Renowned researcher Tebello Nyokong, PhD’87, carries hopes and dreams of her continent.
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Keys to his success

Stephan Moccio, BMus’94, earned success by investing in himself, his passion.

As it happens

Carol Off, BA’81, finds a story in every moment.

Heart and soles

For veteran actor Paul Soles, BA’53, growing older is another performance to embrace.

Taking a chance

On his journey to represent Canada to the world, Stephen de Boer, BA’86, LLB’89, started with the courage to go “down the road.”

Breath of life

Fred Porrsmayer, PhD’65, nurtures the science of possibilities.

Empowering woman

Farah Mohamed, MA’95, LLD’18, lifts up a world of opportunity for millions.

The fight to rid hockey of headshots

After his son suffered two concussions, Dr. Ken Bocking, MD’75, had to do something to bring attention to the issue.

Alumni named among Ford cabinet

Christine Elliott, LLB’78, Rod Phillips, BA’88, and Monte McNaughton, Ivey Executive Education 2010, were named among members of the new cabinet of Ontario Premier Doug Ford.

Moonlite brings bright idea to night-night

Natalie Rebot, BESc’05, has created Moonlite, a storybook projector that displays classics such as Goodnight Moon through a cellphone flashlight and app.

Recommended by Western Alumni
New $47-Million Interdisciplinary Research Facility Unveiled

Western’s new $47-million state-of-the-art research facility, the Western Interdisciplinary Research Building (WIRB), officially opened in April. It will house the Brain and Mind Institute, BrainsCAN and the Rotman Institute of Philosophy, as well as dry laboratories, teaching and research space and a public plaza.

“Western recognizes many of the significant problems facing humanity today are enormously complex, and the greatest advances made in solving them often emerge at the boundaries and intersection of traditional disciplines,” said Western President Amit Chakma. “Our response to this reality has been to promote collaboration and to build operational capacity for interdisciplinary research through a series of strategic investments in select areas of excellence. WIRB will generate an extraordinary return on those investments by providing the infrastructure we need to conduct truly world-class research and scholarship across multiple disciplines.”

A significant percentage of building costs for Western’s newest signature seven-storey structure is supported by the Federal Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). With the SIF program support, WIRB was upgraded from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver designation to LEED gold. LEED is a rating system that is recognized as the international mark of excellence for green buildings in more than 160 countries.

WIRB, with a total gross area of 118,000 sq. ft., is located adjacent to the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre.

The Salamander Foundation gifts $1 million to Environmental Engineering Chair

Western Engineering will continue to lead the charge in mitigating the effects of pollution on the environment and public health with a new $1-million donation from The Salamander Foundation.

This endowed gift will be added to the existing endowed fund established by the donor in 1999 in support of The Salamander Chair in Environmental Engineering. The Chair oversees research activities in environmental engineering with a focus on water quality and processing, including wastewater treatment, resource recovery from municipal wastewaters and treatment of organic wastes. This brings the total funds donated by The Salamander Foundation to $2,811,000.

The Foundation’s latest gift was matched by Western, boosting the existing Chair fund and creating an endowment of approximately $3.4 million.

The current holder of the Salamander Chair, George Khakha, is a professor in the departments of Civil and Environmental and Chemical and Biochemical Engineering. His research focuses on municipal and industrial wastewater treatment, biological nutrient removal processes and recovery of energy and resources from wastewater.

Western to Host Two Major Conferences in 2019

Western will host the Times Higher Education (THE) Teaching Excellence Summit in 2019 - the first time a THE World Summits event has been hosted in Canada, as well as the International Association of College Admission Counselling (IACAC) Conference.

Taking place at Western June 4 to 6, the Teaching Excellence Summit will be titled Degrees of Change: Forces shaping the teaching and learning of tomorrow and will explore themes of providing students educational opportunities beyond their borders; the impact and integration of technology and artificial intelligence on higher education; and the critical role post-secondary institutions must play in building a more inclusive society.

The IACAC Conference is the largest gathering of international college and university admission counselling/guidance counselling staff in the world, with an anticipated 1,800 attendees. Taking place at Western July 9 to 12, it marks the second time the Conference has been held in Canada.

Western Alumni’s 2019 Discover the World program offers travel opportunities for Western alumni and their friends and family, faculty, staff and friends of the University. Join like-minded travellers on one of our journeys, enhanced by knowledgeable lecturers and tour directors, offering an exceptional cultural and educational experience.

To view all upcoming trips, visit alumni.westernu.ca/travel
Keys to his success

STEPHAN MOCCIO, BMUS’94, EARNED SUCCESS BY INVESTING IN HIMSELF, HIS PASSION

In an industry where less than one per cent achieve international success, Stephan Moccio has struck a chord with his piano serving as both muse and weapon.

A classically trained pianist, composer, conductor and producer, Moccio, BMus’94, began mastering the nuances of piano pop song writing shortly after graduating from Western, passing up a scholarship from the famed Berklee College of Music to sign with Sony/ATV Music Publishing.

Born in St. Catharines, Ont., and raised in Niagara Falls, he hails from a long line of pianists. Music is part of his DNA with his mother passing on a winning mindset as well.

“She taught me, from a very young age, if I have an idea, no one is going to make it happen other than me. It made me a big believer in investing in myself and my passion,” Moccio said.

It’s what drove him to send a demo tape to his idol, super producer David Foster, during his second year at Western. “He called me back, which was huge, and told...”
“IF I’D BEEN BORN 10 YEARS EARLIER OR LATER, IT WOULD NOT HAVE WORKED OUT”

Writing for Dion wasn’t the only dream Moccio manifested. He was just 16 when he heard Fos- ter’s composition for the 1988 Calgary Games. “I was in my third year. My friend, Gary McAuley (of the R&B vocal quartet McAuley Brothers), and I managed to weasel in and introduce ourselves. I told Celine I would write her a song one day.”

Less than a decade later, he did, teaming up with Aldo Nova to write A New Day Has Come. The song topped the charts for a record-breaking 21 weeks, affording Moccio the opportunity to start his own publishing company and co-found Bijou Records with long-time manager, James Porter, BA’86.

It also gave him time to record his first solo piano album, Expirs. He needed to return to the sim- plicity of the instrument he knew best. The album became the highest-charting instrumental release in Canada.

Moccio relocated there with his family in 2013 to better access the growing number of singers seeking a帮忙 access the growing number of singers seeking 00. He’d been born 10 years earlier or later, it would not have worked out. It’s one of the greatest honours, I will carry with me forever as I live down here in L.A.”

Moccio continued, “Both my wife’s (high school sweetheart, Hillary) and I miss school sweetheart, ’Both my wife (high school sweetheart, Hillary), and I missed Canada. But there’s no place to do nothing. I’m doing at the level I’m doing it, other than L.A.”

“Wow, was that ever a game-changer for me,” he said of the song, born out of a session with Noah Starshack (James Blunt’s Beautiful) and Maureen ‘MoZella’ Mac- Donald. He had never met his co-writers before, yet circumstances saw them create a power ballad in one afternoon that would change their lives forever.

“MoZella had just ended a semi-toxic relationship. She was supposed to get married the week we wrote the song. She was supposed to get married the week we wrote the song. I was in my third year. My friend, Gary McAuley (of the R&B vocal quartet McAuley Brothers), and I managed to weasel in and introduce ourselves. I told Celine I would write her a song one day.”

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“The rest,” Moccio laughed, “is history. She asked us if she could share it with Miley, whom she knew personally, and Miley loved it.”

Moccio’s piano, which accompanied MoZella’s vocals on the demo, ended up on Cyrus’ final recording, and would soon be heard on tracks of a number of artists including, Ne-Yo (Billboard Top 100 Hit, “Shine”), Su- ul (Jingle Saver), and Gladys Knight (Need You, Love You). Also looking for the Moccio touch, was fellow Canadian The Weeknd.

He requested Moccio for his break- out 2015 album, Beauty Behind The Madness, which featured Earned It, a track the two co-wrote and pro- duced for the Fifty Shades of Grey soundtrack.

The Weeknd’s signature falsetto paired with Moccio’s sultry waltz on the piano earned a Grammy, as did the album. It also took The Weekend from celebrated indie artist, to mainstream sensa- tion with Moccio helping him on stage to perform at the Academy Awards and on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon.

“I love finding new talent,” Moccio said, having started on CTV’s The Launch, co-writ- ing and producing Soldier of Love, recorded by the show’s winner, Sarah McLeod, who goes by the stage name Poeyo. He’s currently producing material for “this new kid, Hudson Thames, who’s really incredible. He’s a big priority at Universal and I have a feeling he’s going to break globally.”

His vocal prowess is just effortless. I am still up there with Sam Smith and Adele. He’s a good-looking kid, too, which always helps.”

Moccio’s now the mentor, like Foster once was, the two becoming good friends since that first phone call back in second year. His rela- tionship with Dion has evolved as well. They were recently back in the studio together, working on tracks for her upcoming album, due out in 2018.

“Feel what I’ve written for her is ‘classic Celine.’ She’s not trying to conform or be 18 years old again. She’s just singing beautiful songs, and beautiful melodies” – two things he’s kept as his focus throughout his career. “I remember when I was first starting out, and with Celine Dion. I took big risks to record the demo just to get it to her. I took out major loans, bought beautiful, incredible microphones – I still have 20 years later. Here I was in my 20s, spending tens of thousands of dollars on a computer, compressor and all that gear just to get it in.”

It paid off. “I am one of the few musicians able to make a living at my craft. It’s hard to succeed in music. You have to sing for every song that goes big, there are 30 songs I wrote that didn’t, and were just as good.”

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As it happens

CAROL OFF, BA’81, LLD’17, FINDS A STORY IN EVERY MOMENT

T here’s no such thing as a frivolous story. Carol Off can attest to that. In a mere 90 minutes each weekday, the host of CBC Radio One’s “As It Happens” switches gears repeatedly and seamlessly. Every guest – be it a world leader, an innovative researcher or an ordinary person in extraordinary circumstances – is provided space for their story to resonate with listeners.

For Off, this space is a “cocoon” in which she is the conduit. “We do that all the time. That’s how we intuit and see the world; we see it as a series of things that come one after the other,” said Off, BA’81 (English Language and Literature), LLD’17.

“As It Happens is like Twitter. If you’re looking at Twitter, there’s just been a massacre someplace; a disaster someplace else; somebody lost their dog; someone’s got a show someplace; a politician is campaigning someplace,” said Off, BA’81 (English Language and Literature), LLD’17.

“We do that all the time. That’s how we intuit and see the world; we see it as a series of things that come one after the other.”

Throughout her career, Off has covered an array of stories from around the world. In the field and in the studio, she has worked “in the moment,” Off explained.

“When I do interviews, I try to stay focused, I try to steer an interview, I try to think of the meaning of literature. It was the best grounding in my work. It was the best grounding in what I do now – knowing the shape of a story, the rise and fall of action, what redeeming qualities are, learning to look for the humanity in everything. That’s what literature does; it seeks the humanity in everything. In every book, at the core of it, is the search for our humanity and the humanity of others. It’s a look at the other to find out what the other is and what the other means to us. I use this knowledge every day. Sometimes I’m aware of it; sometimes I’m not. But I know that’s where it came from, that knowledge, that compassion, to appreciate humanity in its complexity – from the humanities,” Off explained.

“The most important thing we learn from studying literature is contradiction, that there can be contradictory ideas at the same time, that you can have them in your mind, that you can embrace contradiction. It’s a beautiful thing.”

Off was 21 when she walked into her first English lecture at Western. She was pregnant, recently married and had no plans of pursuing a career in journalism. She gave birth to her son during Reading Week of her first year, forging through to complete her degree in five years.

“The paper was there in the bin every day in the UCC and I was complaining to a friend saying, ‘It’s not even worth bending down to pick one up from the stack.’ And my friend said, ‘If you feel that way, why don’t you do something about it? I said I was planning to be a creative writer, novelist poet, whatever. I’m not going to be a journalist. But he persuaded me to either stop complaining or go and join – so I signed up,” said Off.

The Gazette, which the proud English student once snubbed, proved a fork in the road for Off. “If you feel that way, why don’t you do something about it?”

By then, I realized I was never going to be the novelist I wanted to be; I was going to be a journalist. I guess I never looked back.”

The Gazette started her career writing for the arts section of the student paper; Off was 21 when she walked into her first English lecture at Western. She was pregnant, recently married and had no plans of pursuing a career in journalism. She gave birth to her son during Reading Week of her first year, forging through to complete her degree in five years.

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Save the date for Founder’s Day, March 7

It’s a time for alumni, students, faculty and staff - wherever they are around the world - to reconnect and share in a celebration of everything #purpleandproud
BESc’99, has navigated his own path

From the high seas to high tech, Fraser Hall, BESc’99, has the résumé to back it up.

The computer engineer who has travelled up and down the West Coast, spent time on the high seas bringing poachers to justice, started two companies and now, as a founder of Vancouver Founder Fund, is helping aspiring entrepreneurs get their big break.

Even choosing Western from his home in Kelowna, BC, was somewhat uncommon. After touring “out East” universities, Hall chose Western for its academic reputation and well-rounded people. Or, as Hall put it – a campus full of “not necessarily just super-nerds.” He also admits to being well-rounded people. Or, as Hall put it – a campus full of “not necessarily just super-nerds.” He also admits to being

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I was pretty nerdy; I still am,” laughed Hall. “I was very salty from life at sea. Once I got off the boat, I decided to go to the University of British Columbia and do my MBA, figuring school was the best way to transition back to land, friends, etc.”

When he and a few friends wrote a business plan for a heads-up display company – smart eyewear with an integrated computer display. Hall landed a day job in real estate development while he worked on the business plan at night.

After two years, he quit real estate and jumped full time into the business. He reassembled the group from business school and founded what was to become Recon Instruments in 2008. Recon was the first technology company to design and develop smart eyewear products for sports and high-intensity environments. The company’s products delivered live activity metrics (location, speed, altitude, temperature), GPS maps, and notifications to a tiny screen in front of the user’s eye. Their first offering, a ski mask with an integrated display, was released in 2010, well before Google Glass made its splashy debut.

“After eight years of that, never drawing a salary, living off ramen, experiencing the ups and downs of the business, constantly battling to raise money, we sold the business to Intel Corporation in 2015,” Hall said. Terms of the sale were not disclosed but rumoured to be worth millions.

In the later days of Recon, Hall started another business, with a different set of co-founders, known today as Article, an online-only, direct-to-consumer furniture retailer with a modern aesthetic, delivered simply and efficiently.

Founded in 2013, Article promoted their brand on Instagram, where it now has more than 260,000 followers, and they tested their products with small production runs, refining plans based on what sold and what didn’t. Their strategy is working, with sales expected to double to $200 million in 2018.

This experience of starting, growing and ultimately selling a company gave Hall insight into the start-up process. He saw the venture industry was starved in Canada. Despite the presence of talented entrepreneurs, prestigious universities and a highly qualified workforce, there hadn’t been a surge in seed funding.

So he launched a fund to address the shortage. The Vancouver Founder Fund (VFF), a venture capital firm ‘built by founders for founders,’ leads early-stage financings for companies based in the Pacific Northwest. The fund typically supports start-ups focused on software, but considers a broad spectrum of companies and industries where they feel they can add tangible value – the only caveat being the potential for rapid growth.

Over the course of two and a half years, the company has invested in 10 companies.

Today, Article and VFF share office space in downtown Vancouver and for now, Hall is enjoying the mix of running Article while sharing his experience and expertise with upstart entrepreneurs.

That is, until the next adventure comes calling. **…**
Pioneering researcher Tebello Nyokong, PhD’87, carries hopes, dreams of continent

It is difficult to know where to start the story – so far of Tebello Nyokong. Perhaps it should begin with the renowned chemist being named, alongside the likes of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, among the icons of South Africa for her pioneering research of photo-dynamic therapy as a cancer treatment. Or, maybe with Nyokong’s current leadership of a joint Africa-Canada consortium, that could mean a new way of purifying drinking water for an entire continent.

Instead, we will begin here: It would be too easy to start with Nyokong’s connection to Western, where the impassioned scientist earned her PhD. After earning her master’s, she arrived at Western. Purifying drinking water for an entire continent.

By the time Convocation took place in 1987, she was back in Lesotho working to change the world at a university that had few of the resources she needed.

“Let’s be honest, when you are in Canada, you have state-of-the-art equipment. You are thinking, your brain is forever thinking about new ideas. You are dreaming. Then you come back to Lesotho and there is absolutely nothing – no facilities, no allowance for that type of engagement. You become dry.”

“I’m not the only one. People educated in Western schools return and they cannot continue their education because they do not have the facilities. In the sciences, we need help, we need an infrastructure. That was our greatest frustration – I could not exercise my brain.”

She was offered a position as lecturer at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. Her work and leadership there quickly earned her an appointment as a professor, then a distinguished professor.

Moving to South Africa, where the social and economic scars of apartheid linger, had its difficulties. “But in terms of research, I have is Canadian. They came here to work in my country. But there is so much to be done and she is eager to move it along. “People think when you work hard you don’t have a life. You can work hard and have a life.”

Nyokong continues to be hands-on in the lab – and she sleeps little.

“My mind is always active. People say they burn out. I can’t understand it,” she explained.

She admitted to demanding much from the students and researchers who compete to be able to work with her. But there is so much to be done and she is eager to move it along. “People think when you work hard you don’t have a life.

Likewise, she holds both admiration and high standards for her students – born in Lesotho in Canada and South Africa – who are now adults with careers of their own. “They are doing ‘differently better’ than I have. ‘Differently better’ is not about making money. It’s about making a difference.”

Africa has a wealth of young talent just waiting to be found – figuratively placing a molecular bull’s eye on cancer cells. For this, and her related research, Nyokong won the prestigious Africa-Arab State 2009 L’Oréal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science.

“I’m not the only one. People educated in Western schools return and they cannot continue their education because they do not have the facilities. In the sciences, we need help, we need an infrastructure. That was our greatest frustration – I could not exercise my brain.”

Nyokong holds a Department of Science and Technology-National Research Foundation professorship in medicinal chemistry and nanotechnology. She is also director of the DST Nanotechnology Innovation Centre at Rhodes University, which has attracted scientists from across Africa and around the world.

“We actually have brain gain. One of the staff members I have is Canadian. They came here to work in my country. We are getting brain gain because we have the facilities.”

Her interdisciplinary team is seeking to develop a specialized kind of photo-dynamic therapy to battle cancer. Instead of undergoing chemotherapy, patients would be administered a specific drug that would be activated with laser light – figuratively placing a molecular bull’s eye on cancer cells.

For this, and her related research, Nyokong won the prestigious Africa-Arab State 2009 L’Oréal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science.

Her latest work is “a huge project” that includes a consortium of researchers in Canada and Africa working to find new ways of sustainable water purification.

When rain or water resources are scarce, there needs to be a made-in-Africa way of recycling, purifying and re-using what little water is sometimes available. “We are chemists. The same principles used in killing cancer can, at the same time, be used in killing bacteria in water.”

In a real sense, that girl who started tending sheep in the Lesotho mountains now shepherds young scholars and researchers.

More science needs to take place in Africa, by Africans, and not just for girls and women, she stresses.

“Boys are removed from education very early so they can go and take care of their families. You can promote (science) to girls but you also need to be aware of the fact boys also need encouraging. I am sincerely driven by promoting young people. That is my greatest passion. I feel we need to create leaders, particularly from the African continent, who are disciplined, who know the value of hard work, who are honest and are accomplished.”

Nyokong continues to be hands-on in the lab – and she sleeps little.

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“They are doing ‘differently better’ than I have. ‘Differently better’ is not about making money. It’s about making a difference.”

Africa has a wealth of young talent just waiting to be found and nurtured, she believes. That talent is slowly emerging from the city suburbs, rural villages and even remote sheep pastures. The world will always present obstacles for learners, but they are surmountable, Nyokong insists.

“Your brain should not be determined by your circumstances.”

A vision of home

BY DEBORA VAN BREKING, BA’86, MA’87 (JOURNALISM)
Paul Soles, BA’53, wants you to understand that growing old is a monumental pain in the ass. Encroaching double vision may cost him his driver’s license. Prostate cancer has become an everyday reality. He takes drugs to hold things up and keep things down. “At my stage, it’s another day, another doctor,” he laughed. “If it’s Tuesday, it’s Dr. Bernstein. If it’s Friday, it’s Dr. Williams. If it’s Thursday, it’s Dr. Stewart.”

Raised in Toronto during the Depression, Soles’ father was a traveling salesman of infant novelties and children’s clothing, who always spoke well of his trips to London. So when it came time for the younger Soles, an “average-to-lazy student,” to choose a university, he picked Western – sight unseen.

“I was an 18-year-old kid who had never been away from home. At Western, I learned about the whole world – and loved it. The discovery. The comradery. The spirit of the school. It didn’t take long to learn ‘Western, Western U, college fair and square.’”

For veteran actor Paul Soles, BA’53, growing older is another performance to embrace. The idea isn’t just about what my character has learned about growing old, but also what he can learn from those who are young and don’t know what it is like to have had another life, or another set of values or culture, different from the one they have now.”

The subjects discussed are universal – life, death, sex, frustration. Everything was arranged to give London a particularly rich heritage. What an exciting time.”

“Because of the CBC, people all over knew what a good pool of actors there were in Toronto,” Soles explained, crediting Canadian actor versatility to their American and British influences. “Orson Welles himself said the world’s best English-speaking acting voices were in Canada.”

Thanks to timing and location, plus incredible talent, Soles became a fixture in radio and television, as well as theatre and film, over the next several decades where his face and voice have become instantly recognizable. His credits are too numerous to list. He has appeared on Broadway in Macbeth with Christopher Plummer, LL’D’04, and Glenda Jackson; on film with Edward Norton in The Score, on radio, alongside hundreds of programs.

Soles holds a special place for pop culture fans. He provided the voice of both Hermy, the elf who wants to be a dentist, in the 1964 stop-motion classic Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, as well as the original voice of Spider-Man in the 1967 cartoon series of the same name. As those shows pass landmark anniversaries, Soles has become a popular convention guest in the United States and Canada.

Soles always loved his Saturday afternoons at the movies and when a high school English teacher cast him in a one-act play, Soles enjoyed it. “But I am not sure I can tell you why,” he said. Not big enough for football or hockey, Soles arrived at Western and gravitated toward the London Little Theatre and the university’s long-standing production company Purple Patches.

Humbly crediting his career success to “more good luck than good management,” his arrival in London was timed to the city’s cultural golden age. Broadway plays arrived in London almost as soon as the runs ended in New York. The quality of the city’s theatre troupes and musicians, combined with the sophistication and wealth of the audience, made London a popular arts destination.

“He was developing,” Soles said. “You had wealth, education, proximity to everything, right there in London. Everything was arranged to give London a particularly rich heritage. What an exciting time.”

Nevertheless, at 87, the iconic Canadian stage, screen and voice actor of the last seven decades has found new life in a young person’s medium. His latest effort, Sir, has not only introduced him to a new generation of fans, he produced the voice of both Burgundy, the mouse, and Dr. Seuss, the patent attorney, in The Lorax, the 2012 cartoon feature. Despite the fact that the Lorax, Dr. Seuss’ creation, is a single-eared creature, Soles was able to change his voice to fit the part. “I have done things to myself that I suppose I am lucky to be 87. I still wonders what his mother would think of him saying. He appreciates its underlying message of both an old dog and a new dog learning new tricks.

“If you can, there is no job better – and I can always use the money.”

Alumnigazette.ca
Newsworthy Career

Alumna rises to the top as President of CTV News

Even after a quarter century, Wendy Freeman, BA’86, is still drawn to the energy of the newsroom. “When breaking news happens, I get to go out into the newsroom and just be part of the team, be part of history, and see it unfold first-hand,” she explained. “That’s my favourite part of the job.”

Having started at the bottom of the industry, Freeman is no stranger to the hard work of news. Today, as President of CTV News, she carries the lessons learned during those long hours and late nights to lead one of the nation’s largest news-gathering organizations into an uncertain future.

“The 24-hour news cycle means you are never offline as big stories break without warning,” she explained. “But if you are curious about the world, and love to tell stories, if you want to see the world and witness history, it’s an amazing, amazing career.”

Originally from Montreal, Freeman was drawn to Western after visiting her brother, David Freeman, BA’83, who was working at CKWV at the time. “That was the visit I fell in love with the campus,” she explained. “I thought, ‘I have to go here one day.’”

Deciding on a school was no problem; deciding on a program was another story. “I was one of those students who switched their major every two weeks,” explained Freeman, who was followed to campus by her sister, Carole, BA’87. “Ultimately, I landed on Philosophy; I loved the classes — they involved deep, critical thinking and in-depth, thoughtful discussion.”

After graduation, Freeman started working at the now-defunct CKO all-news radio in Toronto. “I started in journalism right at the bottom. My first job in radio news was basically ‘ripping wire.’ News would come in through the wire service, I’d rip it, re-write it and get it to air,” she said.

She moved around, assuming new roles and gaining experience at various stations including City TV in Toronto, WXYZ-TV in Detroit and a stint at WNYW-TV in New York City before joining CTV in the early 1990s. It has been home ever since.

She started as a story producer on Canada AM, became a field producer for the CTV National News, and was hired first as an assignment editor and then executive producer of the National News with Lloyd Robertson and Sandy Rinaldo. Eventually, she became vice-president and then president.

“I really started at the bottom, took on any opportunity and worked my way to the top,” she said. “I was someone who did it all.”

Named President of CTV News in 2010, Freeman presides over all Bell Media news editorial content and newsgathering efforts for television and digital, and oversees the newsrooms’ day-to-day operations. Since then, she has been responsible for news, information and current events programming, including the CTV National News, CTV News Channel, BNN Bloomberg and CP24, as well as Question Period, Power Play and W5.

Under her leadership, the CTV News division has been recognized with the Radio-Television News Directors Association Bert Canning Award for Best Newscast for CTV National News for four consecutive years, as well as nine Canadian Screen Awards since 2014.

Despite the success, however, it is the energy of news that keeps her going. “There is no ‘typical work day.’ You never know what’s going to happen in the news; no day is ever the same,” she explained. “I wake up and wonder, ‘What’s going to happen today?’ It’s like starting every day with a clean slate.”

Today, she finds herself leading an industry in transition as audiences shift from traditional television viewing to online and mobile devices. While daunting, Freeman finds this newest challenge invigorating. “We are in an age of disruption. I like a challenge,” she explained. “People are cord-cutting and not watching television anymore. But people will always be interested in big news-stories and live events. We need to be there for every one at all times, on every platform, and in real time.”

People will always watch the news. What’s changing is how they watch it. We have to deliver the news in a way that’s compatible with the viewer’s device of choice — phone, television, iPad, computer, etc. Because the news is never going away.”

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Taking a chance

Stephen de Boer’s journey to represent Canada on the world stage started with the courage to go ‘down the road’

BY ADELA TALBOT, BA’08, MA’11

Stephen de Boer felt brewing as early as he can remember. Growing up in a small town of four children to immigrant Dutch parents, he sensed the restlessness early. It grew in tandem with a quiet self-doubt.

What he didn’t know was that he would find his legs—and a footing that would take him around the world—from an early age to leave home. When I was in high school, I was interested in doing a Rotary exchange and leaving the country for a year. Part of that was birth order, but to a certain extent, I had to do it. I had to call into question what I had been taught. I had that experience of being given a chance, and I had to take advantage of it, and I had to make the most of it.

When he arrived at Western, de Boer knew Western was the right fit. He didn’t really consider “the school down the road.” But when he arrived on campus for a tour, de Boer knew Western was the right fit. He didn’t really consider “the school down the road.” But when he arrived on campus for a tour, de Boer knew Western was the right fit.

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While he was in law school, the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement was in negotiations; the 1988 election was looming and he saw Canadians starting to engage in discussions of free trade, though “not in any sophisticated way.”

While de Boer was interested in contributing to the conversation, his path to the WTO took a winding, global route with stops in Poland, Morocco, Argentina and India—among others—as he pursued a career in law, climate change and trade.

After a stint in the Ontario provincial government, de Boer joined Global Affairs Canada in 2005, working in Investment Trade Policy and North America Trade Policy Divisions. The following year, he was named Director of the Softwood Lumber Division, later shifting gears and serving as Director of the Oceans and Environmental Law Division and Lead Counsel for Canada’s international climate change negotiations. In 2010, he joined Environment Canada as the Deputy Chief Negotiator for climate change and the Director General responsible for Canada’s international climate change negotiations and partnerships. He took the reins of the Trade Controls Bureau in 2013, serving for two years before becoming the Ambassador to Poland, then Ambassador to Belarus. He has served as Canada’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization for the past year.

“I haven’t made a lot of deliberate choices in my career,” de Boer said. “Most of the things that happened to me have been at the request of someone in senior management.”

People say there are all these secrets to success—but doing a good job is quite underrated. You can spend a lot of time making sure you get face time with your boss, you could be very political about it, or you could put your head down and do a good job and people will notice.

Part of his success can be attributed to taking risks, often embracing opportunities that seemed too difficult—even unappealing—at first. De Boer was habitually hesitant to turn these down; he didn’t want to pass up opportunities that could have afforded.

“When I was asked to do something hard, I thought it could be really good because the last time I did something hard, it worked out really well. It was personally satisfying and professionally it moved me forward.

“Students are looking for the magic bullet—but there isn’t necessarily a magic bullet. Doing a good job and showing up isn’t rocket science, but it’s worth remembering,” he said.

De Boer sees his career and work very much aligned with the theme of multilateralism—which is increasingly presenting a challenge for Canada in both trade and climate change.

“Canada will do good in the world to the extent that we engage with the world. We have to leave at some point and come back—I hope. I would encourage students to spend a year abroad, do a graduate degree abroad, and if you are at Western, you have the opportunity to do that. I get the cold feet, the thinking that maybe this isn’t the right thing to do, but you should do it.”

Canada’s economic dependence on the United States won’t change overnight, he added, though the government is working towards diversifying trade with the Canada-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. There is promise, and there is momentum. De Boer is responsible for building on that and creating markets for Canadian goods and services in diverse contexts.

He knows multilateralism is made possible by forging and fostering international connections and hopes moments would take advantage of international opportunities.

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Joelle Faulkner appreciates farmers – she also helps farmers appreciate their land.

Faulkner, BESc/HBA’05, is President and CEO of Area One Farms, an innovative private equity firm that has developed a new model for investing in Canadian farms. At the same time as Area One helps family farmers expand on and improve their acreage, it helps investors find partnerships that are secure, motivated and growing.

Faulkner, who grew up in the city in a family with a long history of farm management, started the business five years ago, following a stellar postsecondary academic career that began at Western.

A Londoner, Faulkner finished a combined, five-year degree in Chemical Engineering and Business in four years – an accelerated pace that reflects both her drive and her focus.

"By the time you go to university, you either have work ethic or you don’t. That’s established before your 20s, and then you have a set of various opportunities to develop that,” she said.

Finishing her degree early, she applied for and received a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University. Faulkner studied law at Oxford for two years. Then, as a Fulbright Scholar, she earned a master’s in law at Stanford University in California and stayed there to work in medical device design before returning to Ontario.

After a brief stint as a design consultant, she became an advisor to the late Joseph Rotman, BA’57, LLD’09, chairman of investment firm Roy-L Capital Corporation and one of the country’s leading investors and philanthropists.

In 2013, Faulkner began Area One, a company predicated on the idea farmers and investors can each benefit from having equity in the land.

"If you want to be in partnership with the best farmers, then I want to give them what they value, and I believe they value appreciation. If I want to do that, then what does the investor need to participate in to make this work?"

It is, she says, a new economy of agriculture, taking into account the needs of investors, whether they work on Bay Street or in a field on a dirt road.

She calls it “third-kid financing” – that is, financing that helps stretch the capacity for families who want to pass the farm along to the next generation beyond the first and second child, but who don’t have enough land and/or capital to make it happen.

“If you want to bring a kid home, if you want to tell them you have a place for them on the farm, relative to other options, you have to give them some predictability that they have a long-term option to stay.

“That’s the gap we work in.”

Now the company has invested in 100,000 acres, most in Western Canada. That’s where the land is highest in potential, far from urban centres, she says.

"The joke is, I go to a city you may not want to live in, and then I drive four more hours. It’s really, really great land that is primed for productivity.”

While some would-be investors have pressed for a larger share of the pie, Faulkner pushes back. Understanding how farmers think, and understanding both the economy of agriculture and the business of business, makes this work, she says.

"I am building something that has to be good for the farmer and, if it is, then it will be good for everyone. We’re trying to build a business that does the right thing.”
How do you solve a problem like Tequila?

By Jeff Renaud

In the early days of Tequila Tromba, Eric Brass, HBA’05, faced a huge obstacle. And knowing the formula for ‘discounted cash flow’ by heart wasn’t going to help. Thank god Ivey Business School also teaches students how to solve a problem or two—or maybe a million.

Fast-forward a few years. Tromba is now the No. 2 premium tequila in Canada and one of fastest growing tequilas brands in North America, but at the time, Brass and his partners knew they had an exceptional product. They just lacked the resources (read: money). Industry insiders told Brass he needed at least $1 million to get Tromba off the agave plant, but the most he could rustle up was $20,000 from his savings and some family and friends. So like any good Ivey grad worth a lick of salt, Brass got solving.

“A lot of really smart guys told me that we needed $1 million to launch a tequila brand in a major market like Ontario and they weren’t wrong,” laughed Brass. “The only thing to do was to go around and speak to the bartenders and have them taste Tromba and fall in love with it. And we did just that. We backpacked bar by bar, bottle by bottle, and we ended up the No. 1 tequila in bars and restaurants in the province. And we’re very proud of that.”

Problem solved.

And guess what? Brass didn’t need to know his discounted cash flow to find his answer.

“I can memorize the formula for discounted cash flow from a textbook, but do you know how many times I’ve put a discounted cash flow together in the real world? I don’t remember a time when I’ve done that,” Brass quipped. “Even when we’re evaluating our business nobody asks for a discounted cash flow.”

That’s the Ivey difference. Of course, Brass says there is a time and a place (and an importance) for memorizing the definitions of ‘debt,’ ‘dividends’ and ‘discounted cash flow’ but the thing Ivey does best is teach its students to solve problems based on a learn-by-doing approach. It’s called the Ivey case study method. And it works. You just might not know it at first.

“I definitely didn’t appreciate that approach when I was going through Ivey. I just didn’t see the tangible benefit,” said Brass, who also mentioned his entrepreneurship class with Eric Morse as an Ivey highlight. “It’s not like taking a test and getting right and wrong answers. It’s a bit fuzzy. But even with my first job in investments and asset management, I understood exactly why and how it works. It trains you to become a great problem solver. And you start to approach problems almost subconsciously. Just take a step back and every problem is just like a case. You don’t even have to think about it. It’s kind of ingrained in your mind. It just clicks. Now I’m a really great problem solver and I credit Ivey with that.”

What isn’t a problem for Brass and Tromba is the quality of the tequila. That’s because one of his partners is Marco Cedano, the ‘godfather of modern premium tequila.’ While at Ivey, Brass studied in Mexico as part of an international exchange. One of the life-long friends he made during his stay was Rodrigo Cedano, the son of the legendary tequila maker. The elder Cedano was the original master distiller at Don Julio. Now, both Cedanos are partners in Tromba.

“Marco is really our big advantage. His son and I became friends when I was on exchange. When we came up with the idea for Tromba, we thought better be lucky than smart, so we pitched him on being our master distiller. That’s like asking Wayne Gretzky to play for your men’s league hockey team,” Brass said.

“We thought he would tell us to bugger off, but he actually said he was interested because he’d never been a partner. He’d always been an employee and never had full control of the production

GOING TO THE CEEPS AND JIM BOB’S, MOST PEOPLE DON’T HAVE A GOOD TEQUILA STORY. THEY HAVE A BAD TEQUILA STORY.”
process. Well now he does. At Tromba, Marco and Rodrigo oversee every single step of the production process."

When asked point blank the difference between a good tequila – let alone a premium one – and a bad tequila, Brass didn’t flinch.

"There is definitely bad tequila. Most people have had bad tequila because it’s a mix of 51 per cent agave tequila and 49 per cent sugar distillate, corn syrup and caramel and I had many of those when I was going to Western," admitted Brass unabashedly. "That’s what I thought tequila was. Going to The Coors and Jim Bob’s, most people don’t have a good tequila story. They have a bad tequila story."

Tromba, like other premium tequilas, is 100 per cent agave but even those tequilas aren’t created equal.

"Think of tequila like a steak," offered Brass. "You can get a steak at an OK restaurant or you can get a steak at a fancy, top-of-the-line steak house like Morton’s. They’re both steaks but the meats are different grades; they’re seasoned a different way, they’re marinated a different way and they’re cooked in a different way. There are many, many things that separate one steak from another steak. And they’re priced accordingly. It’s everything from soup to nuts. Everything from raw materials to how they’re plated is different but they’re still both steaks. And the same things goes for 100 per cent agave tequila. Some are good quality, some are not."

Tromba is good quality. And it’s a good story. That’s a problem that doesn’t need solving.
Friday, October 19

WESTERN MUSTANGS SPORTS HALL OF FAME DINNER
5:00 p.m. Reception
6:30 p.m. Dinner
The Great Hall, Somerville House
Honouring extraordinary athletic alumni.
$75 per person. Advanced registration required.

Saturday, October 20

ALUMNI TAILGATE AND BBQ
10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Huron Flats Parking Lot, TD Stadium
Live music, children’s activities, a commemorative photo opportunity and free Homecoming giveaways while supplies last. Learn more about the purple perks program and receive special offers. This is a dry event. BBQ lunch available for $5.

SOUTH END ZONE EXPERIENCE
11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. TD Stadium
Join us for eats and jets in style at field level in the South End Zone. Watch your 2017 Vanier Cup Champions play the Laurier Golden Hawks in what promises to be some great football action. Lunch takes place between 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and the game kicks off at 1:00 p.m. Experience includes tented area, lunch off the grill, access to a private cash bar and a game ticket.
Lunch and game ticket prices:
Adult (13+): $45 Section D reserved seat/$40 general admission seat
Youth (12 & Under): $45 Section D reserved seat/$25 general admission seat

THE GAME: WESTERN MUSTANGS VS. LAURIER GOLDEN HAWKS
1:00 p.m. TD Stadium
Football tickets only:
Call 519-661-4077 or order online at westernmustangtickets.ca

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY DINNER
5:00 p.m. Reception
6:00 p.m. Dinner
The Great Hall, Somerville House
Join your classmates from 1968 and earlier for an elegant evening featuring a three-course meal and musical entertainment. Golden reunion pins will be bestowed.

Explore Western’s new and iconic spaces
Building tours provide a chance to see campus changes close up

Saturday, October 20

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Official re-opening at 11:00 a.m. followed by tours until 12:30 p.m.
(Corren Hall)
Following four years of renovations, the home of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities has been restored to its grandeur. Don’t miss this chance to see how one of the first buildings to grace Western’s campus has been transformed.

NEW ENGINEERING BUILDING
(THREE C+)
Annual open house and tours
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Atrium)
A project unlike any other in Western’s history, the new Engineering building is informally dubbed Three C+ for its spaces to connect, collaborate and create. A potential Platinum LEED building, Three C+ is a living laboratory and a showcase for intelligent and sustainable design.

MUSIC BUILDING
Tours 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
(Looby)
Grand opening 4:00 p.m.
(von Kuster Hall)
Stop by to see the exciting new rehearsal, performance and classroom spaces as a result of a $23.5-million renovation project, including a five-storey tower in the courtyard space between the Music Building and Talbot College.

Come home and connect.
Start making plans to come back to campus for Homecoming – everyone is welcome!
Complimentary parking available in most campus lots after 4 p.m. on Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday during Homecoming weekend.

For more information, including a complete listing of all Homecoming events and registration information, visit westernhomecoming.uwo.ca, email alumni@uwo.ca or call our Homecoming Hotline at 519.661.2199 and let us help create your best Homecoming ever!

Join the conversation
@westernuAlumni @westernualumni facebook.com/westernuniversity

westernhomecoming.uwo.ca
Events at a glance

Friday, October 19

Western Mustangs Sports Hall of Fame Diner, The Great Hall, Sonnenville House
5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 20

Alumni Tailgate and BBQ, Alumni Park Parking Lot, TD Stadium
10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

South East Experience, TD Stadium
12:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Homecoming Football Game, Laurier vs. Western, TD Stadium
1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Golden Anniversary Dinner, The Great Hall, Sonnenville House
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Friday, October 19

Don Wright Faculty of Music - Grand Opening, von Kuster Hall, Music Building
2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Don Wright Faculty of Music - Grand Opening & Reception, Talbot College & Music Building
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Education - Homecoming Alumni Concert, Music Building Grand Opening & Reception
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Information & Media Studies - Homecoming Speakers & Panel, FIMS/Nursing Building
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Ivey - Lecture Series, Richard Ivey Building, 1255 Western Rd.
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Schulich Medicine & Dentistry - Dean’s Welcome & Lunch, BMO Financial Group Auditorium, Richard Ivey Building, 1255 Western Rd.
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Schulich Medicine & Dentistry - Alumni Lunch, Physics & Astronomy Building Atrium
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Schulich Medicine & Dentistry - Dean’s Distinguished Lecture with Dr. Paul Polak, MD’58, DSc’08, Medical Sciences Building Rm. 146
10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Social Science - Meet the Dean at The Ceeps, 671 Richmond St.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Library - Archives Tour with Rare Books and Treasures, Archives & Research Collections Centre, D.B. Weldon Library
10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Information & Media Studies - Alumni Cocktails, Talbot College & Music Building
5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Engineering - Annual Open House and Tours, Three C+ Building Atrium (new Engineering building)
12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Don Wright Faculty of Music - Concert with Adriana Piccininzi, Musa 95, DClk 92, Music Building, von Kuster Hall
12:30 m. - 1:20 p.m.

Some events require advance registration. Visit westernhomecoming.uwo.ca for details. For a complete listing of all events, including athletic events and those hosted by Brescia, Huron and King’s, visit westernhomecoming.uwo.ca.
They called it Bovine Lipid Extract Surfactant (BLES). With the assistance of Dr. Graham Chance, Director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, St. Joseph’s Health Care London, they began their attempts to treat premature newborns.

“You need to treat them before the lungs are damaged. You’re buying them time until they can produce their own surfactant,” Possmayer said. It worked. Testing showed the surfactant needed to be given early, immediately at the first sign of RDS.

“If you give BLES, there’s an improvement in breathing within 10 minutes and usually by 12 hours, surfactant function is normal.”

Possmayer and Enhorning’s 1985 paper - the world’s first randomized, controlled clinical trial - demonstrated surfactant therapy saved premature babies’ lives. This proved a turning point in premature newborn care around the world. The lab expanded to meet the newfound demand and included virtually every neonatal unit in Canada. “Other hospitals – Ottawa, Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, all over Canada – started using this stuff.” Morbidity and mortality rates among premature babies dropped.

Once Health and Welfare Canada approved BLES as a drug therapy, other countries signed on and BLES is now used in 20 countries. About 99 per cent of Canada’s neonatal intensive care units use BLES.

Now the process continues, as it is being investigated for use in adults suffering from acute lung injury. BLES Biochemicals, although no longer owned by Possmayer, continues to process and supply surfactant to hospitals around the world. Possmayer, now retired but still active in the Western community, is quick to deflect praise to others, including the support of his wife Mary; and to Enhorning, Yu, Chance (now Paediatrics Professor Emeritus), Dr. Paul Harding, Obstetrics and Gynecology Professor Emeritus and Dr. Victor Han, Western Paediatrics Professor and Canada Research Chair.

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In 2009, the Canadian Medical Association Journal and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research recognized Possmayer with the Top Canadian Achievement in Health Research Award. In 2015, he was named one of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry’s Alumni of Distinction. His publication authorship contributions, numbering more than 320, have been cited almost 10,000 times.

“Last I heard of him, he was a pre-med student.”

Together, Possmayer (left) and Dr. Shou-Hwa-Yu developed a method for mass processing Bovine Lipid Extract Surfactant (BLES).

Better than all the accolades, though, is the legacy of babies such as Tyler, born in 1988 at 26 weeks. Treated with BLES, then an experimental drug, the tiny infant recovered.

“Last I heard of him, he was a pre-med student.”

Introducing The Ivey Academy.

As a Western University graduate, you know there’s no limit to what you can become. At Canada’s leading centre for learning and development, you’ll find everything you need to realize your full potential. With new assessment tools, executive education and coaching, custom programs, and retreat packages, your best is yet to come. Plus Western alumni can receive up to a 25-per-cent discount. Learn more at iveyacademy.com
rom his earliest days on campus in the 1980s, to revolutionizing Canadian banking practices today, Rob Paterson, BA’90 (Philosophy), has never backed away from answering the hard questions he first learned to ask at Western.

“Think of all those global consulting companies where everyone went to biz school. What are you looking for in those companies when you hire them?” asked the CEO of Alterna Savings & Credit Union. “You are looking for people with problem-solving skills – the ability to frame problems, solve problems, resolve problems. “Biz school is fine. But I am a big proponent of arts degrees because of the critical-thinking skills they instill. Spending four years in Philosophy classrooms at Western set me up to be a critical thinker and effective communicator who can sell ideas across an organization, get a board onside and demonstrate that when you, say, decide to get into the medical cannabis space, it is not an off-the-cuff decision. You can go to the points of reason and rationale why.”

More on that in a moment.

Growing up in Paris and Hong Kong, Paterson was tech-literate before we knew what that meant. Between the computer lab at his international school in Hong Kong, the computer his dad brought home as CFO for IBM Asia, and an early Wozniak-days Apple in his bedroom, he was plugged-in long before he arrived on campus.

At Western, he used that knowhow to start a consulting company to help small London area businesses automate operations. He sourced equipment, built a curriculum for employee training and installed the hardware himself. “When I saw the difficulties these smaller companies were having automating, I knew I was able to come in and help them. And it wouldn’t just be one company; there were quite a few companies in London who needed this type of help,” Paterson said. “It was a great opportunity.”

Given a passion for debate, he embraced the free flow of ideas in his Philosophy classes. “It was there where I developed my own views and outlook on life. I was able to conflict with and debate with other students my age, as well as professors. The professors encouraged that even as debates ended in class and often continued in The Elbow Room.”

Following graduation, he spent his early career in massive organizations – CIBC, JPMorgan Chase, Aon Corp. and McKinsey & Co. But he longed for a challenge to define himself.

“When you are in large corporations, you can get by never knowing how much of success is you versus the infrastructure, the power of your brand or the big budgets they can put behind you.”

That was the attraction of the top post at Alterna. Among the oldest credit unions in the country, the organization was struggling to find its place in the modern banking world.

“There was this opportunity to come in and redo the entire organization from culture to capabilities,” Paterson explained. “I saw it as the ultimate test of myself. This was returning to my roots of running my own business – it was going to be up to me.”

Since taking the top spot in April 2012, Paterson has led a revolution in his organization.
and industry. He has radically altered fintech – financial technology – by shedding old thinking, developing creative partnerships and asking tough questions of his operation. He leverages the credit union’s nimble nature to create change; he embraces a loyalty to customers, not shareholders or analysts.

His successes are numerous, but it was his company’s decision to back a small medical marijuana company that woke up an entire industry.

Three years ago, an entrepreneur wanted to turn an abandoned Hershey chocolate plant in Smiths Falls, Ont. into a medical marijuana factory. Despite the almost limitless opportunity within the sector, and a firm legal foundation, big banks wanted no part of the business. Exhausting those options, the entrepreneur approached Paterson.

He passed. Then he paused. Why had he passed? “On surface, you hear ‘marijuana’ and people say, ‘Why would I want to be in that?’ But when you spend the time to problem-solve around it, you see this is something for Canadians who are in critical care. This was a real company with real objectives,” Paterson explained.

This was a business fully vetted by government, fully secured by law enforcement, and a needed product and service by customers. The Big Banks saw saying ‘yes’ as putting their other profitable areas at risk. Paterson, however, saw saying ‘no’ as putting their other businesses at risk due to law enforcement, and a needed product and service by customers. The Big Banks saw saying ‘yes’ as putting their other profitable areas at risk. Paterson, however, saw saying ‘no’ as putting their other businesses at risk due to law enforcement, and a needed product and service by customers.

“What am I to say I am not going to provide them services when I know that the people who are going to benefit are the people in critical care,” he explained. “When I look at what our roots are supposed to be—to exist for the benefit of our community, to aid and help our members from birth to death—there is not an ethical way to rationalize not providing these services. I had a problem if we didn’t do this. This was exactly what a credit union was to do.”

His board agreed—and what a success story they have to tell.

Today, Canopy Growth Co. is the world’s largest publicly traded marijuana producer, with a market value of more than $6 billion. On top of that, Paterson prides himself on the economic hope and life the company has injected into the once-tadling town. “They are providing quality jobs. The schools are filling up. The homes are filling up. That is what good banking is supposed to be. I am happy to say I had a part in that.”

As for Alterna, that initial ‘yes’ has grown. The company now has $730 million in pot-related loans and deposits and relationships with two-thirds of the 180 licensed producers. It is a success Paterson attributes to asking himself and his company the hard questions.

“This was the true test to see if we could be true to our roots. Here was something where we had to stand up and say, ‘Yes, we are going against everything a credit union stands for: ‘Why would I want to be in that?’ But when you spend the time to problem-solve around it, you see this is something for Canadians who are in critical care. This was a real company with real objectives,’ Paterson explained.

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“This was the true test to see if we could be true to our roots. Here was something where we had to stand up and say, ‘Yes, all those things we said we are here to do are demonstrating them on an actual hard issue.’”

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Breaking the uncomfortable silence

BY LINDA BARNARD

Natalie Novak was no more than five years old and she was fearless. A grinning little girl. A Muskoka lake. A summer day. On the dock, she did not hesitate. She flew down the water slide into the lake, splashing into water over her head, making sure to do it when her parents, Dawn and Ed, weren’t looking. She was the opposite of most kids, who holler: “Mom, look! Watch me!” Not Natalie. She didn’t want to be told “no.” She didn’t want to hear she couldn’t do something. Several years later, when her parents were out for the evening, she and her adored older brother, Nicolas, got the idea to leap from the second floor of their house into a pile of pillows on the floor below. Natalie went first,...

There are so many stories, so many memories. Dawn shares them while sitting in a chair by the fire in the living room. She smiles and laughs as she talks about her daughter. Her eyes fill occasionally. Ed can be heard in his studio just off the living room. He’s listening, always there for Dawn, but she tells the story. There’s a watch on her wrist. It has a fashionably chunky silver bracelet and small, blue crystal face. It’s a good watch, one that Natalie had saved up to buy. Years later, it was found among 20-year-old Natalie’s things after she was murdered in 2006, stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend in the bedroom of her Toronto apartment. Now Dawn wears it. How can Dawn bear to tell it again? There is such sorrow coming in this part of Natalie’s story, such heartbreak, frustration and anger about a death both predictable and preventable.

BY LINDA BARNARD

PHOTO BY FRANK NEUFELD
Jaffe says women need an “ongoing safety plan and prevention” that involves education for young people on healthy dating relationships. There are so many stories, so many memories. There is also a small urn containing some of her ashes.

Dawn didn’t know about or recognize the signs of abuse. Maybe she would run a hotel someday, but it had to be in a warm climate. She’d become fluent in Spanish.

They delighted in living like pioneers in the early years while Eid worked on the house. Dawn was a teacher, focusing in her career on special needs. They played basketball with the kids played in one part of the house while Eid worked on another.

In winter, Natalie skated on the ice rink Eid made on a flat patch of land. They played pool and Cowboys, Nickelodeon shows, full of questions and anxious to see the brilliantly coloured insects that fascinated her emerge and fly.

A photo of her intently examining a monarch butterfly in her gently cupped hands before it flies for the first time is one of her parents’ favourites.

For many, that photo has come to symbolize more than Natalie’s spirit. It has come to symbolize hope. The butterfly photo is the first that greet website visitors to the Natalie Novak Fund for the Education and Prevention of Relationship Violence.

When Natalie was killed, revealed nothing about what she was doing. Natalie was betraying her family. If only Natalie had been educated, she says. If only she knew any- thing about relationship violence. If only she had been connected to a woman’s shelter or support line. If only friends understood the danger she was in.

If Only ... Nat’s Story

“Natalie’s story is titled ‘If Only ... Nat’s Story.’”

You know it took us a long time to come up with the title and when it came, it was like we all just looked at each other and went ‘Oh my god, that’s it.’” Because there are so many ‘If Only’s’ in Nat’s story.

Dawn reads from the back of a pamphlet given out at her talks. If only Natalie had been educated, she says. If only she knew anything about relationship violence. If only she had been connected to a woman’s shelter or support line. If only friends understood the danger she was in.

“If she just knew this isn’t nothing, honey,” Dawn says. “My mission is just to protect young people with awareness and educa- tion and educate frontline workers.”

Dawn and Eid also created a comprehensive study, A Constructive Analysis of the Murder of Natalie Novak, which details the case and has been used as a policing teaching tool at Wilfrid Laurier University and police colleges in Aylmer and Orillia.

Natalie’s second-floor bedroom has been changed, but there’s still a painting of young ballerinas over the bed that Eid painted for Natalie. Her white figure skates are still in the closet. There’s a heavy earthy-brown mug Natalie loved in a low, glass-fronted cupboard, tucked among baby shoes, books and dried flowers. There is also a small urn containing some of her ashes.

Western’s research shows in 80 per cent of domestic homicides, at least seven risk factors were present. Natalie’s case had 21 warning signs of abuse.

For many, that photo has come to symbolize more than Natalie’s spirit. It has come to symbolize hope.
Farah Mohamed, MA95, LLD18, lifts up a world of opportunity for millions

BY KERI FERGUSON

In April 2017, Taliban assassination survivor, education activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai stood before the House of Commons and announced, “A Canadian will now lead the fight for girls’ education around the world.”

She was speaking of Farah Mohamed. Mohamed, MA’95, LLB 18, became the CEO of the Malala Fund last July, overseeing an organization co-founded by Yousafzai and her father, Ziauddin, to champion every girl’s right to 12 years of free, safe, quality education.

“All my life, I’ve been building up to this moment,” Mohamed said, referencing past roles in government, the non-profit governance boards in their communities. “All the people you meet along the way, they are mentors. Mentorship matters. Women can lift other women. You can make a difference in another’s life, why you should take time to invest in people. Mentorship matters. Women can lift other women. I really do believe Paddy, and Anne, set me up for this job.”

While the 48-year-old Mohamed may quip about having a “21-year-old boss,” her respect for Yousafzai is serious. “Malala’s incredibly wise, has incredible values, an incredible family. She never loses sight of what’s important. She never does the right thing for education because she is a successful, clever mother. She doesn’t take that lightly.”

Mohamed was just two years old when her family fled Uganda under the expulsion order of dictator Idi Amin, who, in a mass ethnic cleansing, gave Indian Ugandans just 48 days to leave the country. “How lucky am I they chose Canada?” Mohamed said of her country’s status.

Mohamed told the graduating class, “My parents had to flee a country where they were no longer welcome. Thank god they arrived in a country that did not assume they were criminals without her. Strategically, we have a good board that includes Canadian women between the ages of 18-25 on non-profit governance boards in their communities. Throughout her career, I have been given an incredible opportunity to help people in the way I was helped,” Mohamed said, and that now includes the 130 million girls around the world missing out on an education.

“I was pretty devastated by what I saw,” Mohamed said of the mass ethnic cleansing, giving Indian Ugandans just one night and at 4 a.m. I woke up and went, ‘Oh my god, we have to have a G20! I pitched it to Belinda and six months later we had our very first summit in Toronto.”

“It was my first really big risk in life,” Mohamed said of the program that invests in the entrepreneurial passion and leadership skills of girls around the world, allowing them to present their ideas on the global empowerment of women to leaders of the G20 Summit.

Mohamed also started the associated Girls on Boards, which trains and places civic-minded Canadian women between the ages of 18-25 on non-profit governance boards in their communities.

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“Mother, Father, connecting with donors and expanding into Latin America has been ‘full of wow’ moments for me,” Mohamed said, “because of the privilege of working on an issue I care so deeply about.”

Mohamed’s accomplishments have been recognized through both a Meritorious Decoration (2017) and a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award (2012) from the Governor General of Canada, and on lists including the World’s 100 Most Inspiring Women, BBC’s Top 100, Top 25 Most Influential Women in Canada, and RBC’s Top 25 Canadian Immigrants.

In June she received an honorary degree from Western, a particularly poignant occasion, given it was also World Refugee Day. “It is a global economic imperative that all girls, everywhere, are in school — that they stay there, they learn and they step out of school and into the workforce with 21st-century skills and capabilities. Simplicity stated, girls are the economic game-changers you need,” Mohamed said on Yousafzai’s behalf.

The result of an appeal made by the Malala Fund and its many partners was a historic $3.1-million investment in girls’ education, and was more about economics than altruism, Mohamed explained.

“They have to create jobs, they have to make sure the economy works, they have to make sure their societies and their countries are safe. They have to make sure there is opportunity for all. Check, check, check. If you educate girls, you’re really working on the safety and security of the country.”

The first year working alongside Malala and her father, connecting with donors and expanding into Latin America has been “full of wow” moments for me,” Mohamed said, “because of the privilege of working on an issue I care so deeply about.”

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"I was always very visual and very quick to visualize, interpret and imagine, to understand what something could be, what it would look like and all the implications therein," said the owner of the rejuvenated Drake, a now-iconic boutique hotel in West Queen West, a spot Vogue magazine listed among the world’s trendiest neighbourhoods.

That first walk-through of the Drake was not the first time. Stober saw — and created — new life between historic walls. Originally from Montreal, he arrived at Western in the late 1970s as part of the inaugural cohort of the Administrative and Commercial Studies program. The school was a good fit and London had that ‘university town’ feel Stober wanted to experience. Soon after, he was renting a basement apartment on Paul Street in an established neighbourhood traditionally reigned by a student population.

But Stober knew what he was working with even then. He knew what he liked, what he wanted and what he needed to do to make the vision he had into a reality.

"I was always very visual and loved creating environments. Even in those days, as a student, with all the furniture I was fortunate to collect from friends and family, I remember bringing a U-Haul out, choosing the right colour paint and making the furniture placement just so," said Stober, BACS’80.

This ability to visualize what could be, once the layers are peeled back, might just be Stober’s secret to success. Indeed, he sees everything as a blank canvas waiting to be primed. He knows there’s never a shortage of ideas; the trick is knowing which hunch to follow. And the life-long entrepreneur, who started a window-washing company as a teenager and operated side businesses while studying at Western, simply seems to have a knack for the hunch.

Stober often jokes he ended up in Toronto because he ran out of gas enroute from London to Montreal. In reality, he saw the kind of life he could create and fell in love with the idea — as he did with that of the Drake — you have to take the risk, he added. When he toured the property, he saw a space begging for a new lease on life.

"My attraction to the space in part represents a love of historic hotels that I’ve had since I was a kid, my love of artists, of culture in general, and in no small measure the relationship between the two, between artists and hotels. Artists have lived in hotels, died in hotels, bartered their art to sleep in a hotel; this had always fascinated me," Stober explained.

"When I saw the Drake Hotel, I found an opportunity for myself to reinvent a business model, a cultural community centre of sorts — kind of an oxymoron for hotels — where it would be a hotel as much for locals as for international travellers."

He stressed that every step of the way is a leap of faith. When he and his team started creating the Drake model, which now has become somewhat ubiquitous in its foundational principles of culture, community and hospitality, it was a risk.

But you have to go into this knowing the only constant will remain change, but also that, certainly, there will be one hurdle after another that you will have to resolve. The only way to do that is with a deeply entrenched culture that you create from the get-go," he added.

"If we have the blessing and opportunity to pursue our passions, to immerse ourselves professionally in something that is important and relevant and contributes to the world in a better way, I think we are doing a good job and that’s what we should all strive towards."
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“An education at Western makes dreams possible. I know my bequest will assist those who otherwise wouldn’t be able to have the experience of a lifetime. For me, it’s paying it forward.”

Nanci Harris, BSc’83, MLIS’87
Western alumna and donor

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In conversation with...

Warren Bongard, LLB’91, the new President of Western’s Alumni Association

HOME: Toronto, where I’ve spent my entire life with the exception of my three years at Western for law school.

FAMILY: I met my wife Kelly in 1997, got married in 1998 and had our first of three kids in 1999. We have 10-year-old son Jared, a 10-year-old daughter Carly and a 9-year-old son Harlan.

CAREER: After Western, I took a job on Bay Street as a corporate lawyer at Blaney McMurtry in 1998. Four years later, I got into the legal search firm business, establishing my own firm and then on-founding SSA in 1999, where I remain as President today.

TEAM: I’ve always been a Maple Leafs fan. I’m that guy who still believes the Stanley Cup will come back to Toronto! I was so in love with hockey that I started a player agency when I was practicing law where I had the opportunity to negotiate with some of my childhood heroes like Tony Esposito and Bobby Clarke.

CITY: I love to travel and recently returned from two weeks in Portugal and Spain. Madrid was amazing — such a great vibe. And I always like going back to southern California and Laguna Beach. The views are breathtaking and the weather is spectacular.

FOND WESTERN MEMORIES: Hosting the Western Law Games was right up there, especially one very early hockey game that had me going straight from the rink to the fridge at 6 a.m. Needless to say we lost that game. That, and also celebrating with my fellow students at the “Third Year Party”. It was such a great celebration of three years of intensive studies. Our class bonded so well and it was a chance to truly celebrate our accomplishments.

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For more information, please call Susan Henderson at 519.661.2111 ext. 85971
The friendships and fun enjoyed by Kappa Alpha fraternity brothers at Western in the early-mid 1950s inspired them to continue their connection, which led to the formation of the KAVOO group. Initially, a few members, including Bob Davis, Dick McDuffee, Don McKinley, and Wally Delahey, decided to meet every month to discuss golf. Over time, other alumni began to join, and the group evolved into a monthly investment club. The members enjoyed golf, barbecues, and catching up with each other. As the years went by, the group became known as KAVOO. Golf was the main event, complete with trophies and a 'best dressed' award, with old stories told and retold. As the years have gone by, several of the members have passed, but they are never forgotten. On June 9, 2018, the 60th KAVOO was celebrated in Waterloo. In 60 years, not one KAVOO has ever been missed. When asked how long they'll continue to hold KAVOO, the answer was clear: "KAVOO will happen as long as there are two guys who want to get together on the second weekend in June."
Moonlighting
Bruce Willis
with Cybill
premieres

CLASS NOTES
1985

John Finney, MA ’85, was honoured as an IABC (International Association of Business Communication) Fellow on June 2018 as the IABC global conference in Montreal in June. The IABC Fellow designation is the highest honour bestowed on an IABC member. Becoming a Fellow denotes a body of achievement by a communicator who has made a significant impact not only on their organization and IABC, but also on the communicators profession at large. John began his IABC career in 1985 with the London, Ont., chapter, where he filed many award submissions, chapter president. He went on to become director of Canada District Two, with chapters in eastern Canada and one in the Caribbean. John served as the IABC Chair in 1997-1998 and over the past 20 years has served on IABC’s Ethics Committee and as a Gold Gull Award judge. His professional career includes serving as director of corporate communications for two healthcare organizations and as a senior communication and change management consultant with Willis Towers Watson, a global human resources firm.

David W. Sandor, BA ’95, BSc ’96, retired in 2016 after 32 years of teaching secondary school physical education and other subjects in the Oxford County School Board, Japan and the Thames Valley District School Board. David shared his fond memories of Western when he brought his students to campus to visit the anatomy lab and soccer fields. He has been married to Beth Jones.

Graig, BSc ’16, for 20 years and they have three children. Retirement life for Graig will consist of travel, golf, fishing and fricking wherever and whenever possible.

Eric Stevenson, MRA ’85, recently received the T.B. Happy Fraser award, given annually since 1975 to an individual or organization that displays a long-term commitment to will Atlantic salmon conservation on a regional or national level. Since 1985, Eric has been based in Toronto and has actively led a venture capital syndicate whereby primary investments have been in unincorporated farm versus, early-stage companies, and product--and--in logistics management software. He serves as a Director of Environmental Defense, a non-profit organization dedicated to environmental education, research, education and advocacy for protection of human health and the environment. He serves on the Board of Caring for Recovery, and is a founding board member of the SREB initiative, which will establish a notifiable standard for environmentally sustainable aggregate mining in Ontario.

Antree C. Demakos, LLB ’93, was presented with the J. Shirley Denison Award at the Law Society’s Annual Awards ceremony at Osgoode Hall in Toronto May 23, 2018. Demakos received the prestigious award for his commitment to helping Canadians obtain better access to justice through legal aid. She is one of 10 award recipients to be recognized for their exceptional achievements and contributions. Called to the Bar in 1992, Antree has devoted her entire career to diversifying the law and helping millions of Canadians obtain better access to justice. Antree founded and continues to be the driving force behind LegalAid.ca, a federal non-profit organization. For 25 years, she has helped millions of Canadians obtain free legal answers and professional referrals through her pre-processed, 24-hour information telephone line, live telephone support and the website, LegalAid.ca.

In October 2017 and February 2018, Bruce Hart, PhD ’91 (Geology) taught as the 2017-2018 American Association of Petroleum Geology’s Society of Exploration Geologists Distinguished Lecturer. During his lectures, Hart gave lectures about an ice age that happened about 300 million years ago that started with an impact in the evolution and spread of land plants, and how sea level changes associated with the ice age created some unusual stratigraphic stacking patterns in North Dakota and Saskatchewan that have helped to lead to a careers in North American of production. The lectures were delivered at 17 different geoscience departments and professional geoscience societies, from Fairbanks to Roswell and Vancouver to Ottawa (including a stop at Western’s Department of Earth Sciences). Bruce currently works as a research geoscientist for Statoil, in Austin, Texas.

Eddie Patton, MLA ’95 (Music Education), recently released his debut album, SOLIS, which features his distinctive and diversified guitar playing across 12 tracks of Latin, adult contemporary, cinematic and pop music.

Matt Davison, MS ’93 (Physical Education), recently named the new Dean of Western’s Faculty of Science, effective July 1, 2018.

Justice Jennifer Brodarchik, BA ’95; Political Science, LLB ’99, was called to the bar in 2001. She was most recently the Crown Attorney, and previously an assistant Crown Attorney, for the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County. Justice Brodarchik is a volunteer member of the fundraising group 100 Women Who Care - Kawartha Lakes. Chief Justice Marc Monias has assigned Justice Brodarchik to preside in Peterborough.

Mark Davies, BA 95, was inducted into the 2018 Theology Summer School program at the University of Oxford, England. Previously Mark had earned a Diploma, then a Bachelor degree in Theology, and has just finished a Certificate in Anglican Studies from Thorneloe University at Laurentian.

In April 2018, Cynthia Lockery, BA ’95 (English), History, published her first book, Just Real Mom: Sweeney Pregnancy-Ridden Proj Rest With Your Sandy and Skinny Infant (Self-Counsel Press). The book helps women navigate the emotional and medical challenges of home and hospital-based bed rest. The book is based on Cynthia’s personal experiences with two high-risk pregnancies that resulted in bed rest, and shares the stories of women she has met along the way. Her second book Your Child’s Voice – A Caringer’s Guide to Advocating for Kids with Special Needs, Disabilities or Others Who May Fall Through the Cracks, is set to be released in September 2018, also by Self-Counsel Press.

Eric Strong, MRA ’93, received a Federal Governor in Council appointment as a Member (Part-Time) of the Military Grievances External Review Committee (MGERC). Formerly the Canadian Forces Grievance Board, MGERC, reviews military grievances and provides findings and recommendations to the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Canadian Armed Forces members who submitted the grievance. The Committee is an administrative tribunal independent from the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence and, as such, plays a unique role within the military grievance process.

Ged by also Mark Iskson, BA ’95, Canada continued its record of medalizing in every Paralympic Winter Games wheelchair curling competition by defeating Korea 5-3 to win bronze at the 2018 Paralympic Games on March 17.

John Dunlap, BACS ’82 (right), along with his son Sebastian and six others, set off on the 70-kilometre Lonesome route to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, 19,340 feet to the summit in Jan. 2018. The group was on a Reach Beyond Expedition to raise funds for Outward Bound Canada, which John recently joined as a Board Member. “We had prepared well physically, but you can’t prepare for the high altitude and the effects on your body. We chose a slow and steady eight days of camping, walking ‘pole pole’ (slowly in Swahili) and we reached Uluru Peak with snow and glaciers. We hiked through rain storms, vast alpine dwarf, and scrambled up Barranco Wall. All the while talking about life, our feelings, our goals and our challenges. Reaching the summit gave us a tremendous feeling of success and achievement, but that was a small part of the overall experience. The best part was sharing the expedition with my son.”

John Finney, MA ’85, was honoured as an IABC (International Association of Business Communication) Fellow on June 2018 as the IABC global conference in Montreal in June. The IABC Fellow designation is the highest honour bestowed on an IABC member. Becoming a Fellow denotes a body of achievement by a communicator who has made a significant impact not only on their organization and IABC, but also on the communicators profession at large. John began his IABC career in 1985 with the
2000s

Gloria Gilbert, MSc’02 (Phytotherapy has developed a website and written an eBook called Don’t Go To The Guilt stall to help people which contains information and resources, including exercise guidelines for people with invisible and visible problems as well as their family health providers. In 2011, Gloria was awarded an Honorary Life Membership Award from the Canadian Phytotherapy Association for her years of devoted service to her patients, colleagues and profession.


Michael Ament, BA’05, MA’07, an Arts & Humanities professor and former police officer, is the recipient of this year’s Western Humanitarian Award. Since 2011, he has worked with Western students to research unacknowledged historical incidents.

Amy Booth, BA’08 (Sociology), and her husband recently bought a farm in the country which has been a dream of Amy’s ever since she attended university.

2010s

Alexander Kopacz, BSc’15 (Mechanical Engineering) and Justin Kripps of Canada tied for gold with Germany in 2-Man Bobsleigh at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games in Korea on Feb. 19.

Hajer Abid, BSc’15 (Nutrition and Dietetics), recently got a full-time, permanent job at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine and got married in 2016.

Sarah Botehlo, BTAF, a singer-songwriter who goes by the stage name Poesy, beat out four up-and-coming artists, winning the right to release a new song on CTV’s The Launch. Her song, Stealer of Love, was written and produced by Academy Award-nominated hit-maker Stephen Moccio, BMI ‘04.

Helen Gregory, PhD’16 (Art and Visual Culture), has been named the new curator of Western’s McIntosh Gallery.

IN MEMORIAM
Harold A. Hodgkins, BA’62, died January 27, 2018 at age 96. He was an elementary teacher and principal who earned his degree by attending Western as a summer student. After 35 years of teaching, he turned his passion in piano recreation into a successful small business which occupied his retirement for about 30 years.

Wilfred T. Green, BA’74 (Economics), died February 2, 2018 at age 83 in London, Ont. Dr. Alexander Marshall Blair, BA’54, MAS’71, died February 1, 2018. He was a Geography Professor at York University. At the time of his death, he was living in Hamilton, Mississauga with his wife, Mary Elizabeth Blair. Daniel Durkan, MHA’07, died February 1, 2018 at age 63. His 30-year career as a collaborative musician included work with Great Phiharmonic Choir (Kitchener), music director at Baptist and Philharmonic Choir (Kitchener), community choir (Mississauga), dance (Tangle) as well as teaching (piano and vocal, examining (Canada Conservatory), and playing piano for innumerable concerts in Southwestern Ontario. Sensible, servant-hearted, and infinitely kind, he aspired to make others look and sound good.

Grant Reuber, BA’50, LLB’95, who served Western in multiple capacities, including as head of Economics and Sociology, the first dean of the Faculty of Social Science, as Provost & Vice-President (Academic), and eventually, as Chancellor died July 7, 2018 at the age of 90. Beyond his remarkable academic career as an economist, Reuber also served as deputy minister of finance under former Prime Minister Joe Clark’s Progressive Conservative government, as president and CEO of the Bank of Montreal and as a chairman of the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation. He was a Member of the Royal Society and the Order of Canada. Born in Medicine, Ont., Reuber graduated from Western with a B.A in economics. After earning his MA and PhD at Harvard University, he returned to Western as a professor of Economics where he quickly distinguished himself as an exceptionally able scholar and leader. As a scholar, Reuber was the first economist to explicitly use the inverse relationship between unemployment and inflation as a policy constraint. As a result, policy-makers could no longer justify polices that lowered inflation without worrying about raising unemployment, and vice versa.

Western Alumni
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CLASS NOTES
Moving away, growing up and gut-checking along the way

I recently read Ian McEwan’s 2007 book, On Chesil Beach. It’s such an astute observation of human nature and relationships that it takes things that are so familiar they’ve become invisible and spoils them out in a way that re-explains us to ourselves.

One of the protagonists, Edward, is a newlywed in 1962, mulling over moments in his life that have taken on that squeamish quality memories acquire when you see them much more clearly in retrospect. At one point, Edward recalls his fondness for the visceral clarity of the occasional fistfight when he was a student at University College London.

One specific night, he was headed to the pub with a friend. Harold was short, bespectacled, “maddeningly talkative and clever”— exactly the type Edward would have tolerated in his younger days but now appreciated. When they passed a couple of leather-clad rocker types in the street, one didn’t even slow down as he reached out to smack Harold across the back of the head. Edward immediately popped him square in the face, then returned to help his friend retrieve his broken glasses from the road. It took Edward several hours to recognize that Harold wasn’t grateful to him, and still more time to realize Harold was in fact embarrassed; their friendship withered.

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At first, Edward thought Harold’s pride was wounded, but eventually he understood “that what he had done was simply not cool,” McEwan writes. “What he believed was an interesting quirk, a rough virtue, turned out to be vulgarity. He was a country boy, a provincial idiot who thought a bare-knuckle swipe could impress a friend.”

Well, that’s a pretty solid summary of what it’s like to move away from where you grew up and then learn to grow up some more, isn’t it?

We tend to judge ourselves against the norms of our social context, but when those norms are what you’re used to, they become invisible, like old wallpaper. There’s not a rule you’re conscious of following, things just . . . Until, that is, you’re launched into a new world with fresh norms, and then the old ones become bafflingly obvious, and often outdated.

When you head off to university, this becomes clear most quickly in the context that’s easiest to rectify: fashion. A glance around Concrete Beach demonstrates that your ‘Exiting The Hometown’ haircut has more hometown in it than you maybe wanted, or that what was coveted in high school is gauche in your new world. In my high school, that was Ralph Lauren or Tommy Hilfiger sweatshirts that rendered the wearer a human billboard who’d paidhreadily for the privilege (it was the late 1990s in northern Ontario; we did the best we could).

But as Edward discovers, it’s the deeper stuff that takes longer to grasp and more work to recalibrate, with more potential embarrassment. You go on acting like the class clown because goshly not caring (or pretending to) was the way in high school, before you realize that earnestness and effort are now the coin of the realm. Or you still think you have to do everything with someone, but then you gradually realize that going your own way and being into your own weird stuff is fine—cool, even. What’s worth getting angry about and how to express that anger, what you judge or accept with a shrug, what you appreciate or complain about—you tend to shake it all out and scrutinize it anew.

A lot of this, of course, is simply about growing up, but there’s also something particular about being chucked together in a shared life with strangers who all have their own default settings that provoke that kind of reckoning and stretching. That’s not to say you become a human weathervane, perpetually twisting in someone else’s wind currents—moving past that is part of growing up, too— but there’s something about being in a place where basically your whole purpose is to sort things out that makes you inclined to, well, to sort things out.

Now, we have the Internet to be our Concrete Beach: a place where we can be constantly exposed to other people’s norms and gut-check our own notions that something must be a certain way because of course it is. But it hasn’t really turned that way, has it? Instead, suggesting to someone that perhaps there’s another way to see things is often the surest way to get them to double down on their own view, as we all cling ferociously to the baggage we arrived with.

We’d probably all be better off instead recapturing a little of that fish-out-of-water uncertainty that lends you a kind of naked openness, glancing around to see how everyone else is doing things and allowing for a personal reappraisal.

Shannon Proudfoot is an Ottawa-based staff writer for MacLean’s.
Pelmorex Corp. founder Pierre Morrissette (MBA’72, LLD’10) forecasted the future by turning a handful of television stations into a weather data empire that includes The Weather Network. Today, Morrissette inspires other Canadian entrepreneurs to embrace change and think big. And his bold vision for the future started at Western.

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