio includes sustainably developing Yukon's burgeoning oil, gas, and mining sectors. "I believe the skills and training I learned at UNBC have given me the ability to be much more analytical and objective when it comes to policy and political decision-making."

Dixon's list of priorities includes the development and maintenance of a sustainable and competitive Yukon economy, enriching the quality of life of all Yukoners, and maintaining and expanding partnerships with First Nations in the economic development of Yukon.



Working with First Nations, Industry, and the Environment

As a student at UNBC in the 1990s, Shawna Hartman (BSc Natural Resources Management '00) was passionate about fish. Now Shawna works in Terrace as a project manager for Triton Environmental Consultants Ltd. on some of the largest development projects in northern BC.

Shawna has identified the need to incorporate First Nations values and knowledge into major project initiatives. In addition, she has realized the need to develop First Nations' skills and capacity so they can benefit from these activities. This is also directed at helping industrial clients interact with First Nations to facilitate the permitting and approvals process. Shawna has worked with more than 30 First Nations communities, learning their values and delivering training for their members. "For six years, I've worked with a crew of Tahltan people to harvest salmon eggs from north of Telegraph Creek. At camp there is a sense of community that I truly appreciate."

"Shawna has shared her knowledge and has gained our trust and respect," says Cheri Frocklage, Tahltan Fisheries Manager. "She is sensitive to the First Nation's cultural values and concerns."

Alumni Focus: Derek O'Neill

Understanding the past to ensure a sustainable future.

Tradesmen, engineers, nurses, physiotherapists. These are the occupations that are often cited as being in critically short supply around the North. Archaeologists likely don't appear on too many lists, but don't tell Derek O'Neill (BA Anthropology '09). The UNBC Anthropology grad has developed a keen appreciation for the role archaeology plays in industrial development. Before land can be industrially developed, it must undergo three key assessments: environmental, biological, and archeological. Now working at the Site-C Dam in Fort St. John, O'Neill says it was UNBC Anthropology professor Farid Rahemtulla's Archaeological Field School west of Prince George in 2007 that inspired him to enter the field.

"That field school made a significant impact on me. I walked away with an enormous sense of what I was going to be doing on the job," says O'Neill of the school, which was located near the confluence of the Chilako and Nechako Rivers. More than 100 stone artifacts were discovered during the

excavation, in two archaeological sites on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh and Nazko First Nations. "I meet people now who participated in field schools at other universities. While they were digging for pottery, I was taking soil samples and doing shovel tests. At UNBC — in the heart of industry — they prepared us for actual careers."

At the same time, O'Neill was looking for practical career preparation with a theoretical base. UNBC was the ideal place to study industrial developmental assessment. "Oil and gas, power, wind, mining... you're engrossed in the environment here. The activity is everywhere," says O'Neill.

O'Neill says his time in academia directly informs his career in industry. "Studying ancient cultures is a metaphor for working in non-renewable resource development. Building roads and disturbing the land can also destroy the cultural artifacts of the past," explains O'Neill. "That awareness helps me work with my industry partners.

I see myself as a protector of our natural resources, and aim to facilitate responsible land use."

Born in Calgary and raised in Vancouver, Derek says he came to UNBC because he wanted a complete university experience. "UNBC provided a small, personable environment, where I could fully participate in campus life," says O'Neill. "Clubs, small class sizes, and access to like-minded grad students and professors enabled me to make connections. This led to UNBC-led internships studying forensic anthropology and human genocide in Guatemala, Columbia, and Peru. This year I'll be participating in a field school to Africa."

Now working as an archaeologist for Golder and Associates, he is excited to be a part of a region with so much industrial activity.

"UNBC is the reason I'm successful," cites O'Neill. "When you are in a class of 15-20 students in your 3rd and 4th year, you have the opportunity to stand out."

"I aim to facilitate responsible land use and see myself as a protector of our natural resources."



Derek O'Neill on the banks of the Peace River near the location of BC Hydro's proposed Site C dam.

People In The News

A sampling of UNBC people and stories making recent headlines.



Golden Exit

With two gold medal wins over Vancouver Island University, UNBC said “good bye” to the PacWest Athletic Association with provincial championship titles in both men’s and women’s basketball. UNBC will begin next season as a member of the Canada West conference in Canadian Interuniversity Sport. “I’m so happy for our players, their families, and fans,” said UNBC President George Iwama, who attended both gold medal games at Capilano University in North Vancouver. “Together with our amazing fans and alumni, and with the drummers leading us, we cheered each offensive drive and defensive effort. It paid off: gold for both. We all left hoarse and happy.” Both UNBC teams moved on to place fifth at the National Championships.



A Northern Engineering Program

Citing forecasts for significant regional economic development fueled by natural resource projects, UNBC President George Iwama responded to industry and community calls for an engineering program in northern BC at this year’s Natural Resource Forum in Prince George. Likening the need for engineering to the creation of the Northern Medical Program, Dr. Iwama emphasized that educated engineers are key to realizing economic development opportunities in ways that are appropriate to communities.

New UNBC Paper Using Local Pulp

UNBC has created a paper stock that combines pulp from northern BC with post-consumer recycled fibre. The new paper — being used for UNBC letterhead, envelopes, and promotional materials — represents the first time the University has used a paper that combines local and recycled content. The paper is comprised of 17% fibre from Canfor Pulp’s Northwood pulp mill and 83% post-consumer recycled content. It was manufactured by Monadnock Paper Mills, Canfor’s longest continuous customer.



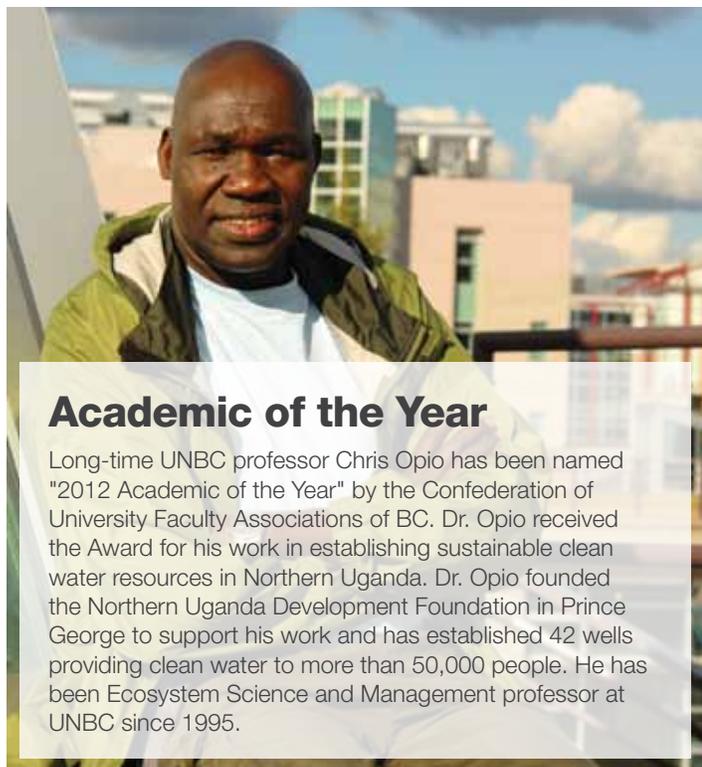
Underestimating Pain

“When we dislike a person, we tend to underestimate their pain,” says UNBC psychology professor Ken Prkachin, whose research in the area of pain expression was published recently in *Pain*, the official journal of the International Association for the Study of Pain. “People associated with negative traits such as egotism had their level of pain consistently under-rated even when in considerable pain,” says Dr. Prkachin. “This has implications for health professionals when they gauge pain in their patients.”



UNBCers take home 2 of 10 National Fellowships

Environmental Studies student Cameron Bell and Health Sciences student Selena Demenoff were among only 10 winners of the first-ever 3M National Student Fellowships and the only winners from a western Canadian university. The awards recognize students who have demonstrated qualities of outstanding leadership. Bell has been a leader in organizations such as Students for a Green University while Demenoff has advocated for peace and empowering youth.



Academic of the Year

Long-time UNBC professor Chris Opio has been named "2012 Academic of the Year" by the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC. Dr. Opio received the Award for his work in establishing sustainable clean water resources in Northern Uganda. Dr. Opio founded the Northern Uganda Development Foundation in Prince George to support his work and has established 42 wells providing clean water to more than 50,000 people. He has been Ecosystem Science and Management professor at UNBC since 1995.

Dan Le, a third-year Northern Medical Program student and 2013 class president is the first-ever recipient of the Rising Star Health Service Award at UNBC. Created and funded by the Northern Medical Programs Trust, the award identifies and rewards a top student at the annual Dr. Bob Ewert Memorial Lecture who represents the future promise of health care professionals educated in the North. His dream is to work at the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North in Prince George.

Rising Star of Health



Cancer Discovery Platform



UNBC is closer to an anti-cancer drug discovery platform that will be unique in Canada. Recent funding of more than \$87,000 from the Canada Foundation for Innovation will help purchase specialized equipment for screening molecules for their cancer-fighting potential and provide a glimpse into how they might act as drugs. "Any chemical molecules that we flag are expected to act through a new molecular pathway to inhibit the development of tumors," says Dr. Lee.

The northern BC ghost town of Cassiar that shut its doors 20 years ago is being resurrected on Facebook thanks to a project led by UNBC's Head of Archives and Special Collections. Ramona Rose is documenting the community's history using the website and it has generated a lot of feedback from former members of the northern BC community. "Virtually all of the material we have uploaded has had feedback," says Rose. "Cassiar residents feel really connected to that time and place."

Keeping BC History Alive... on Facebook



Class Notes

Be Part of Class Notes

Visit our website and let us know what you've been up to.

unbc.ca/alumni

1999

Charles Smith, BA History, went on to complete a PhD at York University and is now an Assistant Professor in Political Science at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, SK. He recently became the proud father of twin boys, Dylan and Jonah.

2000

Tasneem (Taz) Hassanali Bandali, BSc Psychology, is a Senior Trainer with Alere Wellbeing, a company that provides support services to people in approximately 24 states who want to make healthy behavioral changes such as tobacco cessation. Tasneem, her husband Shakeel and 10 month old son Zayan, currently live in Seattle, WA.

2001

Eenjin Batsuren, MA International Studies, went on to complete a Masters of Development Economics after leaving UNBC. Since then she has worked for the World Bank on an internship with the Young Canadians for Future Leadership and a fish conservation project with a Mongolian NGO. She also spent four years as a Programme Officer running the United Nations volunteers' country office in Kazakhstan. She recently moved back to Canada and is looking to settle down in BC.

Christopher Hernes, BSc Biology, is a Medical Radiographer for Interior Health in Penticton, BC.

Michel Reed, BComm General Business, is teaching Business Law at CNC and after practising law for 6 years, recently built a new office, Reed Law, in Vanderhoof, BC.

2002

Nicole Botten (formerly Gagnon), BSc Environmental Science & Geography (right), runs a successful online business in Prince George, The Green Sheep, which specializes in eco-friendly products for babies and families. Nicole, who is a stay-at-home mom, was one of the many local vendors that participated in UNBC's 5th Annual Green Day.

2003

Jared Kassel, BSc NRM Forestry '01 and BSc Environmental Planning '03, is the Manager of Development Services in the Town of Cochrane, AB, a community facing challenges around protection of the environment and creating a liveable city for residents in a sustainable manner.

Brendon Ogmundson, BComm Finance, is an Economist for the BC Real Estate Association in Vancouver, BC. In 2010, he earned the Association of Professional Economists of BC's Crystal Ball Award, as BC's top forecaster.

Vanessa Podgurny, BA Joint International Studies & Political Science, is a Technology Partnering Officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Following a posting in Moscow, she is now working with the Canadian Consulate General in Atlanta, Georgia.

2005

Kathleen De Vere, BA Joint International Studies & Political Science, is part of an internet sketch comedy group called LoadingReadyRun, a Staff Writer for Inside Network, and is also involved with the most successful online fundraiser in the world, Desert Bus for Hope, which has raised more than \$820,000 in five years.

Paul Way, MSc NRM is a Senior Policy Analyst with the Canadian Forest Service in Ottawa, ON.

2007

Jillian Merrick, BA Economics & International Studies, works in Prince George, BC as the Project Coordinator for Beyond the Market, a community economic development project aimed at building, strengthening, and diversifying the agriculture and food service industries from Valemount to Terrace. The project links organizations, farmers, ranchers, purchasers, and consumers in the region in an effort to identify barriers to the local food industry and encourage collaboration and entrepreneurial development.



2008

Jeremy Belyea, BA First Nations Studies '05 and MEd Counselling '08 (below), is the chairperson of the Young Indigenous Professionals - an advisory group within the Aboriginal Human Resource Council. The aim of both organizations is to increase Aboriginal inclusion in the national workforce. Jeremy is currently working towards the creation of a national mentorship network for Aboriginal students and is based in Prince George, BC.



Sarah Dupont, BA English, went on to complete her MLIS at the University of Alberta and is now the Aboriginal Engagement Librarian at the Xwi7xwa Library at UBC in Vancouver, BC.

Liam Iliffe, BA Anthropology, and fellow graduate **Keli Watson, MA Interdisciplinary Studies '11**, recently opened a new outdoor recreation clothing and equipment shop, the Wild Life, in downtown Prince George, BC.

Philippe Thomas, MSc Biology, is a Wildlife Biologist for Environment Canada in Ottawa, ON.

UNBC Grad Goes to Harvard

Yvan Prkachin, BA History '06, is one of the first UNBC grads to attend the prestigious Harvard University, where he will be pursuing his PhD in the Department of the History of Science, and researching the development of neuroscience in the 20th century. "Obviously it's an incredible thrill to be going to Harvard. I'm filled with gratitude for everyone who helped me up to this point in my career, especially the faculty and staff at UNBC," says Yvan, whose parents, Drs. Ken and Glenda Prkachin, are founding members of UNBC's Psychology Department. "You can actually trace the origins of my project all the way back to work I did with Professor Jonathan Swainger of the UNBC History Department as part of my honor's thesis." Although born in Sackville, New Brunswick, Yvan considers Prince George and northern BC his home.

UNBC's class of 2012 will include 750 graduates, bringing the total number of alumni to nearly 10,000!

2009

Kevan O'Brien, BComm Marketing, is a Social Media Account Executive working primarily on real estate development accounts with Peak Communicators in Vancouver, BC.

Katherine Pearce (formerly Lapadat-Janzen), BA Geography, is currently working as an Environmental Protection Technician for the Ministry of Environment in Nanaimo, BC. She was recently accepted to the BC Institute of Agrologists as an articling agrologist and is working towards obtaining a professional agrologist designation.

Pearl Wierenga, MA International Studies, is a Foreign Service Officer for Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada in Ottawa, ON.

Candice Wilson, BSc Environmental Science, is an Environmental Specialist with Bechtel Canada and is currently working to minimize the environmental impact of Rio Tinto Alcan's Kitimat Modernization Project.

Get involved with the Alumni Association of UNBC

Call **(250) 960-5873**
Email **alumni@unbc.ca**
unbc.ca/alumni

2011

Virginia Russell, BSc Psychology '09 and MSc Community Health Science '11 (below), is a Métis woman who grew up in Terrace and completed both an undergraduate honours degree and a master's degree at UNBC. Virginia recently received a 2012 BC Community Achievement Award from Premier Christy Clark. She was also the recipient of UNBC's New Alumni of the Year award in 2011 and has long been dedicated to social justice, indigenous health, and women's issues. Virginia has contributed to organizations such as the Prince George Hospice Society, the Prince George New Hope Society, and the BC Cancer Agency's LACE Cervical Screening Campaign.



A Northern Flush

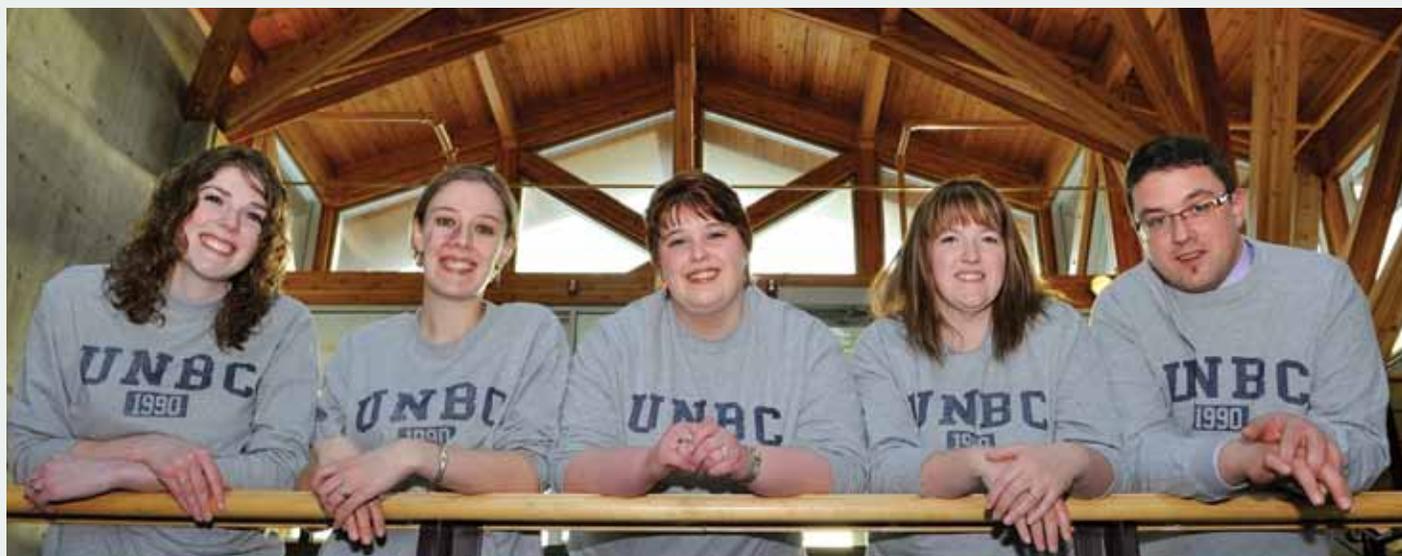
In 1988, Prince George residents Richard and Helen Callaghan donated \$5 to sign a petition in favour of creating a northern university. At the time, they had no idea they were actually investing one dollar for each of their children who would grow up to live and work in northern BC and one day call themselves UNBC graduates.

The journey began with Dennis Callaghan's graduation with a BA in English in 2001; he would also later obtain his MBA from UNBC. Soon after, sisters Cortnie, Tara, and Jenilee followed him across the convocation stage. This spring, the Callaghan Clan celebrates a "northern flush" as the fifth of the siblings, Tamara, graduates from UNBC with a degree in Nursing.

All of the Callaghans are now living, working, and making contributions in northern BC. Dennis is Chief Financial Officer for Northern Development Initiative Trust, Cortnie is a homemaker in Prince George, Tara is Manager of Financial Planning and Operations at the College of New Caledonia, and Jenilee is a Nurse at the University Hospital of Northern BC. Tamara plans to live and work in the North.

Photo L-R (below):

Tamara den Otter BScN Nursing '12
Jenilee Isaak BScN Nursing '07
Cortnie Callaghan BSW Child Welfare Specialization '05
Tara Szerencsi BComm Accounting '08
Dennis Callaghan BA English '01 and MBA Business Administration '09



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Carrier Sekani Family Services
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District of Chetwynd
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Brian Fawcett
FMC of Canada Limited
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 Kristina Watt
 Wayne Mobile Homes
 Leslie Webb
 Julianna Weisgarber
 Kim Weisgarber
 Jillian Werk
 Western Industrial Contractors Ltd.
 Westwood Sports Pub
 Roger Wheate
 Travis White
 William White
 Michael Whitehead
 Clarence and Dawn Wigmore
 Dave Wilbur
 Barry and Linda Williams
 Janet Willson
 J Galt Wilson and Gerda Blok-Wilson
 James Windsor
 Wine Central
 Leah Winstanley
 Ross Wolff
 Women Zone Fitness
 Jo-Anne Woods
 Timothy and Bonnie Woolnough
 Candace Wotten
 Lynne Wright
 Teresa Wylie
 Xiaolin Yan
 Yellowhead Helicopters Ltd
 Ying Ying Yip
 Jane Young
 Jennifer Young
 Lyle Young
 Margaret and Keith Young
 Agatha Yuen
 Bob Zimmer
 Lela and Peter Zimmer
 Adam Zimmerman
 Kathryn Zimmerman

Preparing for the Boom

Learning from the past will inform the future.

Northern BC is on the cusp of transformative economic and community change. Billions of dollars of development projects are proposed and some — such as the Rio Tinto Alcan modernization in Kitimat — are already underway.

While growth and an influx of activity will put pressure on housing, infrastructure, and services, this activity also gives us the opportunity to redefine our communities and strengthen the foundation for community development and prosperity. Jobs are only part of the equation. If we manage strategically, the upswing can create a legacy of community, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits. The renewal of our physical and social infrastructure will be vital to the viability of our communities.

The lessons come from northern BC's own past; from places like Kitimat. The historical lesson of the benefits and successes in Kitimat is that they were not accidental. Public and private sector investments were made that paid dividends for decades into the future. Paying attention to community infrastructure, services, and quality-of-life issues, combined with a robust and diverse economic foundation, creates success and resilience. If we prepare for economic

booms, the opportunities to extract benefit and value for communities and regions multiply.

Through understanding the structure of transformation, we can take better advantage of the opportunities presented by economic change to support local and regional physical and social infrastructure renewal.

Take construction camps, for example. Project managers spend a lot of money building high-quality temporary camps for temporary workers. With planning and forethought, such camps can be community legacies. Could the camps become seniors' housing and allow long-time residents to age-in-place? Could the money for camp recreation facilities be better invested in the town's facilities? Can the camp's services be used to extend water and sewer lines to new parts of the community? We must be ready to extract as much value as possible from transformative investments.

We also need to think about using transformation to enhance our social infrastructure. One example is in the area of job training. New jobs require workers to have higher levels of education and training to qualify for work, and on-going training and skills upgrading to remain current. We can prepare our communities for this challenge. What programs and facilities can we embed in the community to ensure people are ready to learn? How can we give workers access to ongoing skills development opportunities rather than focusing on retraining only when they are about to lose their jobs? How will we ensure that young people, especially those from Aboriginal communities, can be successful in taking advantage of education and training opportunities?

The lessons of the past tell us that being ready increases the likelihood of realizing benefits, minimizing costs, and ensuring that key building blocks will support sustainable communities, resilient economies, healthy ecosystems, and robust cultures.

Our choices and decisions today will have impacts for decades to come.



Greg Halseth, Professor of Geography

Greg Halseth is a Professor in the Geography Program at UNBC and specializes in Rural and Small Town Studies. His research examines rural and small town community development, and strategies for coping with social and economic change. Dr. Halseth is also Director of the UNBC Community Development Institute and was recently named UNBC's first-ever Tier One Canada Research Chair.

