

UPDATE

A Magazine for UNBC Alumni and Friends

– Spring 2013

Hands-on Learning

Connecting students with communities through education

• Block Teaching pg 5 | • Health pg 6 | • Housing pg 11 | • Social Entrepreneurship pg 12

UNBC student Julian Brown and his classmates carve canoes while learning about local cultures, pg 3.

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

The **Inside Scoop**

President's Message

There was no fanfare nor ribbon-cutting; no speeches nor political visitors. Nevertheless, one of the most important days of the past semester for me came when I visited with students in our Foundation Year curriculum. This is a new initiative at UNBC, providing students with a strong foundation across disciplines through six courses over the fall and winter semesters. It challenges students to think about the critical issues that face our world and I attended a session when they were presenting some of their work from a class.

For me, engaging with the students and faculty involved in this new program came to symbolize so much of what is right with UNBC's approach to education. We have much to be proud of and build upon. You'll see more examples in this issue of Update as we highlight a number of community-based learning opportunities, many of which would not have been possible without the support of donors. These kinds of initiatives make the classroom come alive for students and directly prepare them to be engaged, involved citizens as UNBC alumni.



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This graphic, which appears throughout this issue of UPDATE, indicates courses or activities that have been made possible with the support of donors.

Expanding the Walls of the Classroom

Heightened Student Experiences come from Meaningful Community Investments

In 2010, when UNBC President George Iwama put forth a vision in his Strategic Plan for the expansion of experiential learning at the University, UNBC had already built a reputation for small class sizes, a welcoming learning environment, and numerous opportunities for undergraduate research.

Since then, the University has also increased its commitment to experiential and community-based learning. The reason is simple: these educational opportunities have the effect of heightening the student

experience while creating more fully engaged citizens. From the community perspective, meaningful involvement as funders, mentors, and teachers has a tangible and immediate return-on-investment.

For the students, experiential learning opportunities are practical ways to apply learning that occurred in the classroom that can be made even more valuable when these experiences are connected to community needs and aspirations. This issue of UPDATE highlights just a

few examples: a course on local Aboriginal culture (page 3); a pilot program on a new model of curriculum delivery called block teaching (page 5); a research project on how experiential education can help deliver more doctors for the North (page 6); an innovative housing strategies course (page 11); a partnership between Business and Social Work around social entrepreneurship (page 12); a collaboration between UNBC and the Northern Development Initiative Trust to produce more local government leaders (page 7);

and a faculty member's "call to action" for how these kinds of experiences could revolutionize UNBC's approach to education and its value to communities (back cover).

"Contributing at an undergraduate level was extremely valuable in developing skills and experiencing the time, work, and emotions that are put into a project," says UNBC Anthropology student Delaney Prysruk, who participated in an archaeology field school with the Lake Babine Nation. This excavation unearthed a fishing village that has been determined to be more than 1,300 years old. "Understanding and applying the concepts that we are taught in a real-life situation is very important."

UNBC students have had meaningful real-life learning experiences at locations all over the world, including (Clockwise L-R) Antarctica, Guatemala, BC's Skeena Estuary, archaeological field schools at Babine Lake and Calvert Island, and UNBC's John Prince Research Forest.



“

Understanding and applying the concepts that we are taught in class in a real-life situation is very important.

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A Confluence of Cultures

UNBC Students Learn
Art, History, Culture,
and Politics from
Local Masters

“Lheidli T’enneh means ‘The People from the Confluence of Two Rivers in the Dahketh language,’ says Jennifer Pighin, indicating the place where the waters of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers meet and the Lheidli T’enneh (pronounced Klate-lee Ten-eh) call home. “That’s why this course is special: the rivers of two cultures are meeting and making each other stronger.”

Pighin, a UNBC master’s student in First Nations Studies, is referring to *Tsi – the Dugout Canoe*, a joint Fine Arts-First Nations Studies course being taught by Lheidli T’enneh artist Robert Frederick and his wife, Edie. When the City of Prince George approached Pighin, who is a Prince George teacher, artist, and Lheidli T’enneh Band Councillor, to help commission a cottonwood dugout canoe for display in the Two Rivers Art Gallery, she thought of Frederick, a neighbour from her youth.

Frederick soon provided the City with a traditionally crafted dugout canoe that included the “Story of the Salmon” beautifully carved

into one side. For the sake of preservation, the Gallery made a fibreglas copy of the canoe and donated the original to UNBC, where Jennifer and UNBC Professor Antonia Mills hoped to use it as a catalyst for a new course at the University.

“Robert and Edie are the instructors, Jennifer is the teacher’s assistant, and it’s the students’ job to carve and paint one side of the canoe, while learning about the history and culture of this region,” says Dr. Mills. “I’ve just helped facilitate this unique, experiential way of learning.”

Frederick learned much of his craft from famed Northwest Coast artist Ron Sebastian, whose work includes the doors to the UNBC Senate Chamber and the ceremonial chairs used at Convocation. “There are only a few people like my husband left, whose stories and traditions were passed down to him directly from his mother and father,” says Edie. “Learning about the tools, art, history, and



culture of the Lheidli T'enneh from the people who have an intimate knowledge is the best way of learning."

"This course showed me how to think in a completely different way," says Julian Brown of Burns Lake, a first-year student enrolled in the Northern Advancement Program, a transition year program UNBC offers for rural and Aboriginal students. "I like the way indigenous knowledge is being incorporated in UNBC's curriculum. I like that it focuses on the more positive aspects of recent aboriginal history and culture and not some of the more unfortunate elements. I enjoyed sharing that with my classmates."

This summer, students will be going into even greater depth as they'll be sourcing and felling their own cottonwood on Lheidli T'enneh land and fashioning it "from scratch" into a canoe with Robert and Edie. Frederick says that, by teaching students about the history and culture of his people, he and Edie are making history of their own. "By teaching them our history and culture, we're ensuring it will live on."

“
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”



Watch a video about UNBC and the Canoe Course on Youtube.

<http://youtu.be/2Q0N7h1SaEo>

L-R: Robert Frederick, Jenniger Pighin, Antonia Mills, and Edie Frederick.

Quick off the **Block**

UNBC is an Early Adopter of Teaching Method Focusing on Student/Community Engagement

“**T**his method allows us to focus on teaching and is well suited to the needs of today’s students” says UNBC Geography Program Chair Neil Hanlon. “Perhaps more importantly, it presents opportunities to connect course content to what’s happening in the community.”

Dr. Hanlon is speaking about block teaching, a relatively new form of instruction that UNBC recently began offering to third year, fourth year, and graduate-level students in the University’s Geography Program. This method of course delivery involves students focusing entirely on one course at a time in two and a half week “blocks” as opposed to a more typical five courses over 13 weeks.

The heightened learning experience for students is matched by an equally compelling opportunity for community engagement. “Block programming can involve students learning from service providers and decision makers in the community,” says Dr. Hanlon. “Many of our classes were held off-campus at public and private businesses, and by students observing phenomena as they occurred outside the walls of the University.”

Dr. Hanlon cites the opportunities block courses present for engaging with students and delving deeper into issues and concepts. “Rather than taking multiple courses at a time, we have three hours of class every day dedicated to one course only. Ideas and conversations remain fresh in everyone’s mind so that students learn in a much more in-depth manner.”

Block teaching is gaining popularity among North American post-secondary institutions for its capacity to help students with different

learning styles and to go more in-depth into course material, due to the focused nature of class time and the real-world, tangible experience that happens when students realize they are also members of a larger community.

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“We already use a type [of block course] when preparing students for field schools in Peru or Guatemala where they need classroom study before getting on a plane,” says Dr. Hanlon. “And there may be ways we can use the block approach at some of the university’s regional sites or with certain cohorts of students.”



A few words from a **Rising Star**

Joanna Paterson Explores the Effect of Experiential Learning

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As rural communities struggle to recruit and retain skilled workers of all kinds, is there something educational institutions can do to produce graduates who have the skills that are in demand, as well as a predisposition to working in those communities? UNBC graduate student Joanna Paterson believes so, and experiential learning is a key piece of the puzzle.

Joanna is the 2013 recipient of the Rising Star award, presented annually by the Northern Medical Programs Trust to a student who has demonstrated leadership and represents the future promise of health care professionals who are educated in the North. Her research is putting her on the front line of understanding how to attract more doctors to northern communities.

She has interviewed seven graduates of the Northern Medical Program who are working in family practice in northern/rural communities to identify the factors that influence them to stay and set up a practice. While family connections and personal history in the region appear to be the top reason, diverse learning experiences in real clinical settings has been essential.

"In their third and fourth year, when medical students are in rural clinical settings, they truly get to experience a type of practice that is diverse and very attractive," she says. "And when they learn by interacting with patients in an appreciative environment I think Northern Medical Program students begin to see the value of working in a supportive community and want a continuation of this 'good thing' they're experiencing instead of risking going somewhere else."

Joanna came to UNBC from Toronto and has been inspired in her time here to explore barriers to health care access. She is hoping to pursue a medical education after she completes her master's degree program in Community Health Sciences.

Nearly 30 local governments in Northern BC have partnered with UNBC to establish the Northern Medical Programs Trust. It provides funding to medical and nurse practitioner students who pursue clinical experiences in northern communities during their degree program.

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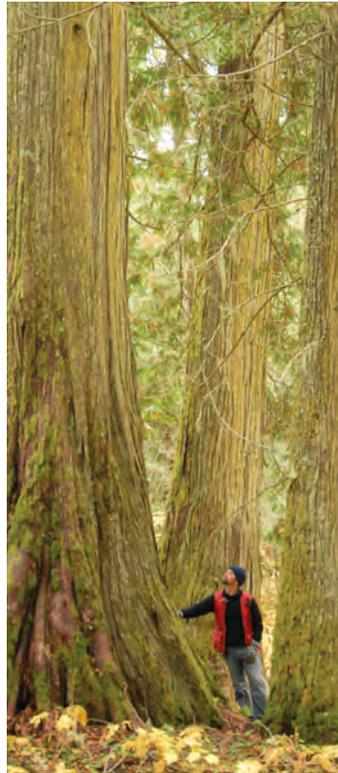
People In The News

UNBC People and Stories Making Headlines



Engineering Champs

Four Environmental Engineering students recently beat teams from universities across Canada to take home the top prize in the Junior Design category at the Canadian Engineering Competition at Carleton University in Ottawa. The group's submission at the event, which challenges teams with problems of physical engineering, defeated entries from the top eight regional teams in the country.



World Heritage Site?

New research led by UNBC is recommending that the area surrounding the "Ancient Forest Trail," about 130 kilometers east of Prince George, be named a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The research indicates that these stands of ancient red cedars and surrounding bio-diversity are "globally significant" and require the protection and status afforded other rich areas of scientific and cultural value deemed World Heritage Sites.



National Student Fellowship

A UNBC environmental engineering student has received one of Canada's most prestigious awards. Stephanie Doherty is one of only ten 3M National Student Fellowship recipients this year and is the third UNBC student to receive the national honour since 2012. This year, she is the only student from BC to receive the distinction, which honours outstanding student leadership and vision. "Going to a small university with such a focus on the environment and sustainability has opened up venues for me to develop as a leader and provided me with opportunities to invest in my local community," says Doherty.



Local Government Internships

UNBC, Northern Development Initiative Trust, and the Local Government Management Association, have launched the region's first-ever Northern Development Local Government Management Internship Program, which is providing new graduates with year-long internships in northern communities such as Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, and Mackenzie. "It really is the local government equivalent to the Northern Medical Program, in that it's a program hosted in the north to meet a specific local need," says Internship Program developer and UNBC Political Science Professor Gary Wilson.



A First for Northern BC

Dr. Sarah de Leeuw, a UNBC graduate, a professor in the Northern Medical Program, and a research associate with the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAH), has two recent achievements of note. She was named the first-ever Northern BC-based recipient of a partnered scholar award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and the NCCAH. She is examining how involvement with the creative arts can improve health. She is also a finalist for a BC book prize for her collection of poetry.



New VP of Research

Dr. Ranjana Bird has officially joined UNBC as Vice President of Research. Dr. Bird joins UNBC President George Iwama, Provost Mark Dale, and Vice Presidents Eileen Bray (Administration and Finance), and Rob van Adrichem (External Relations) to fill out the University's Executive. "I am delighted to join UNBC, which has, at a relatively young age, earned a proud reputation as one of the four research-intensive universities in BC," says Dr. Bird, who comes to UNBC from the University of Windsor, in Ontario.

UNBC's CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT



UNBC's Campus Correspondent

Starting in September, Lukas Bosch, a Grade 12 student from Regina, Saskatchewan, will be UNBC's first-ever Campus Correspondent. Lukas was one applicant for the Northern Exposure Award that attracted 27 video submissions to the contest, more than 13,000 votes, and 46,000 video views.

Lukas's video talks about sustainability, the importance of immersing oneself in the surrounding environment, and his passion for arts and culture. View Lukas's video at unbc.ca/northernexposure.

"One of the things I'm really excited about in going to the Prince George area next year is the access that Prince George and UNBC have to nature," says Lukas. "I cannot wait to experience this wild beauty for myself." The environmentally conscious student fell in love with the campus and the community during his first visit to UNBC last September.

"Lukas is an excellent example of the passion our students bring to UNBC, and I look forward to meeting him when he starts classes in the fall," says UNBC Dean of Student Success and Enrolment Management, Dr. Bill Owen. "His drive and energy will be an exciting addition to campus life."

Lukas will write a blog, produce videos, take photos, and engage with the community through various social media platforms, all with an eye towards showcasing the UNBC experience by drawing on the activities of a student living it day-to-day.



Connecting Northern BC to the World

UNBC grad **Christopher Colussi** has the best view of Northern BC's position as a trading region. As Marine Superintendent for Maher Terminals at the Fairview Container Terminal in Prince Rupert, Christopher literally has a front-row seat of what's coming and going from one of North America's most active and successful ports.

Christopher, who graduated with a degree in Mathematics in 2004, is one of the UNBC alumni being featured by the Prince George Citizen newspaper. Together with the University and its alumni association, the Citizen is producing *True North: Developing our Region's Capacity for the Future*, a magazine and newspaper insert profiling dozens of graduates who are making a difference in Northern BC as business leaders, politicians, health care providers, or other careers. Many of them are like Christopher: doing jobs without fanfare but nevertheless contributing to the resilience and success of Northern BC and its communities.

True North will be published in May and launched at the annual Alumni Awards Reception the evening before Convocation.

Class Notes

Be Part of Class Notes: Visit unbc.ca/alumni and Let Us Know What You Have Been Up To

1998

Todd Romaine, BA Environmental Studies & BSc Environmental Planning 2001, is the VP, Corporate Social Responsibility with Nevsun Resources Ltd. in Vancouver. Nevsun owns and operates a gold/copper/zinc mine in the State of Eritrea, Africa.

Recently named Partner, **Jason Pannu, BComm Finance**, specializes in Business & Commercial Litigation, Construction Law, Toxic, Tort & Environmental Law with the law firm Lewis, King, Krieg & Waldrop, P.C. in Nashville, TN.

Dr. Ronny Priefer, BSc Chemistry, recently accepted a position as a Professor of Medicinal Chemistry in the College of Pharmacy at Western New England University in Springfield, MA.

1999

Sam Zirnheilt, BSc Forestry, owns Zirnheilt Timber Frames which specializes in sustainable building systems in Williams Lake, BC. *Sam is featured in True North coming out in May.*

Kelly Burt, BA English, met her husband and UNBC Grad, **Adam Inglis, BSc Environmental Science 1997**, while attending UNBC. Living in Nanaimo BC, Kelly is a Teacher and Adam is a GIS Specialist.

2000

Working for Rescan Environmental Services Ltd. and living in Telkwa, BC, **Kirsten Seymour (nee Mackenzie), BSc Fisheries Biology**, has travelled throughout Northern BC, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut working on environmental assessment projects for mines and hydroelectric developments.

2002

Mark Webster, BComm General Business & Psychology, is the Human Resource Advisor for Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo, BC where he lives with his wife, **Courtney Webster (nee Clarkin) BComm, 2004**.

2003

Denis Lacroix, BSc Biology is a Senior Environmental Assessment Officer for Environment Canada's Environmental Protection Operation Directorate in his hometown of Whitehorse, YT.



Corey Walker, BA English & History, is the Northern Branch Coordinator of the Autism Society of BC in Prince George, BC. He is also the Vice-President of local radio station, 93.1 CFIS-FM.

2005

Tammy Virkutis, BA General, is an EAL (English as an Additional Language) Teacher/Coordinator for the Australian School of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

2006

Terry Teegee, BSc Forestry, is the Tribal Chief of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council in Prince George, BC where he met and married UNBC Grad **Rena Zatorski, BA Political Science 2002** who is the President of Earth Management. *More information about Terry and Rena will be in True North coming out in May.*

As a Government Agent for the Dawson Creek office of Service BC, **Terry Regner, BSc Computer Science**, has continued his education since leaving UNBC. In addition to finishing an MSc in Information Systems, he has earned an associate's certificate in Business Analysis, a Canadian Risk Management professional designation, and a Project Management Professional designation.

2007

Laura Blumhagen, BSc Psychology, is responsible for Special Projects and Business Development for the Aboriginal Business & Community Development Centre in Prince George, BC.

As the Assistant Editor for the Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, **Joe Landry, BSc Biochemistry and Molecular Biology**, is pursuing his PhD in International Conflict Management and International Development Policy in Ottawa, ON.

Despite being raised on the Sunshine Coast, **Cameron Orr, BA English**, has chosen to stay in the North and is the Editor of the Kitimat Northern Sentinel in Kitimat, BC.



2008

Charlene Mattson, BA Joint History & Political Science, is the owner of Quill for Hire and a successful freelance writer/editor. She is planning to get her Master's in History and enjoys spending time with her husband, and her three-year-old son.

2009

Ashleen Montgomery, BSc Biochemistry & Molecular Biology is the Social Media Coordinator for Daiya Foods Inc., which produces an alternative to cheese that is free of eight allergens (including dairy, soy, gluten, egg, peanut and tree nuts).

2010

Danielle Smyth, MSc Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, is living and working in Smithers, BC as the Regional Director for the School of Exploration & Mining for the College of New Caledonia. *Learn more in the True North magazine being published in May.*

2012

Currently pursuing her master's degree in Physics, **Kimberly Lawyer, BSc Physics**, is exploring the application of terahertz technology (developed at UNBC) to real-time monitoring of emissions from bioenergy systems.

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Generosity with Purpose

Donors Support New Experiential Service Learning Opportunities

Since UNBC's founding, donors have supported a designation called the Area of Greatest Need. These unrestricted funds are important for meeting UNBC priorities that are otherwise unfunded. A new project is directing funds raised to three of the University's great needs: student recruitment, student retention, and strengthening UNBC's connection to the region. The Undergraduate Experiential and Service Learning program has been created, providing opportunities for students from multiple disciplines to get involved in the community through their coursework.

To pilot this initiative, UNBC professor Greg Halseth joined with the City of Prince George and the Prince George Metis Housing Society to develop a new course – Prince George Housing Strategies – that took a broad look at the City's housing issue: market and non-market segments, demographic changes, and the existing inventory. In addition to field trips, students were exposed to 28 guest speakers from local, provincial, and national organizations that presented perspectives from the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

Students have been unanimous in their support for this style of course delivery, citing the benefits of community involvement for developing critical thinking skills and a greater sense of local citizenship.

The outcome of the course was a formal report with recommendations presented by students to the community partners. Students were invited by the City of Prince George and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to an event at its conclusion where Councilor Murry Krause recognized and thanked the students for their contribution to the City's housing strategy.

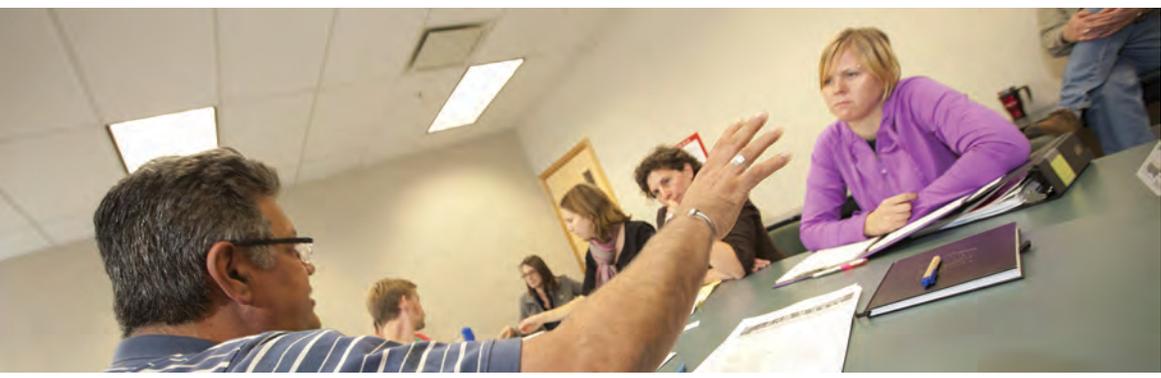
“It was amazing to feel more invested in the outcome of my work than the grade I will receive for completing it.”

“It was amazing to feel more invested in the outcome of my work than the grade I will receive for completing it,” said Erin MacQuarrie, a student also new to Prince George. “the Housing Issues course opened my eyes to the strong sense of community in Prince George. It is evident how much people care for one another.”

It's a sentiment echoed by Leo Hebert, Executive Director of the Metis Housing Society. “The program was a fantastic example of community working together through learning, sharing, research, commitment, enthusiasm, innovation, caring, knowledge, and action.”

Donations to the Area of Greatest Need will help UNBC offer more experiential learning opportunities in collaboration with community and regional partners.

It would appear to be a sound investment. “In my 20-year career,” says Dr. Halseth, “this has been the most remarkable teaching experience with which I have been involved.”



Building a More Just Society

The University's Family Support Program

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We've been incredibly fortunate as a company and we really want to provide support back to the communities that have supported us.

Operating in an industry challenged to retain skilled workers, a Prince George construction company is taking a unique approach to increasing its return on social investment with university students.

"We've been incredibly fortunate as a company and we really want to provide support back to the communities that have supported us," says Dennis Schwab, President of IDL Projects Ltd.

The University's Family Support Program is the manifestation of this company's culture. It's an innovative response, bringing the Schools of Social Work and Business together in a spirit of "social entrepreneurship" to enhance learning opportunities for students while providing real and meaningful benefits for people who might otherwise not receive support. Social Work student Lacey Chabot, started the process by compiling an assessment of the gaps in support for northerners experiencing crises. Business students have designed the social enterprise that will operate year after year to address these needs. Funding to directly support families is being provided through donations already being made by more than 100 IDL employees.

"As a company, we've been especially drawn to helping people who might otherwise fall between the cracks," says Schwab. "The UNBC relationship has been terrific in that regard: we feel that we're making a difference in communities, while enhancing the experience for students who will graduate and implement the things they've learned throughout their careers. At the end of the day, I hope this fosters a new kind of entrepreneur who pursues profit and community stability simultaneously. I think that's important for business in Northern BC, but I also think these students have many role models in the region."



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A Community-Wide **Call to Action**

Growing Experiential Learning at UNBC

By Pat Maher

Experiential learning is a philosophy and a method that values direct experience, reflection upon said experience, further generalization, and then the application of the new understanding that arises. Experiential learning can take place on a remote river, in a classroom devoted to Shakespeare, or in a chemistry laboratory.

Experiential learning also appears to be the new buzzword in higher education – both in Canada and across the globe. Many institutions are setting up specific service departments to support this idea, or encouraging academic departments to utilize service learning, active learning, problem-based learning, and transformative learning (all subsets of experiential learning) in their practices. UNBC is no different.

Presently, experiential learning has a high profile because it is associated with adventure. It is often shared as the excitement of field schools to unique locations, the “bang” of science taking place in the real world, or the benefit learners can bring to community-based actions.

At UNBC, experiential learning has been around “behind the scenes” since its inception. However, the idea became much more prominent with the 2010 University Plan, and has been acted upon through subsequent programs such as the Undergraduate Experiential and Service Learning (UESL) awards and colloquiums on the subject through the Teaching In Progress Seminars (TIPS) of the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. At a recent TIPS roundtable on the subject of experiential learning, there was near unanimous agreement that UNBC is at a critical juncture in its support for experiential learning. Our class sizes allow our courses to be more intimate and mobile and we can provide opportunities for direct experience because students are more than just a number, and our community supports and values the connections we make.

However, on the other hand, we have yet to dedicate specific organizational or financial resources to an experiential learning office, or some such hub, which encourages the use of this method and promotes the understanding of the philosophy across academic disciplines, college structures, and could even link to ancillary service units, from food services to residence life.

With many champions at the administrative, faculty, and student levels already in place, UNBC has the opportunity to grow this philosophical and methodological ideal throughout the institution. UNBC could be a Canadian example that develops upon, and rivals, the excellent models used with such success at US liberal arts colleges such as Earlham, Oberlin, and Sterling.

We have spectacular locations on Cranbrook Hill and across Northern BC from which to work, and there is increasing donor support for this type of innovation. Just as UNBC is a champion of interdisciplinary research, we could also become a champion of reflection and application in teaching – the crux of experiential learning—becoming more than simply learning by doing.

Pat Maher

Pat Maher (red toque) is an Associate Professor in the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program at UNBC. His research focuses on the meanings that individuals gain from their travels and how they enact those gains to change values and behaviour at home. Dr. Maher is editor of the *Journal of Experiential Education*, the top international journal in this field, and was recently awarded the Willi Unsöld Award from the Association for Experiential Education for his ongoing commitment as an educator.



Photo: Pat Maher (red toque) and students in a class offered in Smithers in February. The course explored the development of local outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in collaboration with Tourism Smithers.

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