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WESTERN'S ALUMNI MAGAZINE

WINTER 2017

LASTING LEGACY

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member of the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission



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(PHOTO BY TARA MARCHIORI)

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THE POWER OF KINDNESS

Western's Kind Mail project has struck a chord with students.



A NEW SPIN

Some of the best ideas come from drinks at a bar with friends. Theo Versteegh's revolutionary idea to mitigate concussion in sport was no different.



THE POWER OF SPORT

Thérèse Quigley, BA'75, BEd'77, has been fueled by a "belief in the power of sport" for her entire career.



ON THE LIST

15 alumnae named to Canada's Most Powerful Women Top 100 list.

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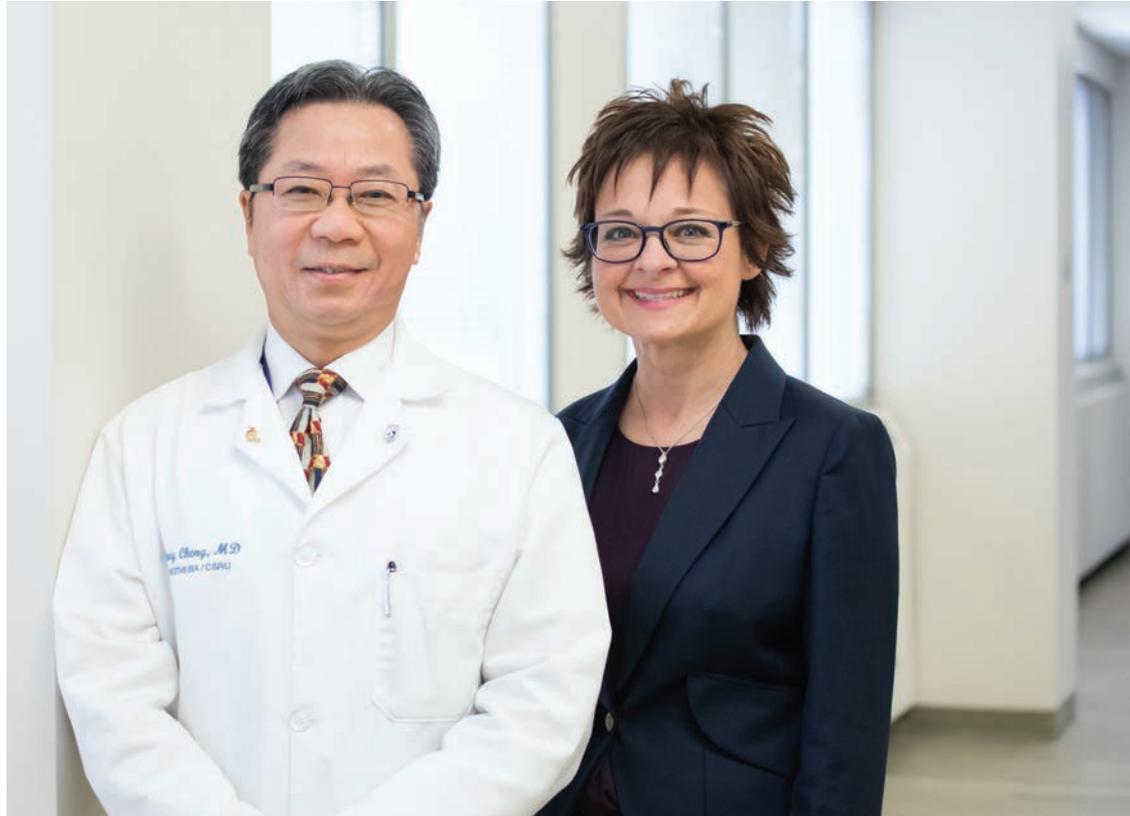
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Dr. Davy Cheng and Dr. Janet Martin. (PHOTO BY PAUL MAYNE)

Schulich to lead WHO surgical efforts

The World Health Organization (WHO) designated the Department of Anesthesia and Perioperative Medicine, at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, as a WHO Collaborating Centre in November. A first-of-its-kind designation for the university, the team was tapped to address the issue of access to safe surgical and perioperative care on a global scale.

WHO recently designated emergency and essential surgery as an emerging pillar of its work based on the fact five billion people around the world don't have access to essential life-saving surgery, and 30 per cent of the global burden of disease would be preventable through adequate access to safe essential surgical services like C-sections and orthopedic procedures.

"The global burden of disease, because of lack of access to surgery, by far outpaces the global burden of disease for HIV, malaria and tuberculosis combined," said Dr. Janet

Martin, who, along with Dr. Davy Cheng, is a project lead on the WHO Collaborating Centre. "Now, it is our responsibility to shine the light on this problem. The numbers are staggering."

WHO Collaborating Centres are institutions – such as research institutes, parts of universities or academies – designated by the Director-General to carry out activities in support of the organization's programs. Currently, there are more than 700 WHO collaborating centres in more than 80 member states working in areas such as nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies.

One of only 28 Canadian centres, the Schulich team is the first collaborating centre in the world to be designated by the WHO to study perioperative surgical care. They will research the gaps in resources, capacity, infrastructure and training in countries around the globe in order to develop evidence-based priorities and put forward recommendations for change.

BrainsCAN earns Fed backing

An unprecedented federal research funding push will position Western to radically transform humankind's understanding of brain disorders.

In September, Western's *BrainsCAN: Brain Health For Life* initiative received a \$66-million investment from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) – the largest research grant in the university's history. The funding was part of a \$900-million investment in 13 postsecondary institutions, announced by Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science.

Already ranked among the best in the world in cognitive neuroscience and neuroimaging, Western excels in the breadth of cognitive, computational, clinical, technological and translational approaches required for understanding and intervening in brain function.

BrainsCAN will bring together researchers from across campus under one unifying initiative.

The Brain and Mind Institute and Centre for Functional and Metabolic Mapping involve researchers from seven faculties across campus including, Arts & Humanities, Engineering, Health Sciences, Ivey Business School, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Science and Social Science. Most researchers are jointly appointed in at least two departments in different faculties.

As part of the initiative, Western will partner with researchers at McGill University – who received \$88 million for its *Healthy Brains for Healthy Lives* initiative – to leverage both institutions' complementary expertise to better understand disorders such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, traumatic brain injury and schizophrenia.

Adrian Owen, Canada Excellence Research Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience and Imaging, and Schulich professor Lisa Saksida will serve as Co-Scientific Directors of BrainsCAN.

Western OK's landmark Indigenous plan



The approval of the Indigenous Strategic Plan is an historic occasion for Western, one that has been a long time coming, noted Janice Deakin, Western's Provost and Vice-President (Academic). Next up, a task force will be formed with the mandate, in the New Year, to recommend ways to implement

the goals outlined within the plan, she said.

"It's an important step toward fulfilling a commitment made in the university's overarching strategic plan (Achieving Excellence on the World Stage) to improve accessibility and success in higher education for Indigenous peoples. It also provides some direction for how we will respond to the calls to action outlined in the 2015 report issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," Deakin said.

"Western stands among many postsecondary institutions across the country that are focusing greater attention on issues related to Indigenous education – something that's profoundly overdue, and something to which we are strongly committed to achieving tangible results."

"We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the members of the Indigenous Strategic Initiatives Committee who consulted with close to 700 campus and Indigenous community members over the course of the last three years to develop the plan," she continued.

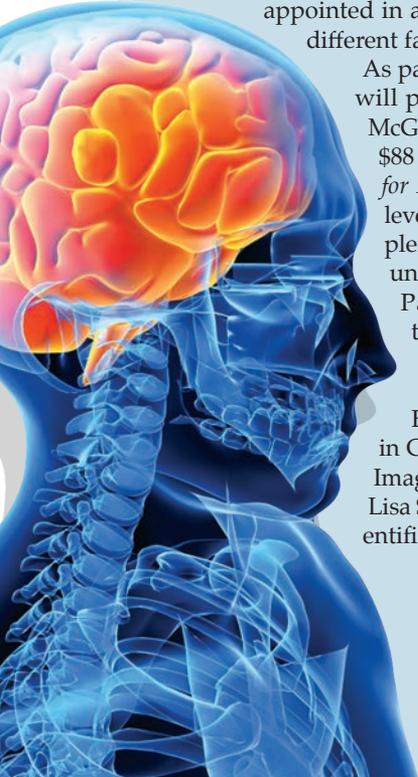
Western's first-ever Indigenous Strategic Plan seeks to remedy the under-representation of Indigenous peoples as students, professors, staff and administrators in Canada's postsecondary education system, according to university officials.

In consultation with the Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council, Western formed an Indigenous Strategic Initiatives Committee, which has been engaging and consulting members of the campus community and local/regional First Nations communities over the past two years to develop the draft strategic plan. Western has three local First Nations communities in close proximity – Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee Delaware Nation.

The document sets down eight strategic directions for the institution, including:

- Strengthen and build relationships with Indigenous communities;
- Nurture an inclusive campus culture that values Indigenous peoples, perspectives and ways of knowing;
- Enhance Indigenous students' experience at Western;
- Achieve excellence in Indigenous research and scholarship;
- Excel in Indigenous teaching and learning;
- Indigenize Western's institutional practices and spaces;
- Become a university of choice for Indigenous students; and
- Increase Indigenous representation in staff and faculty complements.

The plan calls for the university to "explore strategies to increase Indigenous content across undergraduate programs. (e.g. mandatory course and/or embedding Indigenous content into foundational undergraduate courses using common learning outcomes)."





CAMPAIGN GIFTS SUPPORT STUDENTS, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry professor Ting-Yim Lee (PHOTO BY FRANK NEUFELD)

A handful of high-profile campaign gifts this fall offered support to students, research and innovation.

Western students now have a safe, central and supportive space to access health-and-wellness resources thanks to a \$1-million donation from the Fairmount Foundation in support of the Wellness Education Centre (WEC) this past fall.

WEC is a one-stop shop for students seeking mental-health and wellness resources, nutrition information, as well as sexual-violence prevention education and survivors' support. In addition to supporting WEC operations and activities, the gift also provides funding for new health-and-wellness programming and workshops, including an annual lecture series that brings speakers to campus on the topic

of health and wellness, and international learning bursaries.

"It is my hope, with this gift, to directly impact the lives of Western's students in a positive manner. I want all Western students to feel like they are a part of this community, and to feel as though they have had lots of opportunities for personal and academic growth," said Fairmount Foundation founder Heidi Balsillie.

In November, Western, with St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation, announced a significant gift from Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry professor Ting-Yim Lee and his wife, Maggie, to help establish a research chair in cardiac CT imaging. The gift was jointly bolstered by Western and the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation to create a \$3-million endowment to support the chair, which will develop innovative CT functional and molecular imaging

techniques to advance early diagnosis and clinical care of patients suffering from cardiac events, such as heart attack.

"Dr. Lee's contribution to imaging research has been tremendous. Not only has his work had an impact on CT imaging globally, but it has changed the course of treatment for countless patients," said Schulich Dean Dr. Michael Strong. "The cerebral blood flow measurements that Ting pioneered are now mainstay in the management of stroke patients. The establishment of this chair will allow us to continue this innovative work for the benefit of cardiac patients."

Finally, a \$1-million legacy gift from University Librarian Emeritus Joyce Garnett, when realized, will support innovation and inspire future development and growth in Western Libraries through the Joyce C. Garnett Innovation Fund.



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Western  **Alumni**



O-Week friendship
blossomed into
name-brand business

The power of two

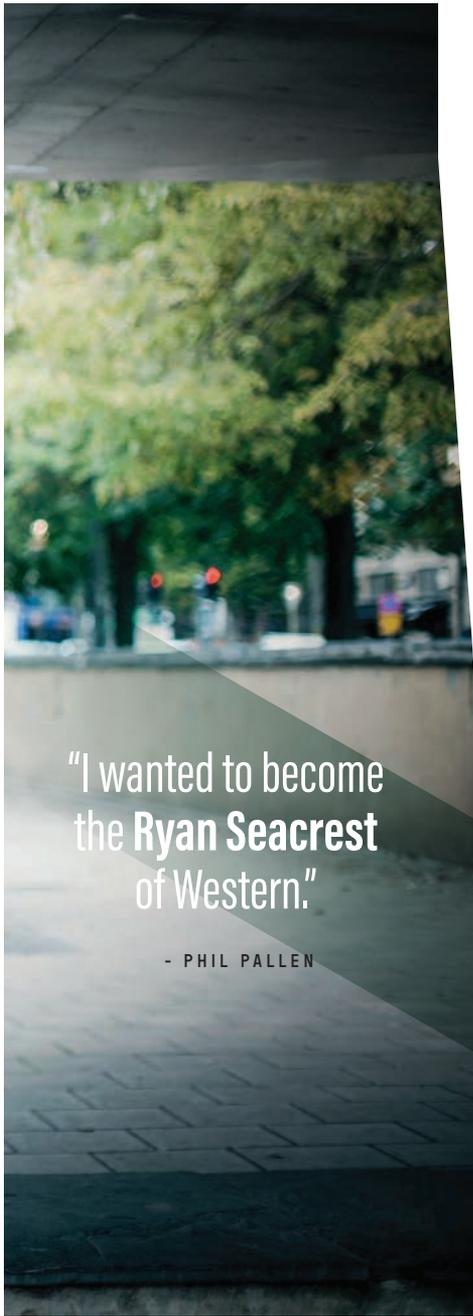
BY LAUREN PELLEY, BA'10, MA'11

In 2006, Phil Pallen and Lauren Moore were two Western frosh trying to make new friends during the chaos of Orientation Week. Within five minutes of meeting each other, Pallen – a shaggy-haired 17-year-old hailing from Belleville, Ont. – and Moore – a bubbly blonde 18-year-old from West Vancouver, B.C. – had rattled off their high school credentials, from Moore's two-year reign as student council president to Pallen's stint as head prefect. There was an instant spark.

A decade later, that friendship has blossomed into a brand-strategy business partnership that's taking the pair around the world, from working with reality show celebrities in Los Angeles to conducting brand-building workshops in spots like New York, Orlando, Stockholm and London.

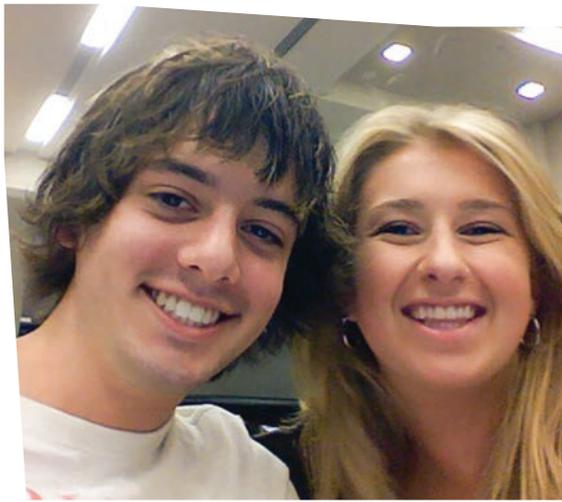
"We're a creative collective that helps personalities, experts and businesses position, build and promote their brands," explained Pallen, BA'10, who started working in the brand strategy world in 2011 and officially launched his company, Phil Pallen Collective, in 2014. Moore joined the team in Los Angeles full-time in April 2016, after spending a few years working in the writing and social media realms.

It's a busy lifestyle. Yet, Pallen and Moore, BA/BHSc'10, seem to thrive on constant plane-hopping, while juggling 20-30 projects at a



“I wanted to become the Ryan Seacrest of Western.”

- PHIL PALLER



Paller and Moore at Western

blossoming media scene. “I wanted to become the Ryan Seacrest of Western,” Paller recalled. “That was my goal.”

With a knack for on-camera chatter, Paller hosted the *American Idol*-style singing competition *Western Idol*, created a talk-show called *Big Purple Couch* and hosted various shows for TV Western and CHRW Radio.

Through it all, Moore was by his side, working with Paller behind-the-

scenes. When Paller was asked to co-host the Canadian Asian International Student Association fashion show in 2009 – a massive event with thousands of participants and attendees – he “freaked out” about having to write a script.

Moore stepped in, writing all his scripts and jokes. She was studying Health Sciences at the time but quickly discovered a hidden talent for writing. “That started our working relationship,” she said.

Both friends went stateside after graduation – Paller heading to Florida for an MA in entertainment business at Full Sail University; Moore to New York to become a writer. She started her career working in DailyCandy’s editorial department by day and freelancing for Time Out New York at night and on weekends before landing social media jobs at MTV and BMI.

In 2011, as Paller neared his graduation from Full Sail, Moore sent him a link to enter a contest to become actor Charlie Sheen’s social media intern. More than 80,000 people applied for the bizarre gig. Paller, despite the staggering odds, made it to the Top 50, with Moore yet again working on his scripts and social media posts for the contest. It was a big boost for Paller’s own social media profile, landing him more than 100 interviews for TV, print and radio around the world.

“A lightbulb went off,” Moore said. Shortly after the contest wrapped up, fast-talking Paller moved to Los Angeles. In 2013, Moore moved to California as well for a social media strategy job with an advertising agency, where she worked on accounts like VCA Animal Hospitals and Subaru of America.

Now, with the pair officially working together on the West Coast, everything Paller creates – be it a simple social media post or his 2014 book *Shut Up and Tweet* – involves Moore’s deft writing touch. (She co-wrote the Twitter strategy guide, for instance, despite Paller’s name being plastered on the front cover.)

“I often joke that Lauren knows my brand better than I do,” Paller said.

The pair’s complementary skills might be the secret to their success. While Paller acts as the collective’s public face, hosting workshops and appearing front-and-centre in all the promotions, Moore handles much of the behind-the-scenes writing and strategy.

“Lauren is actually the brains behind the operation,” Paller said.

Despite the playful banter – and a knack for finishing each other’s sentences – they’re not a power couple. Paller married his husband, Diego Esparza-Duran, in 2013. But the pair are undeniably best friends, and even celebrated the 10-year anniversary of their Western-forged friendship in the fall.

“We still work in the same style today that we did at Western,” Moore said.

“Our personalities have complemented each other for 10 years,” Paller added. [WAG](#)

time – and some big-name clients. The pair are tight-lipped when it comes to naming them, but you’ve probably heard of a few. They’ve worked with politicians and television personalities: Reality show contestants on *American Idol*, *Dancing with the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. ‘Sharks’ and entrepreneurs on *Shark Tank*. A Nobel Peace Prize Winner.

To anyone who remembers Paller at Western, his celeb clientele is hardly shocking.

In his undergrad days, he was a campus celebrity of sorts himself, after trimming his shaggy locks and tapping into Western’s

Thicke: I got lucky in a purely Canadian way

BY JASON WINDERS,
MES'10, PhD'16

Iconic Canadian actor Alan Thicke, BA'67, best known for playing Jason Seaver on 1980s sitcom *Growing Pains*, died from a heart attack Dec. 13 in Los Angeles. He was 69. Thicke was playing hockey with his youngest son, Carter, when he suffered the fatal attack.

Having skipped Grades 4 and 6, Thicke arrived at Western at age 16. Fresh from his small-town life, the 1965 Elliot Lake Secondary School homecoming king admitted to boxing up dirty clothes and mailing them home for his mom to wash and return to his dorm. "I had no skills," he laughed.

"My time at Western, in retrospect, was a great time, and instrumental in everything I have managed to do in my life," said Thicke, a Delta Upsilon fraternity member. "But by today's standards, I would consider it to be simple, protected, naive, simple old Canadian values."

In the 1970s, Thicke was part of the leading edge of Canadian entertainers into The States.

He spent his first decade in show business as a writer for icons: Richard Pryor and Flip Wilson, Anne Murray and Glen Campbell. He penned infectious TV theme songs to shows like *Diff'rent Strokes*, *The Facts of Life* and *Wheel of Fortune*. He hosted numerous radio and television programs – none to more success than CTV's *The Alan Thicke Show* and none to more of a failure than *Thicke of the Night*.

In 1985, he was tapped to play Jason Seaver on *Growing Pains*. That role put him alongside Bill Cosby (*The Cosby Show*) and Michael Gross (*Family Ties*) as the iconic television



father figures of the 1980s. He is identified by that role, and its 'wholesome dad' persona, to this day.

He made recurring appearances on CBS' *How I Met Your Mother*, and worked on film and Internet projects with comedians Adam Sandler and Will Ferrell. He had roles in many TV movies and feature films.

In theatre, Thicke received rave reviews opposite Jason Alexander in the Neil Simon/Burt Bacharach musical *Promises, Promises* and for his Broadway debut as Billy Flynn in *Chicago-The Musical*

A sought-after emcee, he hosted event specials, including the Emmy Awards and Miss Universe, as well as series hosting gigs, including ABC's *Animal Crack-ups*, the Emmy-nominated *Pictionary* and A&E's *Travelquest*.

As a headliner, he played the main Las Vegas showrooms of the Hilton, Desert Inn and Sands, as well as Atlantic City's Resorts International, numerous cruise ships, and corporate events for Borden, Nestle, Mattel and Baskin-Robbins to name a few.

Thicke was also the author of *Lovely Parting Gifts*, *How to Raise Kids Who Won't Hate You* and *How Men Have Babies – The Pregnant Father's Survival Guide*.

Thicke remained connected to Ontario and Western. He supported the Alan Thicke Centre for Juvenile Diabetes Research, a venture launched by Thicke and his father, Dr. Brian Thicke ('56), who still practices medicine in Brampton.

"My Canadianess has always been somewhat unique and special," he said. "I like that. And Western is part of that."

Thicke is survived by his wife, Tanya Callau, and sons, Brennan, Robin and Carter. [WAG](#)



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BY STEPHEN LEDGLEY, BA'99

Finding light in the darkness

Danielle Da Silva, BSc'10, is inspiring hope and change one image at a time





(PHOTO BY KRISTI ODUM)



Danielle Da Silva, BSc.'10, used to find herself pulled in different directions. With a passion for travel, conservation, photography and learning, she's taken a long journey to find her place in the world. But now, as founder and CEO of Photographers Without Borders, her world has come into focus.

"Recently, I've started to prioritize a lot more," Da Silva said. "Photographers Without Borders is growing and requires more of my attention. And I'm happy to give it because I love everything it stands for and the work I do."

Photographers Without Borders connects photographers with grassroots NGOs around the world free of charge to capture and share their work with others so they may advance their causes and inspire social change. Founded in 2009, the organization now includes more than 500 photographers and has documented more than 60 projects in 25 countries.

Da Silva's evolution as a global citizen began as a child, travelling with her family to Europe and the Caribbean.

"My parents loved travel, so I was lucky to travel with them. My father is Indian-Pakistani and my mother is Portuguese, so there was always this natural curiosity in different cultures and different religions since I was very young.

"The year before I went to Western, I went to Central America on my first trip by myself. It was a service trip where I helped dig trenches for a water pipe and helped out at an orphanage. I was really young, but it really changed my

Da Silva found a sense of joy and hope among the Maasai in Tanzania. (PHOTOS BY DANIELLE DA SILVA)



life. It opened up my mind that the world isn't just a playground or a place to vacation in. It's also got so many stories and things happening. I then wanted to trace my roots, so I went to India and I went to Portugal and I travelled all over Europe. That was a big spark."

It was her travels in India and her experiences with the Dalit community, who experience discrimination based on caste, class and gender, that opened her eyes to the power of photography to tell stories and inspire change.

"I had been taught that the caste system had been abolished in India," she said. But the reality she found was much different; their plight affected her deeply. She captured what she saw

with her camera and when she returned to Canada she began working to raise awareness of the problem.

"My friends didn't care about world issues, but I wanted to find a way to spark their interest. The photos were really helpful. It's such an accessible format that everyone can relate to. You're seeing a photo of a child that looks like any other child, but has no rights. That story juxtaposed with those images was really powerful.

"Together with my friends, we raised money to help build nine schools in India. That was really the moment where I saw the impact of photography in telling stories that are hard to tell or that people haven't cared about."

While completing her fourth year at Western, Da Silva founded Photographers Without Borders and registered the organization as a not-for-profit. After completing her degree in Biology, Psychology and Global Studies, she was then accepted to the London School of Economics where she graduated with a Master of Science in Environment and Development.

"I wanted to be very educated on sustainable development issues so that we weren't promoting any narratives that were harmful. There are a lot of narratives promoted every day that are harmful. People just don't think about the little nuances," she said.

For the past seven years, Photog-



Mina, the Sumatran orangutan, was rescued, rehabilitated and has been thriving in the wild. (PHOTO BY DANIELLE DA SILVA)

raphers Without Borders has grown at an extraordinary pace as Da Silva assembled a team of dedicated volunteers.

“We had some really amazing individuals come on for free. We didn’t have a paid position in this organization until this year. For seven years, we were running on volunteers and, for the most part, we still are – aside from three part-time, minimum wage salaries.

“It’s not necessarily money that gets people out of bed, it’s having something that they really look forward to. I think that’s missing in a lot of workplaces – creating a place where people really feel like they are making an impact.”

In addition to her duties as CEO, Da Silva still works as an active Photographers Without Borders photographer.

“My position requires that I maintain my skillset and it also requires that I continue learning, experiencing, travelling and documenting.”

Her approach to photographing these causes eschews the concepts of pity and fear in favour of fostering hopeful human connections. She sees more potential in positivity.

“There’s this constant narrative of African countries being poor and sad. But when I was in Tanzania – yes, I saw poverty and I was working with people who were living with HIV and AIDS – but, there wasn’t a sense of despair or pity. I felt like if I were to include that narrative in my work it would be dishonest.

“What troubles me most in the world is apathy, and that comes from being bombarded with a lot of negativity and images that leave people feeling helpless. I try to focus my attention on beauty and the people who are embodying beauty, and against all odds, are making the world a better place. I think that’s inspiring to the average individual.”

In 2015, Da Silva went on a two-week assignment to Sumatra, Indonesia, to work with and capture life at the Orangutan Information Centre (OIC), an organization that rescues orangutans in conflict situations, reforests reclaimed palm oil plantations and educates the population about saving the rainforest.

This trip would prove to be another turning point in her life. She connected with the people, the land and most of all, the orangutans.

“There’s something about animals that is so similar to humans that help us reflect on our own human nature and that experience just rocked me. So, we started this organization called the Sumatran Wildlife Sanctuary to purchase existing palm oil plantations or private land that might be converted to plantations to turn it over to OIC so that no one can encroach on it.

“The more money we can raise, the more land we can buy. It’s one of those issues that’s crucial to do now. At the rate they’re going, the whole rainforest



Da Silva on location in Sumatra. (PHOTO BY KRISTI ODUM)



Da Silva photographs a group of playful Sumatran Elephants. (PHOTO BY KRISTI ODUM)



One of Da Silva's Maasai hosts. (PHOTO BY DANIELLE DA SILVA)

in Sumatra could be gone in 20 years."

Da Silva looks back on her time at Western as a key factor in developing her global outlook.

"Western was so accommodating to my ever-changing interests. It was a really wonderful experience. I connected with a lot of different communities and cultures at Western. Clubs and extracurriculars were some of the most influential experiences in my life. I don't think there are many communities like Western that foster that extracurricular community atmosphere.

"Western allowed me the freedom and opportunities to explore who I was. I got to earn a credit by going to Vietnam to study biodiversity. That was a huge thing that sparked my love of travel and fostered my love and deep appreciation of the rainforest and its inhabitants."

As she continues in her work, Da Silva has carved out some very simple, but ambitious goals: Grow Photographers Without Borders and inspire more people to improve their world, to raise money to save the rain forest and the orangutans in Sumatra, and to continue her own personal growth.

"I want to learn more, experience more and become a better filmmaker and photographer and make more friends in the world. That's the most inspiring thing for me. Once you meet people from all over the world, you begin to see it in a different way. You begin to see humanity in a different way. And nothing can really compare to those experiences. No book I've read can match it." [WAG](#)



The Sumatran Wildlife Sanctuary aims to help critically endangered species by conserving more than 40 hectares of rainforest.

Still-life reinvention

Feeding the growing
appetite for Erin Rothstein's
hyper-realistic work

BY DEBORAH REID







The Pickle (acrylic on canvas)

The pickle glistens as if just fished from the jar, a small pool of green juice anchoring it to the canvas. The eye runs over a cluster of small bumps on its surface, stopping to search the glassy liquid reflection at stem end. The stark white canvas and bright overhead light isolate it, like a specimen.

Who would look on a pickle for this long or think to make art of it?

"I want to put a smile on people's faces," said Erin Rothstein, MA'10, about turning a pickle into high art.

Beyond the pickle, across all of Rothstein's art, foodies and more have found a new way to consume their favourite subject and their appetite is voracious. And her popularity is growing at the same pace as that appetite.

Collectors are buying paintings that include a Tim Horton's Chocolate Glazed Donut and a marshmallow on a stick pulled just from the fire. Food is not her only muse. In 2013, Google commissioned an 8-by-8-foot painting, *Computer Guts*, to hang in their Montreal headquarters.

While her subjects may be seemingly simple, the process is not.

Rothstein creates hyper-realistic paintings, a style that leads a viewer to believe they're looking at a photograph. That's part of the awe in her work. It requires an obsessive attention to detail, which gives her great pleasure. She spends weeks looking at her subject and only works on one painting at a time, surrendering to a fascinating and occasionally frustrating relationship with the subject.

"A painting has to start off with the right inspiration," she said.

That can mean going through bags of Dempster's bread in search of the perfect slice for her work *Toast*. She photographs the subject on a stark white background using mostly natural light, and then spends time editing the photo before the painting begins. She knows exactly what she wants, works minimally on layout, painting by eye as she moves between the canvas and the image on her laptop.

"There are always fun accidents that make it better," she said.

The texture in *Toast* was "really hard" to achieve. Up close, it's an abstract porous landscape rendered with a limited colour palette in exquisite variations of tone. It's only from a distance that it comes into focus.

Rothstein describes her work as "modern still-life painting." She creates time-lapse videos that record her process, reducing the hours to a short, elegant dance with her subject.

She began painting food in her second year of a master's degree in Art

History at Western.

"Art history is very important to fine art. It taught me how to think in more complex ways about painting," Rothstein explained. She loves academics and teaching undergraduates. Writing her thesis was a "wonderful experience. It took me out of my comfort zone and I learned all kinds of things about myself."

"I LOVE THE IDEA OF PAINTING SOMETHING SO REALISTICALLY IN STYLE BUT IN AN ABSURD CONTEXT."

Comparisons to Warhol please her, but she points to surrealist painters like René Magritte and M. C. Escher as having a big influence on her work. "I love the idea of painting something so realistically in style but in an absurd context."

She also looks to the realistic representations in Baroque and Renaissance painting and the way artists of that period capture light.

The final stage of painting is adding light to the subject. Rothstein delights in this part of process. Her skill calls to mind the Canadian painter Mary Pratt.

In describing her work, Rothstein uses words like calm, focused, precise and compelling. The same could be said of the artist. She's soft-spoken, has a serene demeanour and is astute when it comes to her business and brand. She wants her paintings to remain exclusive.

She was 24 when she finished her master's degree and took to the canvas full-time. In the six years since graduating, she's been painting, promoting her work and chasing



Erin Rothstein, MA'10, describes her work as "modern still-life painting." She creates time-lapse videos that record her process, reducing the hours to a short, elegant dance with her subject.

after her twin boys.

Some of her talent is a genetic inheritance; there's no shortage of talented artists on her mother's side of the family and artistic support was not in short supply. She did undergraduate studies in fine art at Concordia University in her hometown of Montreal. Even as a young artist, she was sure of her work. At 17, she took her CV to art galleries in Montreal, knocking "on every door" with the hope of showing her work.

"My art is unpretentious" and that makes for a diverse audience who turns up to appreciate it," she said.

Her paintings are in galleries in Toronto and Montreal and she's looking further afield for international representation. *Amuse Bouche*, an exhibit earlier this year at Toronto's Abbozzo Gallery, brought more attention to her work and the sales are brisk. Beyond the original paintings, she sells

limited-edition prints of her work. Keeping up with the demand is her sole focus.

"The goal for me is to optimize my time painting," Rothstein continued.

She's also found favour with the media and has been featured in a number of publications including *Architectural Digest*. Rothstein also engages her audience through social media, on Instagram.

Rothstein is astute about her business and brand and wants her work to remain exclusive.

"There are so many opportunities," she said, "but they are not all the right fit. If I say 'yes' to everything then I won't have the time for the right ones."

Her next project is a big bowl of Fruit Loops, the white canvas the milk that they float in.

"Everyone knows the texture, they have cracks and holes, they're porous and you need to get that just right. It's colours that I don't normally work with. I'm having so much fun with it." [WAG](#)



SHINING THROUGH

Shauna Sexsmith changed the world by changing herself

BY JASON WINDERS, MES'10, PHD'16

Shauna Sexsmith never grew up wanting to change the world. She wanted to change herself.

“As we go through life, experience teaches us to either develop a thicker skin or be really soft. A lot of times it tends to be the former and not the latter. But for me, it was about developing that ability to be soft within the world, to be present with someone while they tell you what they have lived through,” she explained. “Empathy is not just compassion; it is being able to understand we are similar – same fears, same dreams. The only thing separating us is a geographical stroke of luck. And that was never a good enough reason to me for some people to have to live the way they live.”

Today, Sexsmith, BA'08 (Philosophy and Political Science), heads International Project Development for the World Education Foundation. Through her work, she has discovered that soft spot she so desired to find in herself.

“The only thing separating us is a geographical stroke of luck.”

Founded by Marques Anderson, a former National Football League safety, the World Education Foundation (WE Foundation) develops collaborative international projects specific to communities, particularly in the Global South and Middle East, focused on five key developmental areas: energy, health, education, infrastructure and sport. Using its ability to bridge academic knowledge and real-world implementation, the organization is currently involved in multiple initiatives, including working with Syrian refugees in northern Iraq and North Korean defectors in Seoul, as well as projects in Haiti, Norway and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“Our niche is our ability to build connections across borders. We take theoretical knowledge housed within institutions and create practical solutions to problems,” Sexsmith explained. “We also have the ability to be



World Education Foundation founder Marques Anderson, a former National Football League safety, and Shauna Sexsmith, BA'08, are currently involved in multiple initiatives across the globe, including working with Syrian refugees in northern Iraq and North Korean defectors in Seoul, as well as projects in Haiti, Norway and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

with the people and hear what they need. We want to take the time, do the due diligence on the ground, instead of entering in with this sort of assumption that ‘we know what’s best for you.’”

WE Foundation projects do not begin until staffers spend a minimum of two weeks on the ground in the communities they plan to assist.

“It is really about sitting with people and trying to understand their lives,” Sexsmith continued. “Instead of this antiquated idea of an NGO (non-governmental organization) that continuously gives aid, we are looking for ways to put ourselves out of business so these problems get solved, predominately, by people in these communities. We don’t go in with a cookie cutter.”

Through her work, an essential truth revealed itself – we are not that different from one another.

“People want to be heard. They want to be witnessed. When you sit with someone, and you listen, really listen, you start to realize



how connected we are. At the end of the day, we're thinking about the same problems: How to live a good life. How to be happy. How to develop something that is just," she said. "For a lot of people, they have the same problems I have. The more time you spend in any community you realize a family is still just a family, a mother loves her son or daughter just as much in Myanmar as she does in Canada or Venezuela or North Korea."

Growing up in London, Ont., Sexsmith's family travelled to "not-typical areas for family vacations" – Central and South America, Venezuela, Panama. At 8 years old, her lone trip to Disney World resulted in her getting lost for more than six hours soon after arriving. "My mom was like, 'Never again. I cannot lose you in a third-world country, but at Disney, I lose you,'" Sexsmith laughed.

It was her mother, Jane Sexsmith, who works at Western in the Faculty of Science, who pushed the family to see the world. She wanted her children to understand how lucky they were to have their place in the world.

"Mom is like the best rock star in the world. It was a

family trip, but she always took us to places where it would expand our conception of ourselves within the global context and make us want to learn more," Sexsmith said. "For her, education was always the pathway to success."

In the WE Foundation, she has also found a pursuit that embraces her roots at Western.

"In a world that counts and quantifies, and sometimes forgets that philosophy and the humanities are not a tangible thing – the way science produces things or the economy produces money or buildings get built – but it actually changes the way we are able to see ourselves within the world. To them, that is more important than anything else. And that is why I feel I will always be with this organization."

Within the WE Foundation, Sexsmith has found a home, one that aligns with those principles she learned early in life and carried through university and her early career.

"No matter what you do in life, it has to start from within. Everything that is important and sustainable starts with a passion, a love, within you," she explained. "Everything is doable through somebody's true commitment, true passion to what they are doing. That is not something you can supplement. Authenticity eventually shines through. The more you start to experience yourself within the global context, you start to see how connected everything is. You start to see the ripples." [WAG](#)



BY TODD DEVLIN, MA'09

Dose of perspective

Boyko brings his skills, training to treat the world

Dr. Mark Boyko, MD'07, was taking a snooze in the call room when he was awakened by a bang at the door. The ER doctor was needed downstairs immediately. A young boy, brought to the new children's hospital in Laos by his parents, had a snakebite that needed urgent care.

Before anything could be done, Boyko had to identify the type of snake that had bitten the boy. Understandably, very little time is devoted to venomous snakes in Canadian medical schools, but Boyko, who has worked extensively overseas, has a tropical diseases diploma that he earned along the way.

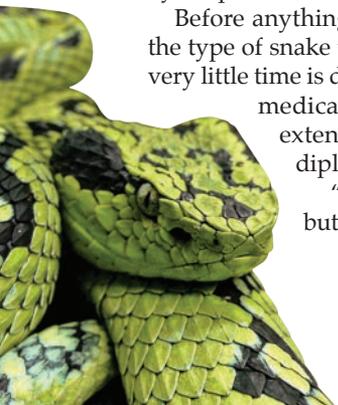
"I don't know the snakes of Laos that well, but I got my laptop out and googled pictures

with him. He showed me – he pointed right to the one. It was a green pit viper, a neon green deadly snake. Most snake-bites don't actually inject venom, but about 20 per cent of the time they will. He was in the unfortunate 20 per cent."

How did he know? Without any bloodwork to go on, the test goes like this: Drop some blood into a glass vial and duct tape it to the wall, Boyko said. Give it 20 minutes and then check – the blood should clot normally. If it's still runny, like water, then the patient is sick and needs anti-venom.

"He was very sick," Boyko said. "He was vomiting blood, his leg was swollen, and he was bleeding from the leg. We had to try to get some anti-venom right away."

That proved to be tricky, not just because of the rarity of





Dr. Mark Boyko, MD'07, provides medical assessments and treatment to patients during a medical campaign for the Ascenta Foundation in Cotabambas, Peru.
(PHOTO BY MICHAEL BEDNAR)

the malady, but also because of the language barrier. They made their way to the pharmacy, which was closed, and Boyko tried several keys before gaining access. The language on the vials of anti-venom was in Thai, so a local doctor was tracked down to translate. Luckily, the hospital did have green pit viper anti-venom. The correct vial was identified, and Boyko administered the anti-venom to the boy. It helped turned his health around.

"You just have to get creative in those parts of the world," Boyko said. "But

those are feel-good stories. It's good to reflect and realize how far you've come along, in terms of your training, that you can manage stuff like that."

Boyko, 36, has been managing health crises, not just in southeast Asia, but in various parts of the world since his medical school days at Western. During the summer after his first year, he travelled with a team of medical, dental and nursing students to Tanzania as part of the MedOutreach program. The summer after his second year, he found himself treating an underprivileged population

in rural south India as part of the India Health Initiative (IHI).

"I decided from then on I was always going to make it part of my career," Boyko said. "There are always ups and downs, but the gift you get from overseas work is so tremendous for your own personal life."

The Sarnia, Ont., native also worked in remote areas in Canada – Nunavut and northern British Columbia – during his training before heading to Vancouver in 2007 to do two years of family practice at the University of British Columbia. And he completed his extra year of emergency specialty training in Calgary, where he currently lives and works.

**"YOU NEVER KNOW
THE TRUE REALITY OF IT
UNTIL YOU'RE THERE."**

In 2010, he got his next big taste of international medicine when he travelled to Haiti following the devastating earthquake and subsequent cholera epidemic in January of that year. Volunteering with Haiti Village Health, Boyko worked in a cholera tent for four weeks.

"That was quite eye-opening," he said. "It was one of the more challenging trips I've been on. I remember it was really hot out. You'd get only a few hours of sleep. We did it in shifts, and you'd sleep about 40 yards from the Médecins Sans Frontières tent."

The locals prepared a little breakfast for the doctors before they washed up with chlorine and were sprayed down so they didn't bring any cholera into the tent. Inside were cheap, foldable gurneys ("picture MASH-style"). The 40 or so gurneys would always be filled with people, and the doctors would go bed-by-bed assessing the patients and trying to turn their health around.

"It was quite dramatic. People would come from miles and miles, sometimes dragging a relative for days on a mat," Boyko said. "They were either dead when they arrived, or they were super sick, or they weren't too bad. If they weren't too bad, they didn't need to go in the tent – they could just do oral therapy on a little side clinic we had. But

GREEN - OPTOMETRY
BLUE - DENTAL
RED - MEDICAL
YELLOW - SURGERY



Dr. Mark Boyko, MD'07, has experienced a “big dose of perspective” through his work in international medicine in 10 countries, including Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Bhutan and Cambodia, to name a few. (PHOTO BY MICHAEL BEDNAR)

the ones in the tent were getting IVs and were much sicker.”

One might wonder how doctors and other volunteers manage to come away from experiences like these with their psychological health intact. In fact, some don't. Boyko knows colleagues who have done similar work who now suffer from PTSD.

“You never know the true reality of it until you're there, and then you deal with it afterwards,” Boyko said. “It does affect some people more than others. I don't know if I'm just fortunate, but I've been pretty lucky. Like anything in life, exposure helps. The more time you spend in developing spots, and the more sickness you see in your career as a doctor, you get more comfortable with it.”

What Boyko has come away with from his experiences in international medicine, which includes work in 10 countries – Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Bhutan and Cambodia, to name a few – is a big dose of perspective.

“Your mind is very aware when you

come back about what's important and how you want to structure your life,” he said. “There are gifts in that because you come in with fresh eyes to your own culture. A lot of people structure their lives around money or climbing the ladder. And, hey, I was probably the same 10 years ago. But I view things differently now. Life is not about money. You have to do what you're passionate about, and you have to fill your life with love.”

Boyko is back in Calgary for now, working as an emergency physician at South Health Campus hospital. He also keeps his toes in family medicine, working one day a week at the refugee clinic doing intake exams for Syrian refugees who have landed in Calgary.

“It's a really special place,” Boyko said. “There are a lot of good hearts and great work being done there. I think it's a great thing Canada is doing, and I'm happy and fortunate to be part of it.”

He lives a simple life back home. Only recently did he purchase his first car, and that was only for travel to and from work (and to the mountains in his free time). No big house, no extravagant vacations. For now, he's simply enjoying spending time with friends and family.

“That's probably the hardest thing about going away – you don't want to lose those relationships back home,” Boyko said. “It's important to take enough time when you're back to connect. So, I'm here for now. And we'll see when the next adventure comes.” [WAG](#)

Dr. Mark Boyko, MD'07, was a volunteer on the Ascenta Foundation medical team in 2014 that treated residents of the village in the Andes Mountains.

(PHOTO BY MICHAEL BEDNAR)



Tapping into his talents

BY DAVID SILVERBERG

Jed Schneiderman, BA'92, may sound like a self-help guru, but the founder and president of Tapped Mobile believes every word of it. "When you find something you love doing," he said, "you're not really working a day in your life."

Schneiderman, 46, has embraced his entrepreneurial career after developing marketing and media acumen working for some of the most well-known brands in the world. Today, his energy is focused on his own creation – Tapped Mobile.

"I'm proud of what we started here," he said, "It's great to create a company that people look forward to coming to every day."

Schneiderman's passion for marketing and technology rippled out from his time at Western, where, among other positions, he was in charge of marketing events as a member of the University Students' Council. Soon after graduating Western, he earned his MBA in marketing and then began working at Proctor & Gamble in their consumer goods division.

From there, his career forms an arc based on what interested the Torontonians. He left P&G because he was intrigued by the rise of digital marketing and along came AOL, where he spent two-and-a-half years as senior marketing manager. When he wanted to understand loyalty marketing, he went to Digital Cement, managing a team responsible for Kraft Canada's website.

He then shifted his focus to television and content distribution which took him to Bell Media. He ran a team that brought MTV to Canada. "It was the first TV network that launched shows both online and on the channel," he said. "This was where I started seeing first-hand how consumers were interacting with content on a variety of platforms."

He faced a tough battle at Microsoft Canada when his team was responsible for promoting the launch of Bing, Microsoft's competitor to Google. "It was horrible," he said. "It's very



hard to convince people to switch to someone else when that other service is not materially better."

Buoyed by his many years of experience in tech, media and marketing, Schneiderman launched Tapped Mobile in October 2011. The company delves into in-app marketing, location-based targeting, custom advertising and mobile marketing strategies, as well as co-authors an influential annual study on mobile consumer habits and practices in Canada.

Tapped's client list includes brands such as Sony, Pepsi, L'Oreal and Ford.

In December 2015, Tapped mobile became the exclusive Canadian representative of the popular app Shazam, selling all integration, and advertising opportunities.

"SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE HAVE TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH A CERTAIN MEASURE OF UNCERTAINTY."

That popular app is best known for its music-identification capabilities (naming that tune for users in a matter of seconds), but it has expanded its reach into cinema, advertising, TV and retail environment. Most recently, Rogers Radio teamed up with Shazam to usher in a new daily countdown show called *The Shazam @7 Countdown* which air in Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Shazam has more than 15 million downloads in Canada; 3.5 million Canadians use Shazam every month.

Schneiderman credits Western for instilling in him several core values that have carried over in his career.

"University teaches you about being curious and the importance of critical thinking," he said. "Successful people have to be comfortable with a certain measure of uncertainty. And you can overcome that by being curious."

Additionally, at Western he was constantly networking with various groups, whether for work, volunteer projects or in his program.

"The success of a company is predicated on having meaningful relationships with many people, and I learned at school the value of networking," he concluded. "I've seen how that's influenced my business development work at Tapped." **WAG**



BY JASON WINDERS, MES'10, PHD'16

FINDING HER PLACE

MARIE WILSON HOPES THE LASTING LEGACY OF HER WORK IS A CANADA WILLING TO CONFRONT ITS PAST.

The enormity of it all never settled in until evening.

As one of three members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Marie Wilson spent years chronicling the lasting legacies of Indian Residential Schools. She heard hundreds of stories that reduced adults to tears by melting away the years – grown men and women became children in front of her eyes as they revisited a horrific, locked-away past.

“I had to constantly remind myself that these were adults in front of us – sometimes a very elderly person. But sometimes, you could hear their voices change in tense and tone. Then all of a sudden, you had this 5-year-old in front of you. They were little children,” Wilson said. “I have grandchildren who are exactly the ages these children were in the various versions of their experiences. I found it extremely difficult.”

After a day of “toughing it out” in front of crowds and colleagues, she spent evenings alone, in a hotel room, often in tears. It could all be too much, even for a veteran reporter like Wilson.

“Journalism prepares you for that. You put your game face on and then deal with your personal stuff on your own time,” she said. “I was grateful for that training in that discipline. I already knew how to do that. Not to say it was easy. But at least I knew how.”

Today, Marie Wilson, BA'72 (French), MA'77 (Journalism), still carries the memories of those days – and nights. But she hopes the lasting legacy of her work is a Canada better prepared to face its future because it was willing to confront its past.

BORN IN PETROLIA, Ont., raised in Sarnia, Wilson came from a large extended family with no post-secondary tradition. Her eldest brother was the first among dozens of first cousins to attend university; she was the second. Western was an acceptable choice to her family because it was arm's reach from home.

“It was uncharted territory. We were attached to our extended family. My parents had no reference for having a daughter in postsecondary education,” Wilson said. “Seems my hunger was in competition with my roots.”

At Western, she studied French Language and Literature. During an exchange opportunity in Montreal in third year, she was swept away by the wider world. Life beyond southwestern Ontario was to her liking. “That opened up the world to me,” she said.

Following graduation, she left to teach high school students in the Republic of Upper Volta, an impoverished francophone West African nation now known as Burkina Faso. It was a unique moment for the woman who grew up surrounded by so much family. Limited by technology and distance, she was cut off from the world familiar to her.

“I, literally, did not hear the voice of anyone from my family for two years,” Wilson said.

The rocky political landscape of the country, one dotted by coups and political unrest, made for interesting times. She depended upon radio for information about the world. But there was always something missing from the coverage.



(PHOTO BY TARA MARCHIORI)

"I saw how the news played out on the ground, and then how it was communicated to the people through the radio," Wilson explained. "The coverage was all about the political play, the political forces at work. There was nothing about the dire straits of the population and the things compelling those people, the things that, no doubt, led to the coup in the first place."

It was at that moment, she decided to return to Canada for journalism.

Back at Western, Wilson noticed news from the Canadian North was dominating the headlines, namely the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry and James Bay Cree hydroelectric resistance.

"There were all these big questions unfolding in northern Canada, which reminded me of what I just lived through in Africa," she said. "The dynamics were all about economic development, Indigenous rights and the environment – and how all those things interplayed. That was so interesting to me. So I made it my mission to get to northern Canada."

When she graduated, she bought a train ticket for as far as she could go west and then flew to Yellowknife, N.W.T. With an armload of hand-written resumes, she worked her way east, dropping off resumes at "every whistle stop across the country." She landed at the *Regina Leader-Post*. She lasted six weeks before CBC reached out to her for a job in Yellowknife.

Soon, her French language skills made her an attractive target for a new post in



Quebec, a national reporter based in Quebec City. There, she covered the first referendum on Quebec sovereignty. A lengthy Radio-Canada labour strike in 1981 prompted a move for Wilson and her husband, former N.W.T. Premier Stephen Kakfwi, to his hometown in the Dene community of Fort Good Hope, N.W.T., near the Arctic Circle.

In 1982, CBC launched Northern Canada's flagship TV current affairs show, *Focus North*. As its first host, Wilson pioneered the broadcast industry above the 60th parallel. A decade later, she became the CBC's senior manager for northern Quebec and the three northern territories. As regional director, she launched daily television news for Canada's North, navigating four time zones and 10 languages, the majority of them Indigenous.

"The CBC was the news of The North. People relied on it," Wilson explained. "I fought really hard to encourage Indigenous broadcasters, give them a voice, try to make our service as good a quality as it could be for them. But I also tried to offer things from The North to the rest of Canada – there is still such a blind spot about The North in Canada."

Because of her expertise in cross-cultural communications, the South African Broadcasting Corporation invited Wilson to work with their journalists as they brought Nelson Mandela's dream for democracy to life. Throughout the 1990s, she taught reporters how to hold their new public government to account.

These experiences proved valuable when Wilson got the call to bear witness to the stories of residential school survivors.

FORMED IN 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a direct result of the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement*. Starting in 2009, Wilson was named one of three commissioners, along with Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first aboriginal associate chief justice, and Wilton Littlechild, a former MP and Alberta regional chief for the Assembly of First Nations.

She valued her role as the commission's only non-Indigenous member.

"Non-Indigenous Canada needed to realize what happened belonged to all of us. We could not just leave it as something for Indigenous people and say 'Too bad for them. Let them work their way out of it,'" Wilson said. "It was Canadian law that created those schools; it was Canadian policy that caused so much damage. We needed a non-Indigenous commissioner as part of the mix."

A career of writing, listening and recording, combined with a deep family connection to the conversation – her husband attended a residential school, as did her in-laws – made Wilson feel she had "something to offer on many levels."

With a five-year mandate, the commission was charged with informing Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools by documenting the stories of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by that experience. Given these schools operated for more than 150 years, and included more than 150,000 children, the scope was seemingly endless.

The commission hosted seven national events across Canada where they heard first-hand stories of those impacted by these schools, as well as witnessed the ongoing legacies of the institutions within communities.

"This may be the first time Canada has been forced to listen to voices it has

"From the beginning, there was this question looming: *What if we do all this work and nothing changes?"*

long ignored. It was the first time Canadian society tweaked to the fact any of this happened – we were not taught this in school," Wilson said. "We have got to update our files, fill in the blanks of the things we were not taught when we went through. There have been huge gaps in our learning and in our understanding of each other."

Due to the gruelling physical and emotional stress of the work, each commissioner received personal support – mental, physical and spiritual – at the end of each event.

She also called home every day "just to hear the voices of loved ones." She did not use those moments to talk about her day, or, especially, about what she heard. "I needed to feel I wasn't alone," she explained. "I needed to know there were people caring for me, no matter how far away."

Many people she met – strangers, mainly – offered her their support, albeit momentarily and in passing. "There were many, many, many people over the years of the commission's work who told me, 'A lot of us are praying for you. I don't know if you know that.'" So I had the support of prayers from unknown

strangers, as well. That was part of being able to hold it together."

The voices she heard still echo today. Even now, she seeks support.

"From the beginning, there was this question looming: What if we do all this work and nothing changes? That was my deepest fear," Wilson said.

With its original mandate extended, the commission concluded its work in June 2015. Among its legacies are a collection of statements, documents and other materials forming the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, as well as a powerful document identifying *94 Calls to Action*.

This call urges all levels of government – federal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal – to work together to change policies and programs in an effort to repair the harm caused by residential schools and move forward with reconciliation.

For Wilson, the call to action extends into every heart and mind.

"This is not just a project – it must become the new normal. We must be well-informed about each other's histories and, as a result of that, we start to see each other in new ways and start to understand," she said. "The one thing I tell everyone is, you must read the *94 Calls to Action* – which are not 94 pages, only a dozen pages – and ask yourself, 'Where do I fit in?' I am talking about everybody – either as a professional in a particular field, or as a parent, or as a member of a faith community or athletic organization, or as a member of the arts. If everyone does that, we will start to see the changes we need to over the years ahead." [WAG](#)

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AT PLAY IN THE 'NEUTRAL SANDBOX'

Palvetzian has her finger on the pulse of the GTA

BY TODD DEVLIN, MA'09

No two days are the same for Sevaun Palvetzian. But one thing remains constant for the CivicAction CEO – her team's optimism and drive to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

"I work with the best team in the business," said Palvetzian, who was named CEO of CivicAction in January 2014. "These are people who share a common goal of making our city and our region better. You can't help but have a positive outlook in a role like this."

Launched in 2002, CivicAction brings together senior executives and emerging leaders from all sectors – government, business, labour, community organizations and academia – to take action on major social, economic and environmental challenges facing the region of about 6.5 million people.

Palvetzian says the group prides itself on being a 'neutral sandbox' where all parties work collectively.

"You need places where you can leave your sectoral baggage at the door and have good, engaging, meaningful conversations," she said. "We're non-partisan; no one sits at the head of the table. We care about the issues getting solved."

Landing at CivicAction was a natural evolution for Palvetzian after spending a decade working in provincial government. But that evolution, the Torontonians says, goes back even further – to her first stint at Western.

Born and raised in Cambridge, Ont., Palvetzian got hooked on history after taking a course to "fill a spot" in her undergraduate calendar. She completed an Honours BA in History in 1998, and earned a master's degree a year later. Her focus on American history led her right out of graduate school to Washington, D.C., where she worked for Presidential Classroom, an organization that brings high school students to the nation's capital to experience the political process.

From there, she moved

on to work at the International Finance Corporation, a private arm of the World Bank Group. But the pull home brought her back to Canada in 2002. After a stint working in donor relations at the University of Toronto, Palvetzian joined the Ontario Government as a senior executive.

"Government is a good place to find the types of challenges that I'm intellectually energized by," she said. "It's a place where the sectors converge, where the issues are complex, where there are no simple solutions."

Palvetzian worked on a variety of files over a decade, serving lastly as the director of the Ontario Place Revitalization project within the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. She also launched the Youth and New Professional Secretariat, a government-wide strategy to attract and retain future generations of leaders.

She also returned to her roots at Western. In 2013, she completed the Ivey Executive Program (IEP).

"I loved the opportunity to go back, and the advantage of doing the (IEP) was that I had the benefit of 10 to 15 years of work experience," Palvetzian said. "It ramped up for me a new chapter of applicability learning – with a great environment in which to do it, and with the professors and students from which to learn."

In 2014, the opportunity came up for her to take the reins at CivicAction. Formerly known as the Toronto City Summit Alliance, the group is both highly connected and respected by city leaders. Toronto Mayor John Tory chaired the organization's board from 2010-14.

"I loved that (CivicAction) was an organization that sits where the sectors converge to do city-building – in an action-filled way," Palvetzian said. "We put our finger on the pulse of urban issues that need attention, and we bring together leaders from all sectors to do something about them."

The group's fifth summit – the Better City Bootcamp in spring 2015 – was attended by nearly 1,000 citizens. During it, CivicAction identified five topics of focus for the next four years: seniors' housing affordability; the city's infrastructure needs of tomorrow; the importance of a child's 'first 1,000 days'; increasing public space; and mental health in the workplace.

With all the projects on the go, including grooming the next generation of 'emerging leaders,' Palvetzian shifts gears throughout the day while managing her staff of 13.

"It's really been a great place to draw upon so many different parts of my professional experiences and academic experiences," she said. "They all come together in one wonderful petri dish." [WAG](#)



NEW RELEASES FROM WESTERN ALUMNI

1) Survival

by Lorne Brandes, MD'68

2) Gerlinda by Emily-Jane Hills Orford, BA'78

3) Rockets Versus Gravity by Richard Scarsbrook, BA'91

4) Dead Body Politics: Shakespeare Between Machiavelli and Hobbes by Andrew Moore, MA'04, PhD'08

5) Mad Men: Death and Redemption of American Democracy by Andrew Moore, MA'04, PhD'08

6) Prospect Research in Canada: an essential guide for researchers and fundraisers by Tracey Church, BA'87, MLIS'89

7) The Loyalist Legacy, by Elaine Cougler, BA'68 (French and Spanish)



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2017**

westernhomecoming.uwo.ca

Western  Alumni

Kids in the Hall

Family Engineering tradition continues into a new generation

BY TODD DEVLIN, MA'09

Peter Hall, BESC'83, MBA'86, knew from a young age he'd end up working as an engineer. A second-generation owner of Autotube Ltd., a family business located near Strathroy, Ont., the now 56-year-old recalls being encouraged by his father, Ron, to follow in the elder's engineering footsteps.

Thirty years have now passed since Peter joined Autotube, and a new generation of Hall engineers is now being cultivated. Peter wasn't as explicit in his desire for his kids to follow in their father's footsteps, but he certainly didn't shy away from touting the benefits of an Engineering degree.

"It's such a broad and powerful degree to have," Hall said. "Almost every engineering discipline teaches you things like logical thinking and problem solving. Once you get in there, you can find something that really aligns with your skills and interests. The kids were always good at the maths and sciences in high school, and I said I thought engineering was a pretty good base degree to get."

When it came time to choose a university program, the Hall children agreed – all four of them.

The eldest, 23-year-old Mark Hall, BESC'16, HBA'16, has completed his dual Software Engineering and Ivey Business School degrees; Andrea, 21, is in her final year of Chemical Engineering and the Ivey program; Bridget, 20, is in her third year of Mechatronic Systems Engineering and the Ivey program; and the youngest, 19-year-old Neve, entered her first year in Engineering and the Ivey program last fall.

In other words, Engineering runs deep in the Hall family.

Besides conveying to his kids the valuable skills gained from an engineering education, Peter also noted the depth of opportunities offered by the Faculty of Engineering at Western – including many dual degrees that send graduates into the workforce with impressive academic credentials.

"There are so many different options now – more than when I was there," Hall said. "The business aspect was something I missed in my program. That's why I went back and did an MBA. It's such a bonus that Western has a five-year dual degree now, and you can get it all done at once."

Peter joined Autotube in 1986. The company, a Tier 1 manufacturer of tubing parts and fluid level indicators (oil dipsticks) for the automotive market, was founded as a sole proprietorship in 1975 by Peter's father, Ron, an aeronautical engineer by training. The company has two manufacturing





(PHOTO BY PAUL MAYNE)

facilities and employs about 200 people. With its main customers being GM, Chrysler, Ford, Toyota and VW, the company ships worldwide. The Hall kids have each spent time during the summers at Autotube, but they won't be joining the company right out of school.

"That's our rule," Peter said. "The hope is they'll all work somewhere else for a while. Then, by all means, if they want to come into the business after a few years working elsewhere, they're more than welcome."

It's a route that Peter didn't take, and the thinking is that the kids will get more objective feedback on their performance working for a company outside the family business.

"It will also help them develop a little bit faster and better," Peter said. "And, I guess selfishly, they'll bring better ideas back to the family business. You'll get an injection of new ideas and new talent and new energy from the experience they'll gain working at other companies. That's quite powerful for a business."

Following a projected dip in the auto industry in roughly five years, Peter says he expects the company to enjoy solid growth and undergo further expansion. Whether the Hall kids will be involved in that expansion remains to be seen, but they could very well carry on the family business as third-generation proprietors.

"My main goal is that they find something they're passionate about and that they enjoy," Hall said. "If that's in the company, that's great. And if that's outside the company, I'm fine with that too. But, certainly, I'd be very proud to have them be part of the business." [WAG](#)

New Year brings new opportunities



By David
Simmonds,
BA'07

This isn't a column about New Year's resolutions.

If you're like me, or like most of the planet, you have broken these ill-conceived promises to yourself long before you picked up this edition of *Alumni Gazette*. Besides, who thought it was a good idea to give up that morning mocha-cino anyway?

What this column is about, however, is something that won't crumble in the first few weeks of January and, instead, resonate throughout the year – and beyond.

The New Year brings new opportunities to give back to the communities, people and parts of our lives that matter most. For me, that includes our alma mater. As alumni of this institution, we have a unique perspective to offer current students. We have been there; we have seen and faced what they have not yet experienced.

Why not resolve to try one of these three ways in the New Year:

SEND KIND MAIL. Our goal was simple: Have alumni send a short postcard of encouragement (just in time for finals) to the student currently living in their old residence. We had hoped to get 200 notes sent; we received more than 1,400. Cheers to that. What a wonderful show of kindness – a simple way to send a smile, a little support and even a few study tips to those that followed us. Look for this initiative again in Spring 2017. Visit alumni.westernu.ca or follow [@westernuAlumni](https://twitter.com/westernuAlumni) on Twitter for details.

GRAB A COFFEE. Our Ten Thousand Coffees initiative is still going strong. Meeting face-to-face for coffee, alumni and current students changing futures and fortunes – one cup of conversation at a time. Students have expressed their appreciation for these moments, full of advice and tips. Conversations are easily arranged by visiting tenthousandcoffees.com/hub/westernu.

LET'S HAVE OUR STUDENTS' BACKS. Recently, you received some mail from me regarding our fundraising efforts in support of students. This campaign for students is more important now, than ever, to show the students our support and let them know we have their backs. I've been fortunate enough to be able to give this year. If you can, please join me. Visit giving.westernu.ca/where-to-give/western-fund for details.

All of your gifts – time and talent, large and small – mean the world to our students. Thank you for your past contributions and looking forward to future collaborations.



Alumni Career Management

Learn. Connect. Advance.



Western's commitment to your success doesn't end at graduation

Western alumni now have exclusive access to opportunities and tools designed to help you **advance** in your career or **transition** to a new one. As a Western alumna or alumnus, you can:

- learn through online tutorials and tip sheets
- engage on Western's exclusive Ten Thousand Coffees hub
- post or search job opportunities on Western's Career Central
- discover how to stay in touch with fellow alumni on LinkedIn

Whether you are a new graduate or experienced professional, Western can help.

To learn more and view our events, visit alumni.westernu.ca/careermanagement

Western  Alumni



How will you get your purple on?

Show you're #purpleandproud

Every year on March 7, Western alumni, faculty, staff and students mark the founding of Western in 1878 and celebrate our Western connections.

Put on your Western gear and attend an alumni event or plan a get-together with your fellow Mustangs. No matter where you are or what you're doing, add a little purple to your day on March 7.

Tag your Founder's Day photos with **#purpleandproud**

alumni.westernu.ca/founders-day



ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

PLEASE NOTE: Class Notes notices, like all portions of the print magazine, appear in an online version of *Alumni Gazette* and the contents may turn up during a web search. Publicly available personal information may be collected for the purpose of updating alumni records as well as for the purpose of recognizing outstanding achievement or distinguished service by alumni in University publications. Western respects your privacy. At any time you have the right to request that your personal information cease to be used to recognize outstanding achievement or distinguished service in University publications. For more information or to make a request about the kinds of contact you would like to receive, please contact the Operations Administrator, Advancement Services, 519.661.4176 or 1-800.420.7519, fax 519.661.4182, e-mail advser@uwo.ca.



On the heels of Canada's Olympic effort in Rio, the classical music ensemble Magisterra Soloists took to the stage in concert halls across Brazil in a showcase of Canadian talent. The professional chamber music ensemble, spearheaded by Don Wright Faculty of Music professor Annette-Barbara Vogel, fills a gap in the Canadian and international artistic landscape by seeking out lesser-known works and championing Canadian compositions, while launching young Canadian musicians onto the concert stage. Formed in 2015, the group embarked on their first international tour in August – a six-city trek across South America's largest country. The tour program featured *Sapling*, a new work for solo violin and strings by Canadian composer Emily Doolittle. Vogel, who created the tour plan and coordinated the logistics, was assisted by Western alumnus **Mikela Witjes**, MMus'15, and Music graduate student Jordan Clayton.

Pictured are, back row, from left, Francisco Galván, Emily Walker, Mikela Witjes, Jordan Clayton, Jeffrey Komar and Patrick Theriault; front row, from left, David Evenchick and Annette-Barbara Vogel.

AWARDS & HONOURS

6 Six Western alumni have been named to *Marketing Magazine's 30 Under 30* list for 2016, including: **Desiree Brassard**, HBA'10, Marketing manager, New Ventures Group, General Mills; **Sarah Bugeja**, BA'10 MIT, Manager, demand generation, Loblaw Digital; **Matt Callahan**, BA'11 (MIT), Marketing manager, CentriLogic; **Alanna Glicksman**, BA'09, Senior account manager, Snapchat; **Catalina Lopez**, HBA'09, Manager, Public Mobile; and **Hailey Nemoj**, BA'12 (MIT), Social media specialist, Bell Canada.

9 Nine Western alumni included among this year's *Business London Top 20 Under 40* recipients, including **Taylor Ablitt**, HBA'10; **Christ Costello**, BA'02; **Jeff House**, BA'07; **Jamie Kruspel**, BESC'04; **Melissa McInerney**, BA'06; **Dipesh Parmar**, BA'03; **Matthew Reid**, BA'09; **Lissa Savage**, BA'08; and **Yola Ventresca**, BA'02 (Huron), LLB'05.



(PHOTO: CBC.CA)

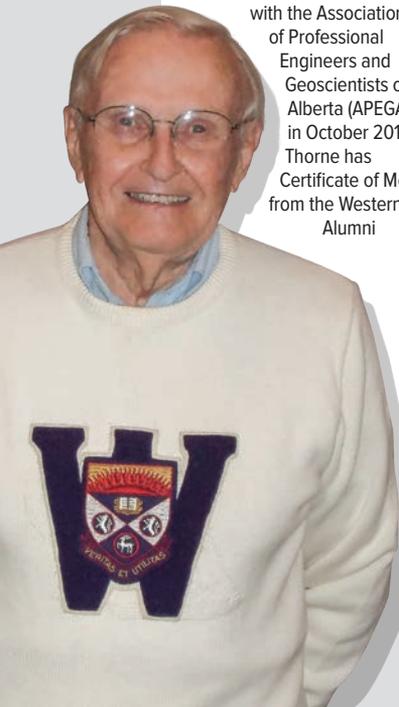
42 At 96 years of age, **Dinnie Greenway**, BA'42, continues to horseback ride and has no intention of stopping. She was profiled in a *CBC News* story in October.



1967
Beatles' single Penny Lane goes #1

1960s

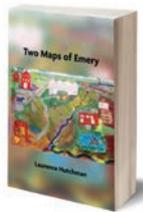
67 **M. Bruce Thorne**, BESC'67, a retired Flight Lieutenant, Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), NATO, was named a Fellow of Engineers Canada in recognition of his contributions to the engineering profession in Canada and volunteer work with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA) in October 2015. Thorne has Certificate of Merit from the Western Alumni



1970s

71 After a stellar career in emergency medicine, Dr. **Charles Sun**, MD'71, has retired from *Vancouver Island Health Authority*, University of British Columbia. After 44 years of marriage, he and his wife, Linda, are "packing up and heading off to travel parts unknown."

72 **Laurence Hutchman**, BA'72 (English), retired from teaching English literature in 2013 at the Université de Moncton in Edmوندston, New Brunswick, where he was a professor for 23 years. During his career, he also taught at Concordia University, the University of Alberta, the Université de Montréal and Western. He returned to Ontario where he lives in Oakville with his wife, the painter and poet, Eva Kolacz-Hutchman. Recently,



he published his 12th book, *Two Maps of Emery*, with Black Moss Press. His poetry has been translated into French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Bangla and Chinese.

75 **Bonnie M. Patterson**, BA'75, MLS'79, was recently awarded the David C. Smith Award by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) for her longstanding commitment to the province's universities, passionate advocacy on behalf of students and outstanding contributions to innovative policy in teaching and research in higher education.

"In four decades of service to Canada's universities, Bonnie Patterson has been a passionate advocate for students and a dedicated champion of higher education," says Patrick Deane, COU Chair and President of McMaster University. "Throughout her career, she has demonstrated immeasurable dedication to helping our students reach their full potential and to fostering a new generation equipped to succeed in the changing workplace of the future."

Patterson served as President and CEO of COU from 1995-98 before being appointed the first female President and Vice-Chancellor of Trent University. Then, after 11 years

as that institution's longest-serving President and Vice-Chancellor, she returned to COU as President and CEO for six more years. She is currently a Professor of Business Administration at Trent University and a Distinguished Visiting Professor of Academic Leadership at Ryerson University.

78 **Emily-Jane Hills Orford**, BA'78, recently published *Gerlinda* (Christine F. Anderson Publishing). Already, the book is garnering attention for its realistic and upfront look at the issues of child abuse and bullying. The book was recently named finalist in the international book competition, Readers Favorite Book Awards.

1980s

80 **Jane Solose**, MMus'80 (Piano Performance and Literature), leads an active career as a featured concerto soloist, solo recitalist, chamber musician, duo pianist and master teacher that has taken her to Korea, Japan, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Russia, Argentina, Canada and around the United States. In May, she was invited to serve as Chair of the Jury at the 23rd Dinu Lipatti Jeunesses International Piano Competition



1978
The Incredible Hulk premieres on CBS

47 Long retired after careers at Princeton and Michigan Tech, **Jorma Kalliokoski**, B.Sc'47 (Geology), enjoys travel – in August was in Europe – and still resides in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. He recently uncovered his old UWO varsity letter earned playing for Western 1946 and 1947 Fencing championship teams.



89 Stuart Carrothers, BA'89, sent along a photograph of a well-worn Western sweatshirt that, despite age and mileage, still packs many “fond memories.”



held in Bucharest, Romania. Solose is Professor of Piano and Keyboard Coordinator of Chamber Music at the Conservatory of Music and Dance, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

84 Bruce Curtis, BA'84, MA'86, MPA'92, retired after more than 33 years in public service as a town planner. Curtis worked for municipalities, including the City of London and Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, most recently, as Director for the ministry's Western Region Municipal Services Office in London. A highlight of his working career was receiving the province's highest award of excellence for Ontario Public Servants, the Amethyst Award, and a highlight of his academic career at Western was receiving the Edward G. Pleva Fellowship, named for the famed Geography professor.



1984
Rock band Van Halen release their most successful album **1984**

87 Anjili Pant, BEd'87, graduated with a Doctor of Education from the University of Toronto in June 2016. She currently teaches ESL/ELD in Hamilton, Ont.

1990s

90 Nader Hashemi, BA'90 (Political Science), earned his MA in International Affairs from Carlton University in 1995. After a year of travelling, he was accepted into University of Toronto and received his PhD in 2005 and attended Northern University of Chicago for his postdoctorate. Six years ago, he accepted an offer to become an associate professor at Denver University, where he is still lecturing in political science. For the last three years, he has been directing the department of Middle East and Islamic Studies at University of Denver.

91 Richard Scarsbrook, BA'91, recently released his latest novel, *Rockets Versus Gravity*, described as the Canadian answer to Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Scarsbrook is the author of eight books, including *The Indifference League*. His short stories and poems have appeared in *Descant*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Matrix*, *The Toronto Quarterly* and the *NeWest Review*. He teaches creative writing courses at George Brown and Humber colleges, and is a mentor for the Humber School for Writers Correspondence Program. He lives in Toronto.

92 Zibi, an Ottawa redevelopment project led by **Jonathan Westeinde, BA'92**, and **Jeff Westeinde, BESC'89**, founding partners of the Windmill Development Group, along with Dream Unlimited and Fotenn, has received the International



02 Justin Morgenroth, BA'02 (Computer Science), of Christchurch, New Zealand, was recently awarded the *International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Early-Career Scientist Award*. This award is given to professionals showing exceptional promise in arboriculture research with the potential of becoming internationally recognized for their work.





02 Ervin Sejdic, BEsc'02 (Electrical), PhD'08, an Electrical and Computer Engineering professor at the University of Pittsburgh, joined more than 100 leading scientists and engineers from around the world in receiving the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), in a ceremony led by U.S. President Obama. The honourees spent two days in Washington, D.C., meeting with administration leaders and sharing the insights of their work. Sejdic, pictured wearing a purple tie next to the president, was recognized for helping address a significant problem in those suffering from stroke, namely Dysphagia (swallowing impairment).

Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) Award of Excellence for Planning and Design. The award, chosen by an international jury of ISOCARP members, recognizes plans with a strong focus on sustainability, innovation, regeneration and resilience. Windmill is the only developer in North America to have achieved LEED Platinum on all its mixed-use projects.

95 Michael Hirshfeld, BA'95, LLB'99, a lawyer from the Greater Toronto Area, has been named Executive Director of the NHL Coaches Association (NHLCA), the group's Executive Committee announced in September.

"We are extremely excited to have Michael lead our association," said Chicago

Blackhawks head coach Joel Quenneville, NHLCA President. "Coaches play an essential role in the game of hockey as leaders and teachers and we look forward to continuing to build a strong partnership with the NHL and its players.

Founded in 2000 by a group involving former NHL head coach Scotty Bowman, the NHL Coaches Association works to help develop minor league and youth coaching around North America. They hold clinics in various NHL cities to help improve the quality of coaching at lower levels of the game.

Hirshfeld, who has worked as a corporate lawyer for Toronto-based firm Lang Michener for the last four years, spent the last decade and a half working

in the investment industry, and should hopefully help keep the organization growing in years to come.

2000s

00 Sarah R. Kyle, BA'00 (English & Visual Arts), recently published her book, *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy: the Carrara Herbal in Padua* (Routledge). Kyle is the Director of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Okla.

02 Kimberly Francis, BMus'02, won an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for her book. *Teaching Stravinsky: Nadia Boulanger and the Consecration of a*

Modernist Icon. Francis is a music history professor at the University of Guelph.

2010s

14 A former semi-professional soccer player, **Dan Grbac**, MA'14, completed an Honours Master of Arts Degree with a Specialization in Sport Management at Western under the guidance of Karen Danylchuk. It was there that he was introduced to the sport of 'Surf Lifesaving Sport' and decided to take up Athletics under the direction of **Tumelo Moleko**, BSc'07, MSc'11, to supplement his training off the beach.

After completing his master's



1995
Last Far Side by cartoonist Gary Larson published (started 1980)



2014
Psy's Gangnam Style becomes the first video to reach 2 billion views on YouTube



09 Kathryn Mitchell, BA'09, Dipl'10 (Arts Management), and **Adam Forristal**, BSc'09, Bed'10, MSc'13, met and started dating at Western. Kathryn and Adam were married July 2, in London, Ont. The couple now lives in Sarnia, Ont., where Kathryn is the office administrator for the International Symphony Orchestra and Adam is a chemical researcher for Imperial Oil. Best Man **Michael Inman**, BSc'10, MSc'13, and Maid of Honour **Emma Ashmore**, BMus'09, BEd'10, are also Western graduates.

degree, Grbac moved to Sydney, Australia, for the sole purpose of enhancing his development in Lifesaving Sport with Newport Surf Lifesaving Club. After a year training, he won a gold and silver medal at the Sanyo Bussan International Lifesaving Club in Miyazaki, Japan.

His commitment and training to the sport culminated in Grbac capturing the Bronze Medal at the 2016 World Championship Lifesaving Competition in the Netherlands in the Men's 90 meter Beach Sprint on Sept. 10, 2016. He beat a two-time Olympic Sprinter fresh

off competing at Rio as well as past world champions to capture the medal.

Grbac is currently pursuing a graduate diploma in Business Administration and Marketing at the University of Technology, Sydney.

IN MEMORIAM

Glenna Marie Allen, BEd'84, Ottawa, Ont., died April 5, 2016.

Lloyd Douglas Auckland, BA'46, 92, following more than

65 years of educating students and influencing high school mathematics across Canada, died May 16, in St Thomas, Ont.

Leonard John Jarrett, BA'58, died Dec. 6, 2016, in Dunnville, Ont.

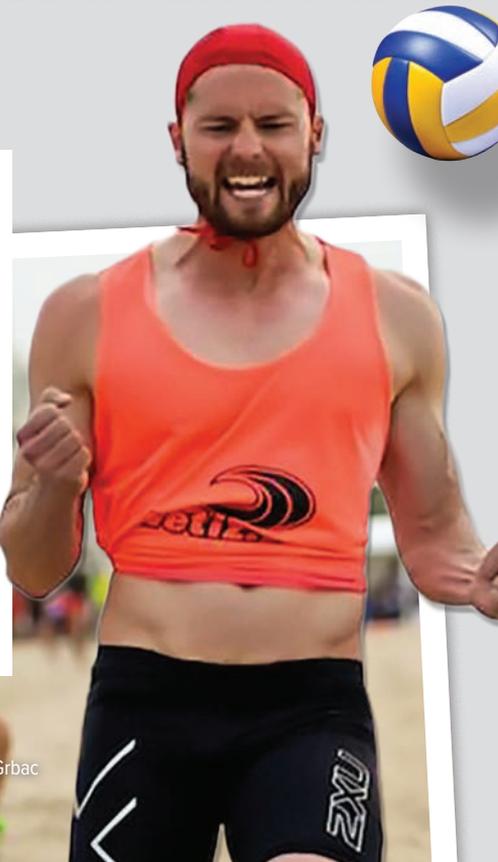
Toyo Nunoda (Fushimi), BA'48, 90, Vancouver, BC, died Sept. 7, 2016.

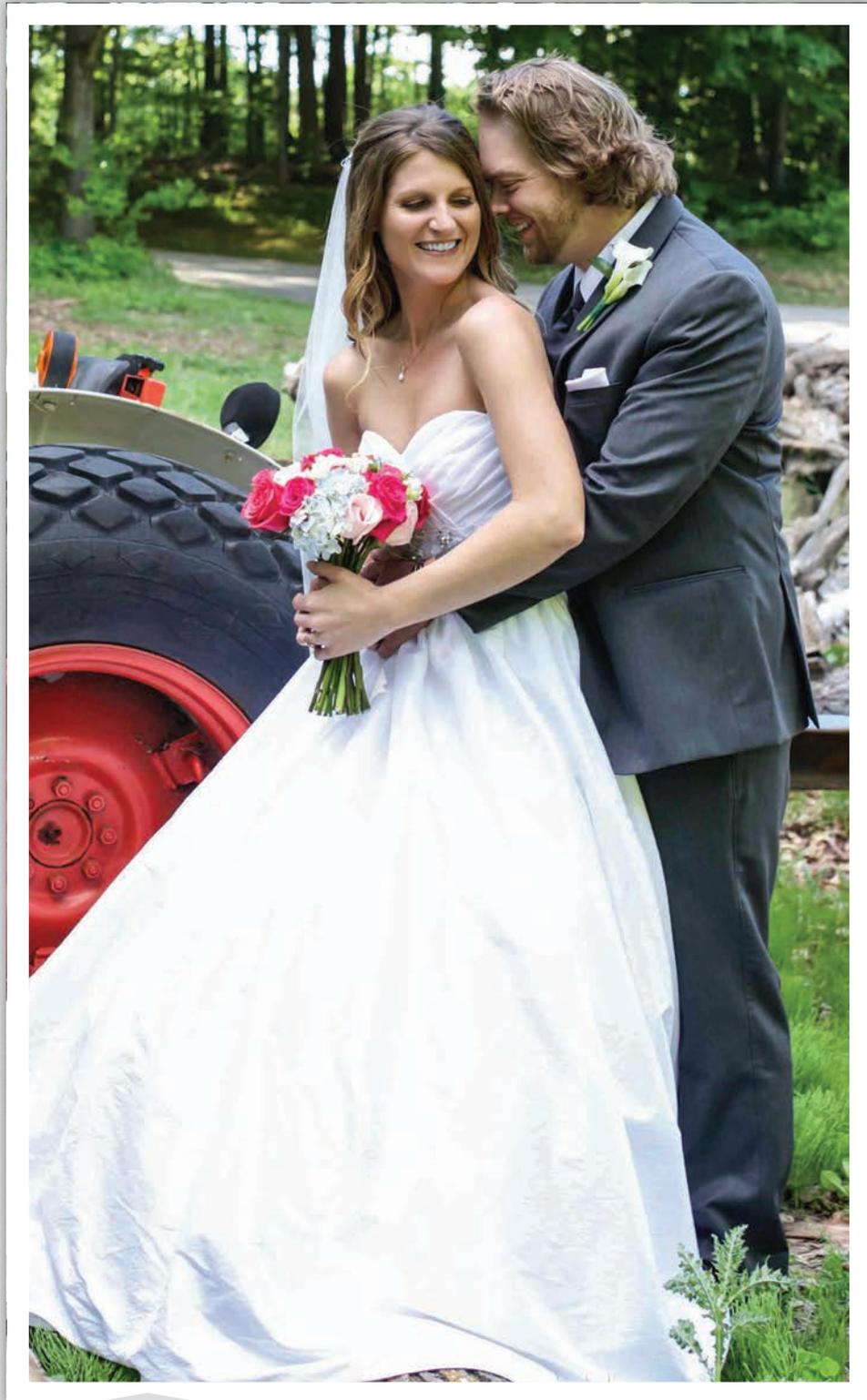
Richard Garth Pews, BSc'60, PhD'63, died Nov. 8, in St. Petersburg, Fla. He was 78.

Barbara Snedden (Farlinger), BEd'74, New Liskeard, Ont., died Oct. 23.



2014
Jay Leno ends his time on *The Tonight Show*





10 Joaquin Barrientos, BA'10, and Julie Wilson, BA'09, MLIS'10, daughter of George Wilson, BA'70, and Mary (Hughes) Wilson, BA'70, were married at Elmhurst Inn, surrounded by family and friends, on June 27, 2015.

12 Cassandra Stiver (nee Warne), BA'12, married Darryl Stiver on June 12. Cassandra, who played for the Western Mustangs softball team, met her husband on the ball diamond; he proposed on the ball diamond; and, naturally, they had a baseball-themed wedding because "some of the greatest memories are created at home."



13 Carla Coveart, BESC'13, a former member of the Western varsity skating team, was recently inducted into the Skate Canada Hall of Fame as a member of the 2009 Nexxice Senior synchronized skating team, the first Canadian team to win a World Synchronized Skating Championship. Coveart, a two-time world champion, is currently working as a project designer at GM BluePlan Engineering in Stony Creek. Attending the induction ceremony were her parents **Antonet Svircev**, BSc'79, PhD'84, and **James Coveart**, BESC'78.

Western Mustangs Sports Hall of Fame

Generations have cheered for the purple and white for over a century. It's time again to honour these student-athletes and supporters who have given it their all for Western.

Nominate a former Mustang to the Western Mustangs Sports Hall of Fame.

Awards will be presented at Homecoming 2017. Nominations close May 1, 2017. Visit alumni.westernu.ca/athletic-awards for nomination information and forms.



Western  Alumni





2015
Muppets
Miss Piggy
and Kermit
the Frog
announce
the end
of their
relationship
on Twitter.

15 In October, **Ahsan Syed**, BESC/HBA'15, attended the 71st United Nations General Assembly in New York as one of two UN Canadian Youth Delegates. Some highlights from the program include writing and presenting a statement to the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) of the UN's General Assembly; attending informal consultations; organizing youth diplomat event; and exposure to several high-level ambassadors and ministers. Since returning from New York, Syed has been involved in national activities to engage young Canadians in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals initiative.



**What's new
with YOU?**
Share your news
with fellow grads.

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Have you moved? We'd love to hear about it!



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The Final Say

With Lauren Pelley,
BA'10, MA'11



I used to joke I'd love to go back in time to my first year at Western – and tell myself to study way, way less.

Hours and hours of course readings in bed? Skip 'em. Second, third and fourth copy edits of final essays? Nah. Nights spent studying for exams at Weldon library? Just do one cram session per exam. Or, hey, maybe don't even do that. You'll be fine, kid!

This whole thought process of mine came from being quite a few years out from school, long removed from those all-consuming first year university stresses which now, by comparison, seem rather trivial. Perhaps I should've spent more time relaxing on the emerald grass of UC Hill or bar-hopping on Richmond Row, rather than fretting about grades people would never see again. (My first-year roommate was even more intense, disappearing to the library for what seemed like weeks at a time during exam season and shutting the door during floor parties to study.)

Looking back, university was merely a training ground for adult life, not the real thing. Why did we ever worry?

Since then, I've settled into a very adult-like, post-graduate routine – or so I like to think – which involves pressures far beyond anything I faced back then. I spend three times as much on rent as I did in my London days. I have bills to pay. I have a real-world job (read: not working at Masonville Mall after class) and real-world obligations. I have career goals and a boss to impress. I swapped my RESP for an RRSP. I own plants and I try not to kill them.

These are the things I think about. Adult things. Real things.

But school was real, too. I was reminded of this fact when I started teaching a first-year Journalism course in the fall. As 30 pairs of eyes stared at me during the first class, I suddenly recalled my anxious excitement upon walking into lecture halls and tutorials for the first time. That's the look they had on their faces, too.

As my course went on, my students became more than a room full of eyeballs. Some days, a few would stay after class, tossing around story ideas and asking for advice. We'd chat about their proposals for the final

project – one worth 35 per cent of their grade – and how it was coming along. Other days, my inbox would fill up with questions. How long should the first essay be? What style of citations should I use? Can you, just, take a look at this paragraph and let me know how it sounds? Those sorts of things.

There was a darker side as well. Students confided in me about health issues, family tension and other stresses beyond their control – things that threatened to pull them away from their studies, and in several instances, actually did. It broke my heart. Because, for all of them, the goal was to do well – to study hard, to produce great work, to feel a sense of pride. These are qualities and goals that will serve them well, whatever they end up doing after graduation.

The funny thing about university is, despite the pressure to do well, in so many ways it's not really about your grades. No one will ask you what mark you got on a first-year English essay or how you fared on your final Chemistry exam. Sure, acing your course load – particularly in the final two years – is the key to entering med school or law school or getting a master's degree, but if your goal is simply to walk away with a piece of paper, you can cram for exams and rush through essays and things will likely work out fine.

But I'm glad my students didn't do that. And I'm glad I didn't do that.

“Would it matter now if I'd studied a bit less for my first year final exams, or cobbled together essays?”

University is a microcosm of the real world, in so many ways. Being an adult is like racing around a busy city on your bike; undergrad is learning how to ride with training wheels. There's pressure and expectations, of course, but it's all coupled with a safety net. It's a place where you learn how to work hard, how to pour hours of your life into something you're passionate about, and how to dust yourself off when you inevitably fail.

Would it matter now if I'd studied a bit less for my first year final exams, or cobbled together essays? From a grade perspective, not really – I can't even recall my freshman average or a single essay topic. From the perspective of being a well-rounded adult who can handle workplace pressure and juggle different stresses – I suppose it does matter, quite a lot.

If I could go back in time to my first year at Western, I'd tell myself to keep it up – to keep caring, to keep learning, to keep studying.

And a decade later, I told my first-year students to do the same.

Lauren Pelley, BA'10, MA'11, is a Toronto-based multimedia journalist and reporter at the Toronto Star.



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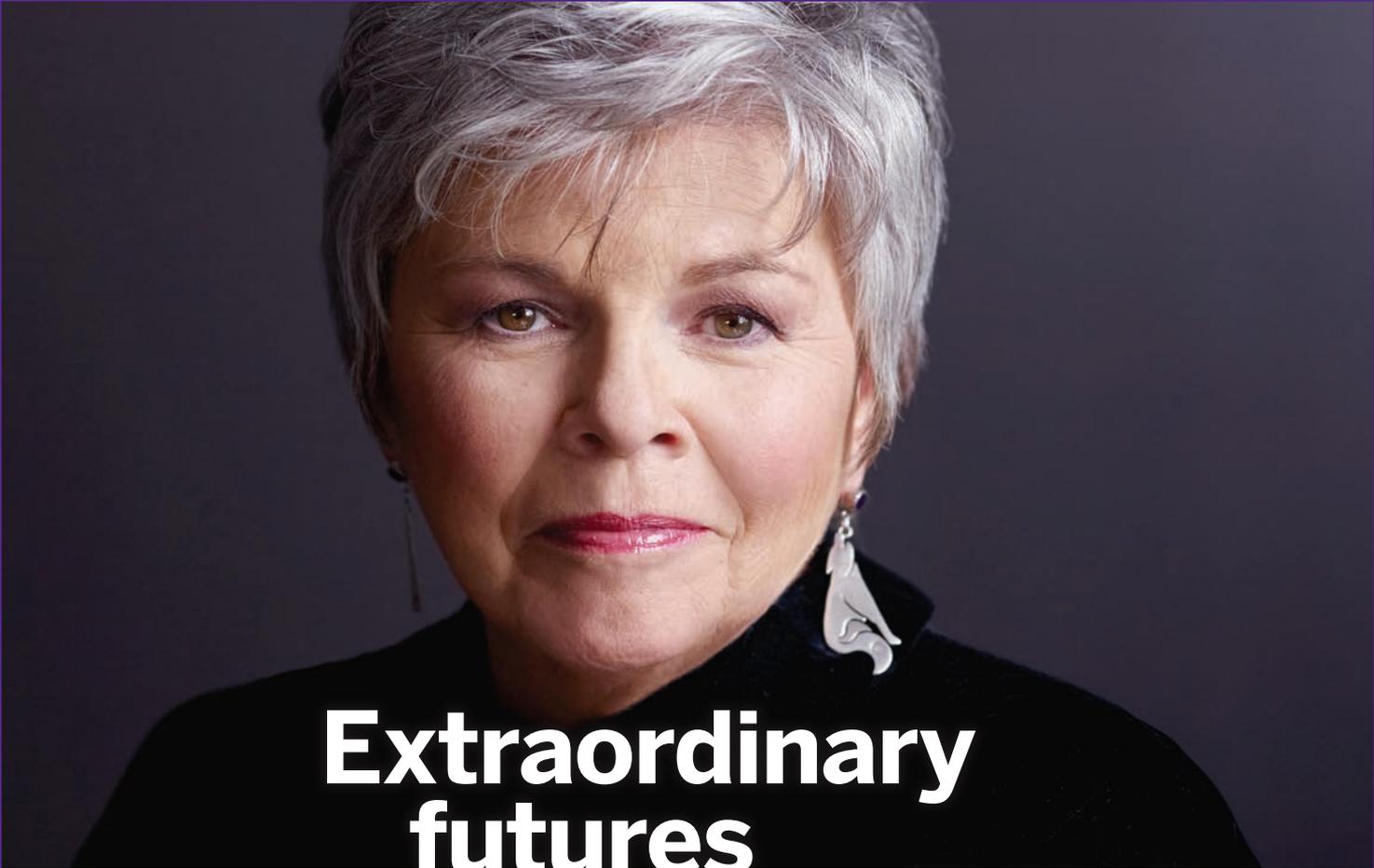
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