

Winter  
2007-2008



# Wisdom

Grande Prairie Regional College Magazine

**Designing  
a Natural  
Playscape**

**Game  
Developers  
on our  
Doorstep**

*In Conversation*  
**Don Gnatiuk**





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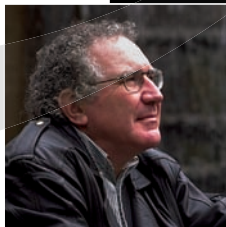
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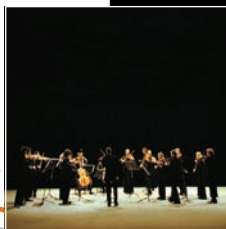
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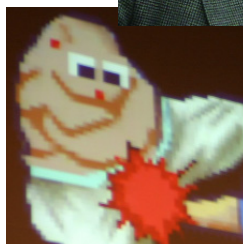
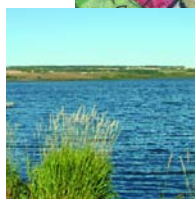
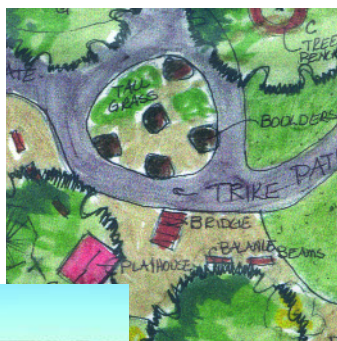
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## The Power of Philanthropy



Philanthropy is making a huge difference in our community. Over my 27 years of working in the not-for-profit sector, I have

learned it is not just ‘the rich’ or people who ‘can afford it’ who continue to make a difference. It is people like you and me. You may have heard the saying: ‘we may only be one person in the world; by we may be the world to one person.’ Each of us, if we choose, can give our time and/or money to causes that help advance our society.

In their book entitled ‘The Power of Giving,’ authors Azim Jamel and Harvey McKinnon make the following introductory statement: ‘We believe that giving is a fundamental human need - one that benefits both the recipients of the gift and the giver. While we are alive, giving fulfills us and taps into our innate gifts. The positive impact of giving remains long after we die, as we live on in the memories and good feelings of our friends, family and community.’ All else is forgotten.

If we survey our not-for-profit organizations like the College, QEII Hospital, Community Foundation, United Way and large capital projects like the Library/Gallery pro-

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– continued from page 3

ject, the Museum, Centre 2000, Evergreen Park and other worthy causes, we quickly see the ‘power of giving’ in our community.

The governments can not and should not have to do it all for us. Through the power of giving we are able to take our destinies into our own hands and determine what is best for our community, making our own decisions about how we as public institutions can best serve our community and our region. Which brings me to an excellent program that our government has in place, called Access to the Future! Every dollar raised by our College from the private sector may be matched by the Access to the Future Matching Funds program, up to a maximum of \$1.1 Million.

I am happy to report that we anticipate being able to maximize the matching fund through the kind and generous contributions from individuals, corporations and businesses who have chosen to give to our College, helping to advance our community through higher education. Over \$2 Million makes a huge difference in our ability to provide the best learning environment for our students and to other community members using our College facility, whether it is to enjoy a concert, take an evening course, attend a lecture, participate in one of the Wolves camps, art symposiums... the list is endless. Thanks to gifts from the community we have also been able to announce the hiring of a palaeontologist.

The power of the philanthropic gift is never-ending and makes a huge difference. These gifts will never be forgotten. As Winston Churchill once said, ‘we make a living from what we do; we make a life from what we give.’

## Matching Funds at Work

In 2006-2007, the College secured \$924,885 in matching funds, which were spent on the following:

### Workforce Development:

- \$80,000 was spent to purchase a dump truck and an 18-wheeler were provided for the Truck Driver Education Class! Certification program

### Physical Education, Athletics and Kinesiology:

- \$150,000 purchased new gym bleachers to replace 30-year-old bleachers
- \$5,000 was used to provide secured soccer nets for Wolves soccer
- \$10,000 provided a new treadmill in the GPRC Fitness Centre

### Scholarships and Bursaries

- \$310,000 was added to scholarships and bursaries for GPRC students

### GPRC Children’s Development Centre

- \$24,885 purchased equipment for the Children’s Development Centre

### Fine Arts

- \$6,000 provided necessary equipment for Fine Arts labs

### Nursing Education and Health Studies

- \$30,000 was spent on Stryker hospital beds for nursing education Library
- \$10,000 purchased needed historical books for the Library collection Student Labs
- \$49,000 was spent to update computers in student labs

*As you can see, a great deal of good was accomplished by the monies generated by the matching fund program. We plan to do even more good things this year, with your participation!*

## Recent Major Gifts

Grande Prairie Regional College warmly thanks the following donors for major gifts in recent months:

The Calgary Foundation  
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# Investing in the Future: Natural Playscapes



The ideal playground: a place where children can play safely, in a healthful environment that stimulates imagination and activity.

Imagining the ideal playground has been a special opportunity due to the new facility and location provided to Building Blocks Day Care on the GPRC campus, and has resulted in a playground design which will be the first of its type in Alberta, and one of the first in Canada.

"When we learned that Building Blocks was moving into a new facility, we started thinking about what we wanted for a playground," says Cindy Carter. She is a long-time member of the Board of Directors of

the On-Campus Day Care Society, and an instructor in Early Learning and Child Care studies at the College. "We knew that we wanted to do more than just purchase a bunch of expensive equipment."

At meetings of parents, board members, and ELCC faculty, various approaches to playgrounds were discussed, including the concept of natural playscapes and the opportunity to establish a model playground which would be among the first of its kind in Canada.

"I have had the opportunity to travel in Scandinavia, and had seen playgrounds which were environmentally sound, and as we discussed

the possibility of having someone design a play space which included hills, grass, a little garden, everyone got excited about the idea. We were eager to create a space that would be deeply connected to the natural and cultural environment of this community. We were committed to our goal to develop and maintain a naturally "green" playground."

A consultant from Evergreen Canada was hired, and met with representatives from the daycare staff, parents and board, including some faculty from the department to gather their ideas of what would be components of the ideal playground.

*– continued on page 7*



BRIDGE  
BALANCE BEAMS  
PLAYHOUSE

GATE

E

PERENNIALS

XG

BENCH

PERENNIALS

SUNFLOWERS

SUNFLOWERS

XG

PERENNIALS

XG

HERB GARDEN

PICKNICK TABLE

GAZEBO

SPIRAL GARDEN

BEAN TEEPEE

XB

BUTTERFLY GARDEN (MOULDED)

LOG ROUNDS PATHWAY

STRAWBERRY PATCH

BENCH

PLAY HOUSE

HERB GARDEN

XE

POLES

The organization has already established a natural playscape at Ryerson University in Toronto, which has become internationally renowned as a model for children's playscapes.

The Evergreen Canada consultant came back to the group with an exciting concept which is designed to teach children from a very young age to be stewards of their environment. The design includes a maintenance plan in which children will participate.

Within the all-wood fence already in place, everything will be natural, and designed for play in all four seasons. Pathways of recycled tires, "poured-in-place", provide a forgiving surface for riding tri-cycles in the summer - and a place for little shovels in the winter. A small hill is a lookout from which children can safely observe the activities of their area of the campus - with a built-in slide for summer and winter.

Indigenous trees and bushes will be chosen to provide year-round variety - and will be low maintenance because they are natural in our climate. They will be planted with well-established root systems, so that there will be areas of natural shade right away. The trees and shrubs along with flowers and perennial plants will attract birds and butterflies. Children will have garden space in which they can plant and grow small fruits and vegetables - and pick them in the fall. Sand and stepping stones, pond-less water features, vertical and horizontal logs, bridges and benches, picnic tables and swings - a wide variety of natural textures and materials will provide a wealth of opportunities for safe and dynamic play.

"We believe that by building this type of outdoor environment for children on our campus, our students will be inspired to create similar play spaces in their home communities. This is going to be a very good thing for young children, and a very good thing for our community. When this playground is completed, it will put Grande Prairie on the map as a community which is committed to the improvement of the natural environment in order to enhance and support children's development by transforming play spaces into healthier and more dynamic places for learning."

The design both excited and intimidated the parents, staff and board of Building Blocks at first. "This is a huge project - but it is something we can grow into. We will just take it one step at a time - it is so exciting!" This project is also seen as a great opportunity for partnership with the private sector to assist in building this safe, environmentally sound model playground that will benefit children, families, and our community.

- Cindy Carter and Lynne Ness

*Building Blocks day care provides care and education for 56 children whose parents are GPRC students or staff, or members of the general community. At present, 224 children from Grande Prairie and the surrounding area are on its waiting list. The new 6,000 sq. ft. facility will eventually allow for an increase of 24 spaces. The day care also serves as a practicum site for the Early Learning and Child Care students at GPRC. These students come from all over Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, British Columbia and the Yukon.*



# Lake Saskatoon

A group of good neighbours have comprised the Lake Saskatoon Community Club for the past 80 years. Their commitment to making life better for people of the Lake Saskatoon district, particularly the youth, has endured from generation to generation, and now includes very generous donations to Grande Prairie Regional College.

In 2004 the Community Club donated \$50,000, establishing the Francis Ramsden Scholarship. In 2007, they donated \$30,000 toward new health studies facilities being planned at the College. Their gifts are deeply appreciated by Grande Prairie Regional College and the students of our region.

In honour of the 80th Anniversary of the Lake Saskatoon Community Club, *Wisdom* is pleased to present this history of the group, as submitted by Marion Dommer, a member of LSCC for 57 years.





# Community Club



## A proud 80-Year History

In the winter of 1927 there was a need for an organization to deal with social affairs in the community. On February 14, a meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Lowe. There, 22 ladies and one gentleman became the charter members of the Lake Saskatoon Community Club.

The first motion at the first meeting was to purchase a twelve quart kettle for the school - so hot cocoa could be served daily to each and every student. Soon to follow, mosquito netting for the windows was donated. A new pail with a cover for drinking water and a table to set it on also added to the comfort of the school. Every club needs a goal. Each monthly meeting was opened with this statement:

*"To sow gladness of heart, to help one another and to promote the highest welfare of the community - especially the children."*

These lines were incorporated into a creed which to this day is repeated in unison at every meeting.

The club's services were soon felt in the community. School picnics and parties at Halloween and Christmas, social hours, debates, concerts and games became weekly events. Members scouted out individual situations and assisted: mend-

ing was done for a motherless family; berries were picked and preserved for a neighbour who was ill and absent during the summer; medicine and tonic were purchased for a sick baby.

If local children were suffering from childhood ailments, they were visited by a member with a bag of oranges or fresh fruit. Newcomers were welcomed with a hamper of vegetables and farm products. New babies born in the district received gifts as did young couples newly married.

Fund raising was an endless job. Many quilts were made - some were raffled or sold; others were kept on hand in case of emergencies. Dances and card parties brought in a little revenue. It wasn't easy to raise money, as the local people had little income and barter was a common practice.

Every fall, the Community Club put on a huge chicken supper at the Hall. All the food came from the members' kitchens. This was a big fund raiser as many folks outside our district came to partake of this excellent supper.

In 1929 the new Saskatoon Lake Consolidated school was opened. It was built on the north side of the Lake. The club gave each room a wall clock and the basement playroom received tumbling mats. Later, after much fund raising, a piano was purchased and placed in the school.

During World War II, the ladies made up care packages for local boys fighting overseas. After the Armistice the Veteran Land Act opened up farm land in the district

for the returning men. This new generation gave the Community Club many new members. They brought new ideas, enthusiasm, and many children.

The club stayed focused on education and the welfare of this new generation - all youth groups were supported. Students were funded to attend the United Nations Seminar in Banff.

In 1967 the Lake Saskatoon Community Club not only celebrated Centennial year, but also the 40th anniversary of the Club. Invitations were sent to any lady or any member near or far to attend a reunion in the hall that June. The attendance was fabulous.

In the 1970's Further Education came to rural Alberta. The Club took immediate interest. The courses covered any subject or project - from accounting and bookkeeping to making wills and testaments to cutting hair. The group had only to pick a project, find an instructor and guarantee a class of eight participants.

Perhaps the Community Club's biggest endeavour was publishing a local history book. Today, "Lake Saskatoon Reflections" is among many local history books of western Canada.

This June, 2007, the Lake Saskatoon Community Club celebrated its 80th Anniversary as a continuous service club to our community. Their hope is that the torch will be carried into the future and our creed will inspire another generation.

- Submitted by Marion Dommer

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TO MAXIMIZE THE MATCHING GRANT  
CESS TO THE FUTURE FUND.



# GPRC's President shares his Views on Life, Leadership and Community



Don and JoAnn Gnatiuk are settling into their new life in Grande Prairie, and exploring opportunities to get involved outside of their work with the College and CIBC respectively. Their two daughters are students, living together in Edmonton. Katie, the eldest, just graduated from the University of Alberta with a degree in Sociology, and is now pursuing a diploma in Public Relations at MacEwan and having a great time. Beth is entering her fourth year of Kinesiology at the University of Alberta, and having a great time doing that too.

Listening and hearing: The President and CEO of Grande Prairie Regional College needs to be listening and hearing, according to Don Gnatiuk. In the hallways and the classrooms of GPRC, in Council Chambers of local municipalities, in the legislative offices in Edmonton, at events in the community, Don has been taking every opportunity to do just that in the months since he assumed leadership at GPRC.

"When I was examining the possibility of taking on this challenge, I was excited by the potential," says Gnatiuk. "The potential for this college is humbling: geographically, economically, socially, this is a gem! It is far enough away for autonomy, yet close enough to be served by the central system. I have talked about this in the community, saying we can make a difference here. There are all kinds of opportunities.

"Then I started meeting the community, and it was evident that the sense of ownership that this community demonstrates toward its college is so strong it draws an emotional response. The people here call me. They call to help, to contribute, to donate. They care, and they ask questions - it is legitimate caring. This is their college. It is the perfect formula.

"This community has so much more depth than people realize. Many people who don't come from here don't see that depth. That struck me right away. It is a very sophisticated community; it is very cultured - multicultural - reminds me of where I grew up. What else can you ask for?"

Don and JoAnn Gnatiuk moved to Grande Prairie in May 2007, from Vermilion where they had spent 18

years while Don built an impressive track record of educational development and leadership through *fire etc.* and Lakeland College.

The couple is attuned to community, whether rural or urban - Don grew up in Montreal - they met when both were living in Edmonton.

"I grew up in a suburb of Montreal called Ville St. Pierre, which was a working class French community - and I went to a small high school across the tracks and up the hill in an English community - Montreal West High. My mother and father were both raised in Ville St. Pierre. My grandfather was in the ice industry. We have photos of them going out to the St. Lawrence Seaway with chainsaws, cutting ice and carrying the blocks with big tongs, then bringing it into town and selling it. He made a fortune doing that until some unknown named Frigidaire showed up! After the market for ice disappeared, he opened up a general store. In the general store we sold shovels and pickles... I remember reaching under the wooden lid into the pickle barrel and grabbing a pickle. That was a great place to be raised; there was a real strong sense of community. We all took care of each other. It was a French community, and I was of an English-speaking family, but when you're the general store in a small community like that (7,000) you are involved with everyone."

It was always expected that after high school Don would go on to university - and he was accepted to the school of architecture at Carleton University in Ottawa, but chose to work in construction instead. "I just wasn't ready to go straight from high school to university," Don says.



"I understand the role of the college system from that very personal perspective - individual learners have individual needs."

And then one day there was an ad recruiting trainees for the fire service. Don and one other applicant were accepted; he completed the training program and worked for a year as a volunteer with the Montreal West fire service before deciding to move to Alberta. "Within days of arriving to live with a relative in Edmonton, I had joined a cultural dance group, and met JoAnn."

For the next years, a job with the federal government took Don to fire service assignments in northern BC, Quebec, and Thunder Bay. "Right away I started studying, working toward a degree in fire science. I enjoyed the instructional points, and ended up taking on teaching assignments in the fire service. I taught provincial courses and federal courses across the country, because that was what I loved, and I kept studying, studying, studying. Along the way as I was moving around, an opportunity came up to work with the fire school as a course development officer. And from there, as the school quickly quadrupled its business, I moved up to manager and eventually CEO, and then moved the school to be part of Lakeland College."

That experience of successfully building a learner-centered network within a community and industry collaborative model set the tone for Don's leadership: network modeling. "Many of our workplaces make us work in an hierarchy. But that is not how people connect - we work molecularly. I find this to be true at both the micro and the macro level. What is true for individuals is also true for institutions. For example, when our fire training became so effective that private industry did not like the competition, we took the network model to our competitors and said, "you continue to train your people, and we'll provide the credential." Everyone wins.

"During those years I was working on my Master's in Business Administration, Executive Management Major, leadership, studying strategic planning, leadership and modeling. Two of the courses changed my life. The whole network modeling concept was one. The other was in environmental management: The Triple Bottom Line. It changed the way I look at things. Up until that time I always saw environmental studies as being one-sided. It's not. I learned that being environmentally accountable is good for the bottom line, good for the environment, and good for the people

around you. In a way we have always known, always believed it, but when we studied it in that course it really hit home. And then when I did the Master's in network modeling it all came together for me, the connection between people, resources and environment. It also allowed me to step way, way back and start to see the big picture."

This is an ability which is critical to making effective decisions as a leader, Gnatiuk explains. "When you are a leader, you get bombarded with many things. You want to act, to resolve things quickly. I have learned that there are many sides to a story, many sides to an issue. It made me stand back. What is the right thing to do? Not the easy thing, the right thing. That's what I try to look for - and the triple bottom line helps me to see it. A good friend once told me to make decisions so that that you can look back on it in ten years and be proud of that decision. That was very good advice. When I get confused I try to look for the high road; sometimes it is hard - the high road can be bumper!"

Looking for the high road means applying core values to every action, every decision. People are number one - and Gnatiuk expects the people in his organization to have a

# *“The College is not an entity on its own – without the community it doesn’t exist.”*

strong sense of right and wrong. Ethics, Honesty, Quality, Follow through on Promises, Seek Balance... these are all among the core values he applies to life and work. “I like to give people the benefit of the doubt. I like to give people lots of chances. Making mistakes is okay, as long as people are trying to do the right thing. I made it clear coming in that I will make lots of mistakes, but I won’t be doing wrong.

“My intent is to model exemplary behaviours that bring credibility to the institution. Behaviours that bring trust, a sense of confidence to the community that one of its educational partners is in good hands and there to serve.

“I am here to serve as a leader, and I work for you (staff, students, community). I have to make decisions, but in a network model. My job is to make sure that all these lines between people connect, to create a culture where people want to connect.

“GPRC does not exist without the community - that goes back to the people equation. We’re only one little cog in the whole societal machine. If we are not connected with our community, then by definition we are not doing what we are supposed to do. If we’re not connecting we’re out of touch with what is required; if we’re not connecting, we don’t have anything to ground what we do - that community can be local, national, international, but you’ve GOT to be connected.”

It is the view of Don Gnatiuk that one of the greatest things that has happened in the system in Alberta is the Roles and Responsibilities document put forward by Minister Horner and recently approved. “This is a document which is long overdue, and much appreciated. I am very thankful for that document, and so

are many of my colleagues.

“GPRC has a geographic mandate - our footprint. We are responsible for serving the people of our region. We have a mandate to provide services in the region, and yes, this community will get degrees. This community deserves degrees for their students so they can stay. I know this is important; I understand this clearly, having spent 18 years in a rural area. You need to educate your young people at home if you are going to encourage them to stay. So whatever is in demand, we are going to deliver those degrees. We also have responsibility now for apprenticeship training. This goes back to the network model, that’s why I like this document! In the network model, you don’t have to deliver. You simply have to make sure it is delivered. So as a network, whatever institution we bring forward, what is really important is that the community is being served. If the need is legitimate, then it is our responsibility to ensure that it is delivered. We are open to dialoguing with any institution anywhere - we are committed to either deliver, or have someone deliver, the needed education.”

Educational institutions are changing everywhere, and community colleges such as GPRC are required to be very responsive to the needs of today’s student = a student who is in a hurry, focused, using rapidly advancing technologies. “We need to be providing education in their context - not in what we think their context is, but in their context. And that is a difference - that is a big difference. It is not enough to say we are student-centered – it is the learner who decides that, not us.”

Gnatiuk has his eye firmly on the triple bottom line as he guides GPRC into the coming years. He has some

*– continued on page 25*

*In the Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for post-secondary education in Alberta, Grande Prairie Regional College is described as a “Comprehensive Community Institution” as follows:*

Comprehensive Community Institutions will provide broad programming, including apprenticeship where demand warrants, certificate, diploma, foundational learning, and upgrading. They may provide university transfer (years one and two) and applied degrees. Baccalaureate degrees will only be provided if feasible, in alignment with areas of specializations, and primarily in collaboration with a degree-granting institution. While the priority for baccalaureate programming will be on collaborative approaches, in some circumstances, degree granting will be considered, subject to a Campus Alberta system review (i.e. a review demonstrating demand, capacity, economic, learner and societal need) that supports demonstrated need (see section 3.2 of the paper) and overall consistency with the Alberta Access Plan. Applied research may be conducted to foster innovation, and scholarly research activity may be conducted as a basis to enhance the instructional mandate of these institutions within collaborative degree program disciplines. Alignment to geographical service areas is intended as a basis to facilitate regional planning, and in no way would it restrict student choice.



# *Houshang Ghazi*

Power Engineering instructor Houshang Ghazi is an important resource for our region and its numerous gas and power plants - his students are preparing to be operators within many of the industries within our economy. His influence on the profession, however, is extending across the country.

In June, 2007, Ghazi attended an inter-provincial meeting for Power Engineering programs across the country. A major agenda item was to meet a Canada-wide need for a "body of knowledge" document to accompany each certification level. Power Engineers progress through





## *Adding to the body of knowledge in Power Engineering Canada-wide*

several levels of examination, from the beginning Fifth Class, through to 1st Class certification which authorizes operation of any plant of any type, any capacity. While the existing syllabus booklets outlined the type of subject and levels of certification related to it, the depth of knowledge required at each level was not in written form.

"A couple of weeks before the meeting, I decided I did not want to go empty-handed, so I began to write a draft of a 4th Class body of knowledge document," explains Ghazi. "I accomplished that with still some days before the meeting, so I

also wrote a 3rd class document."

Ghazi undertook that work thinking that it would be useful to sit down for the discussion with something on the table in front of them. "I went there assuming that most other people would have done the same thing - it turned out that I was the only one!" Each of the draft documents was close to 40 pages.

Colleagues and regulating authorities across the country were delighted with the work that Ghazi had accomplished, and shortly after his return from the meeting, the Alberta regulating body, Alberta Boiler Safety Authority (ABSA) contacted him with the request to complete body of knowledge documents for 5th Class and 2nd Class Power Engineering as well, both of which were ready by the end of October. Now he has been asked to work on the 1st Class document, in preparation for the next inter-provincial meeting in Toronto in June.

Ghazi has approached the projects by comparing the syllabus for each certification level to the subject matter in the accompanying texts, and extracted the necessary information from the texts - volumes usually totally about 2400 pages per level. "The weight of the teaching is in the books - what was missing in the syllabus was the level of scope. That is what I have been working to line up."

Close contact with the instruction books has also meant that Houshang Ghazi began to document errata he

found in the texts. "I have had conversations with the Calgary publisher (PanGlobal), and have sent the corrections needed in the 4th Class textbook," he explains. Students graduating from his Power Engineering class at GPRC write the 4th Class Power Engineering exam. "I have now been asked to review the textbooks for other certification levels - I will be doing that and sending those corrections to the publisher too." Currently he is checking the question banks of the PanGlobal for the 4th and 3rd class Power Engineering levels.

Students of Power Engineering at GPRC are obviously fortunate to have Houshang Ghazi as their instructor. He has been at the College since August 2006, after working several years in industry in BC and Alberta, including some time as shift engineer for a Grande Prairie area industry prior to taking on the challenge of teaching.

"I had some experience as a TA (Teaching Assistant) at the University of Alberta while I was completing my Master's degree in Mining Engineering," Ghazi explains. "I knew I could teach, so I felt ready to try it as a career." Ghazi holds two Master's degrees, in both Mechanical Engineering and Mining Engineering, as well as his Inter-provincial 2nd Class Power Engineering ticket.

"I have learned a lot in my lifetime. I felt I was ready to start giving something back to society."

# Game Dev on our



Computer Gaming is a huge industry, and one which has catapulted several young local entrepreneurs into lucrative global businesses.

According to research conducted at the University of Western Ontario, "Canada is home to some globally renowned game companies; Canadians are amongst the most enthusiastic and best-equipped game players in the world; and there is a small but growing group of Canadian game researchers, writers and reviewers."

Canada possesses one of the world's strongest technical infrastructures for gaming. According to the Canadian Internet Usage, Broadband and Telecommunications report (March 2007), Canada currently has 67.8% of the population who have broadband access. According to the OECD report released earlier this year, Canada places highest in the G7 countries and is 9th in the world.

A statistic which is surprising to non-gamers is that Canadian's purchases of games software and hardware is only slightly behind the sales of recorded music in Canada.

# Developers Doorstep

## GPRC's GameXpo 2007 - A gamer's view of a day packed with info for enthusiasts

*Richard Pod sada, GPRC Alumnus, current webmaster, computer geek extraordinaire (and probably closet gamer) attended GPRC's GameXpo on behalf of Wisdom.*

When I arrive at the GameXpo to get my camera and equipment ready to record the day Libero Ficocelli is busy running around and getting things set up. Meanwhile, his computer science students and gaming club members organize the registration table and nametags. Some registrants have arrived early and are getting signed up. For the next half hour, the nearly 300 participants keep rolling in. The crowd is mostly younger, ages ranging from 14 - 30 years old (most in the high school age range.)

The day plunged right into why everyone was there: Presentations started with a quick demo of Space Trader, the game that HermitWorks has been working on for the past two years here in Grande Prairie. Scott Brooks and Philip Daigle, both of HermitWorks, gave a brief overview of what was involved in developing Space Trader and some of the decisions that went into its development. HermitWorks used the Quake 3 game engine from iD Software to develop Space Trader. The engine is freely available on the Internet, is quite powerful, and saved a ton of development time. Philip commented that

while it was possible to write their own game engine, this was their first game release and it would add a big layer of complexity to an already daunting project.

Philip & Scott demo'd the in-game editor they developed which allows them to design levels and change game parameters without having to leave the game itself. This made the process of setting up and tweaking the rules & behaviour of their game much more efficient.

Even this early in the day, the presenters were immediately bombarded with pertinent questions from the audience - which is comprised of gamers and of young people hoping to join the industry of design and development:

### **AUDIENCE QUESTIONS INCLUDED:**

#### **Q: When do you test your game?**

*A: Testing is an ongoing process, it essentially starts in the early stages of development where our own team will test as we develop features. However, it isn't until we have a reasonably working product that we will release it for testing with the public. (NOTE: There are two main types of product test - Alpha, which is a private, invite-only testing phase, and Beta, which is a free-for-all public release of the software encouraging users to submit feedback.)*

#### **Q: What language did you use to write Space Trader?**

*A: We used C and C++. This is pretty much the industry standard for game development.*

#### **Q: Who started HermitWorks?**

*A: Cameron & Marcia Tofer. Cameron has worked for Bioware, creators of popular titles such as Baldur's Gate and the recently released Mass Effect, and Namco, developers of many popular coin-op arcade titles. Both Cameron & Marcia have attended GPRC.*

#### **Q: How is Space Trade currently distributed?**

*A: Our primary channel for distribution is the Internet - our game can be played, purchased and downloaded from our website. Currently looking for "on-the-shelf" distributors in North America. We have a distributor in Europe.*

#### **Q: What courses should you take if you're interested in developing games?**

*A: Bachelor of Science in Computing, Athabasca degree completion, GPRC is a good start.*

#### **Q: What if you have an idea for a game? What do you do?**

*A: Best advice? Build a prototype. An idea alone won't sell the game if the*



person evaluating it can't see if it's feasible or fun to play. Sometimes when you translate an idea into a game you'll find it's not as great as it sounds on paper. Corey Asbreuk, Backbone Entertainment introduces himself and provides some background. He is a graduate of GPRC (Computer Systems Technology program) and currently works for Backbone Entertainment of Vancouver, reviving classic games for the newer gaming systems like the Xbox. The process of reviving old games on newer systems is called "emulation", where the newer machine "emulates" the behaviour of the older system for which the game was originally developed.

During the process Corey makes many improvements to the graphics of the game to make it more appealing to the younger crowd - which has higher expectations. He will often replace graphics in the game with higher-resolution versions, and add in animations, shading and special effects that were not previously there. He commented jokingly about meeting with a representative from a Japanese game development company, who told him "make the explosions big - BIG BIG BIG!" (apparently the Japanese love big explosions.) When reverse-engineering games, dealing with software bugs can be a very difficult and time-consuming part of the process. Often this involves playing the game until the bug is found, pausing the game, finding out what caused it, making a fix, starting the game over, and playing it until you're confident you've fixed the bug. Sometimes fixing one bug can introduce others - and with some bugs appearing randomly, this can take a lot of your time.

In a bigger company like Backbone, you often see team shuffling. Often the company will move employees around to allocate resources in order to meet production deadlines. You could be working on Game X one day, and Game Y the next. It can be a fast-paced environment and you have to be flexible and prepared for what the day can bring. Getting educated in a wide variety of programming languages and systems

is very beneficial. Diversity and flexibility is key to your success!

**THE AUDIENCE ASKED:**

**Q: What was your favorite game to work on so far?**

A: *TMNT (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles). It was challenging and enjoyable to work on.*

**Q: Why would you emulate these old games instead of recreating them altogether?**

A: *There is a big demand for these games, many people who grew up playing them are buying them again. It's also a financial decision – emulating is considerably cheaper and quicker than developing from scratch.*

**Q: What's the advantage of buying emulated games like the ones you make vs. downloading an emulator and ROM's from the Internet?**

A: *Well, it's legal ... (smiles slyly) Phil Djonov & Matthew Reagan – HermitWorks Entertainment Corp. took the stage to conduct a technical presentation on the process of creat-*

*ing 3D models for games. Most games these days are created entirely in 3D environments, composed of individual 3D models representing characters, buildings, vehicles, the ground, etc – basically anything you see or interact with. It is the art department's job to create or "sculpt" the models and the programmers job to integrate them into the game itself.*

*Phil explained that because computers have limited graphics capabilities, it is important to make your game as efficient as you can. One of the most important parts of doing that is optimizing 3D models of characters, buildings and creatures to be as simple as possible – enabling the computer to draw them on the screen faster, while keeping them looking as good as possible. Many tricks are employed to give the object the appearance of detail without it actually being very detailed.*

*Not long after starting the Space Trader project, HermitWorks discovered a challenge in getting the 3D artists and programmers to work*

*together effectively. The 3D artists were primarily concerned in how their 3D models look and developed highly detailed models which looked beautiful on screen but would slow the game to a crawl if used. The programmers needed a way to help the 3D artists understand the optimization process described above.*

*In response, Phil created a program called "x42view" which helped the two teams collaborate to make the models look as good as possible but yet meet the technical requirements of the game. This tool took Phil about 6 weeks to write and has been undergoing constant improvement since. It is now a key tool used by both the art and programming departments at HermitWorks to develop models which look great and perform well.*

**THE AUDIENCE WANTED TO KNOW:**

**Q: How long does it take you to optimize a model?**

A: *Optimizing models can take days, even weeks to optimize. The process can be painstaking as it may involve*



Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association

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The Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association Service Superstar program is a customer service recognition program, honoring customer service excellence employees in the tourism, hospitality, retail and Nominees will be individuals who consistently distinguish themselves and offer exceptional customer service industries in the Grande Prairie Region. A weekly winner will be chosen, awarded and given media recognition. Nominees will be honored at a gala ceremony each year with the top three finalists in each category receiving special recognition.

The program will also incorporate an educational component. Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association would arrange to give short informative training sessions for staff. Many of these employees are the first point of contact for tourists and subsequently have a huge impact on visitors. First impressions are very important, and with the right training we can ensure that our Region conveys a positive image!

If you would like to be a participating sponsor or if you would like to recognize someone as a superstar send in your nomination using the online form at [www.northernvisitor.com](http://www.northernvisitor.com) or drop your entry in a ballot box at participating businesses.

Please contact Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association for more information at 780-539-7688.

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editing the model point-by-point [A complex model may have upwards of 10,000 points in it]

**Q: What's involved in creating a 3D model and how long does it take?**

A: It can take several weeks, and involves: (a) Collecting reference materials like photos and videos, (b) creating concept artwork including sketches, paintings, etc., (c) creating the 3D model ["sculpting" virtual matter on the computer to form the shape you want] (d) adding bones [this adds a virtual skeleton to the model which allows you to animate it, much like our own bones control the movement of our muscles and skin], (e) texturing the model ["painting" the surface of the model with colors and textures like skin, cloth, metal, etc.], and (f) lighting the model [placing virtual light sources into the "set" to light the model much like you would a sculpture or actor in front of a camera]. In a smaller company one person may perform several of these tasks, in larger companies it is common to have a team of people assigned to a single task – like lighting, or texturing, or modeling.

Owen Borstad, Bioware Corp. (Edmonton) has a total of 12 years experience in the game industry. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Computing Science, and began his studies at GPRC. As a tools programmer, Owen's job is to develop all of the tools and utilities that support the game that the customer purchases. He writes the programs which install, update and remove the game from the customer's computer. He also creates updated patches when the company releases bug fixes after the game has shipped. While these elements do not get much fanfare, they are a critically important part of delivering & supporting a video game. If they are written well the customer will not even notice they're there – but if something goes wrong you could have a lot of very upset customers! Quality & reliability is a key element to developing such tools.

Owen provided some tips on what to do if you want to become a tools programmer: get a bachelor's degree;

play video games; mess around with various programming languages, 3D programs, and game editors; join open source development projects to get experience in developing software in a team environment. (Open Source is software that is generally free of intellectual property restrictions, and may be freely downloaded, used and/or modified by anybody who wishes to do so. Often Open Source software is written by a team of volunteer programmers working together to address a specific need. Sometimes projects start because of frustrations with existing commercial software or where there is a need for a low-cost alternative. The software that runs Wikipedia, for example, is open source.)

Later in the day, Owen was joined via live videoconference by a panel of Bioware experts, present on the big screen on stage. The panel, which included artists, writers, and marketing personnel, responded to questions from the audience.

**Q: Is Bioware privately owned?**

A: Yes, Elevation Partners, a company owned by Bono of U2, purchased Bioware a couple of years ago.

**Q: What was the hardest part of developing Mass Effect?**

A: The Precidium, which is like an intergalactic political hub (visualize a parliament building for the galaxy), It was tough developing this part because it needed to appear very large and breathtaking – like a cathedral, and have a lot of activity (people moving around, etc.) This required a lot of space on the game disc to store all of the sounds, 3D models, textures, etc, and at one point they had to optimize the Precidium resources because they were threatening the entire game not fitting on the disc.

**Q: How does Bioware decide what games to build?**

A: In a company of their size, this is largely an executive decision, however most games are put through a company-wide "gut-check" to weed out potential problems.

**Q: How many people worked on Mass Effect at any given time?**

A: The development teams are flexible and can scale easily to meet production needs. Depending on the stage of development, there may be anywhere from a few to several hundred employees working on a game at the same time. At one point we had up to 300 people working on Mass Effect at the same time.

**Q: How many projects does Bioware work on at a time?**

A: Currently, Bioware is working on about 5 game titles simultaneously, including the facility in Austin, TX.

**Q: What do you look for in an artist / animator?**

A: (a) A strong foundation in traditional arts is a MUST. From there, one can specialize in particular areas – such as designing characters, interfaces, lighting, animating, etc. But the traditional foundation is essential before any specialization occurs. (b) Strong portfolio (c) Experience with software like Photoshop, 3D Studio Max, etc.

**Q: What can you do to get into the industry?**

A: Get in any way you can – start at the bottom and work to where you want to go. Clean floors. Do quality assurance/game testing. These are all entry-level positions at any game company and often serve as a recruiting pool for future employees.

**Q: What is your outlook on the job market for game developers?**

A: There is a high demand but a huge shortage of skilled people. However, they need the right person with the right skills – not just anybody will do.

In the final presentation of the day Cameron Toefer (CEO of HermitWorks) and Lena Gilje (Marketing & PR for HermitWorks) provided information aimed at those planning a career in game development.

Lena presented [www.LaunchEffect.com](http://www.LaunchEffect.com), a website designed to develop and recruit game developers in our region.

LaunchEffect.com was spearheaded by Peace Region Economic Development Authority and designed with the help of HermitWorks. It provides forums for game development, career descriptions for common gaming industry positions, a flowchart of the game development process, and a directory of game development companies in Alberta.

Cameron then spoke about his background as a game developer. He started his career at Bioware, and actually helped come up with a lot of the concepts for the smash hit Baldur's Gate right here in the C-Spot café in Grande Prairie!

Cameron later left Bioware to start HermitWorks and develop Space Trader here in Grande Prairie. Why Grande Prairie? Because it is a great source of talent! He said you would be surprised to see how many big blockbuster games have names from GP in their credits! Cameron's vision for HermitWorks is to "build and capi-

talize on a new set of products and tools to distribute games to customers."

**Q: What do you need to get a job with HermitWorks?**

*A: HermitWorks looks for at least a 2 year diploma in Fine Arts (for artists) or Computing Science (for programmers.) In some cases individuals may then undergo a one-year training program at HermitWorks to hone their skills to the level needed to work in the company. The most important thing any candidate should have is the drive, ambition and resourcefulness to get and do the job!*

**Q: How can you get experience developing games if you can't get a job in a game company?**

*A: (a) Volunteer. Many independent game projects rely on volunteer help to get produced. (b) Self-projects – design and build your own game, (c)*

*Entry-level jobs – get into the company as a production assistant or Quality Assurance (QA) person. These are typically entry-level jobs that companies use as recruiting pools.*

**Q: What's your biggest challenge being a small company?**

*A: Everything. You have to do everything yourself and prove your name.*

**Q: How is HermitWorks funded?**

*A: A combination of self-funding and private investors*

**Q: How do you feel your time at GPRC has prepared you for what you do now?**

*A: The CST program was immensely helpful – I use everything I learned in the curriculum (and more!) Part of it was that I was obsessed with making games and having the goal & drive to do it was a big part of the equation too.*

*– Richard Podsada*



# Recent Achievements

## AWARDS

**Jill Thompson**, Assistant Registrar - Records at GPRC was one of the nominees for the Chamber of Commerce 2007 Employee of the Year award. Chamber representatives visited Student Services to present Jill with coffee and donuts for the department, and a certificate in honour of Jill's nomination. Jill Thompson holds the distinction of Grande Prairie Regional College Distinguished Employee, awarded in May 2007.

GPRC Athletic Director **François Fournier** was named Athletic Director of the Year by the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA). This prestigious national award is designed to honour intercollegiate directors of athletes for their commitment and administrative excellence within the campus or collegiate community environment.

## APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

**Dr. Elroy Deimert**, instructor of English literature at Grande Prairie Regional College, has been elected Alderman of the City of Grande Prairie. He was among the new aldermen assuming positions following municipal elections in October 2007.

**Kathleen Frei** has been elected President of the Alberta Division of the Canadian

Mental Health Association. She is the first person from the northern part of the province to hold this position. Frei is also the President of North West Region of CMHA and has served on the Division Board since 1998. For the past two years, she has been Executive Vice President. At Grande Prairie Regional College, Frei is the Director of Workforce Development.

**Dr. Connie Korpan**, Psychology Instructor and Associate Chair at Grande Prairie Regional College, has been appointed Research Development Advisor (RDA) for Peace Country Health effective January 1, 2008. The position will be jointly funded by SEARCH Canada, the Alberta Association of Colleges & Technical Institutes (AACTI) and Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC). Her appointment is the first to result from a new partnership between SEARCH Canada and the Alberta Association of Colleges & Technical Institutes (AACTI).

## EXHIBITIONS

Long-time GPRC instructor **Ken Housego** and GPRC alumna Fay Yakemchuk were featured in a recent issue of Alberta Views magazine. "Breaking the Mold: Three Peace Country Sculptors" also featured former Prairie Art Gallery curator/director Donna White.

## ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT

Two GPRC students were named to the Alberta Colleges Athletics Conference (ACAC) Soccer Team. Wolves Katie Spencer and Ashley Piggot represented GPRC and ACAC at national championships in late October.

**Katie Spencer** is the ACAC nominee for Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (CCAA) Player of the Year and has been selected as a CCAA All Canadian.

**Wolves Cross-Country Men's Running Team** won the Bronze medal at Provincials.

## In Memory of

Marj Sheehan Berg, GPRC Employee  
1986 - 2007, d. 10/10/07

Sharon Mechanuk, former GPRC Employee  
1984 - 2003, d. 08/01/08

Dallas Rosvold, GPRC Student, Business Administration 2006 - 2007, d. 29/09/07

Penny Thompson, GPRC Student, Nursing 2002 - 2006, Wolves Cross-Country Running Team 2004-2005, d. 14/09/07



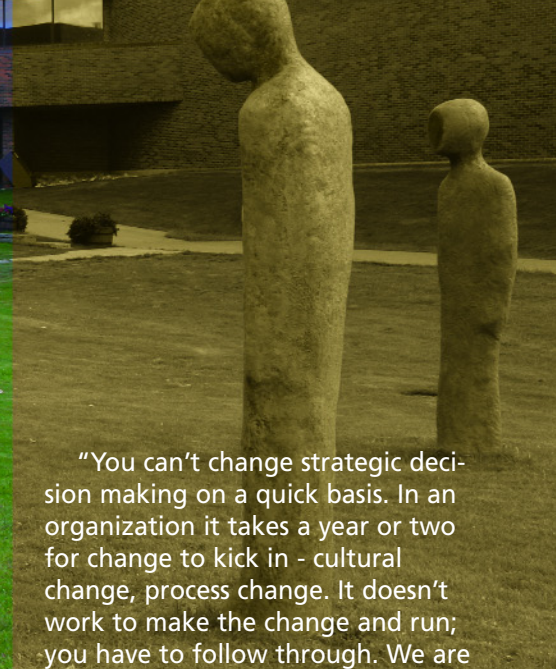
Michelle Kelly, Canadian Olympian in Skelton, is currently ranked number one in the world. *Congratulations Michelle!* Michelle Kelly was featured in our Spring 2002 Wisdom.

## Tracy Persson honoured by Beyond Borders



Tracy Persson was a GPRC student in the spring of 2006 when she cycled out of the College parking lot heading for Ottawa to raise funds and awareness for Beyond Borders and Habitat for Humanity. She accomplished her goal through sheer grit and determination, and attracted plenty of media attention along the way. In November 2007, Tracy was honoured by Beyond Borders at their 10th Anniversary & Media Awards celebrations in Winnipeg. Tracy and husband Kelly attended the event, and are pictured here with Rosalind Prober (at left) of Beyond Borders.





"You can't change strategic decision making on a quick basis. In an organization it takes a year or two for change to kick in - cultural change, process change. It doesn't work to make the change and run; you have to follow through. We are talking about long-term issues when we are talking about leadership.

"I love leadership - leadership's my thing. I like to pay attention to people, taking people to places they didn't think they could get to. I have studied leadership - all the models (top-down, walking-around, appreciative inquiry, servant leadership situational leadership.) If you have an understanding of all of that, and you truly care about people, then you adapt to the leadership environment that is needed at that time.

Sometimes leadership means pounding your hand on the desk. Sometimes it means putting your arm around somebody. Sometimes it is supporting somebody who has made a mistake. Sometimes it is getting out of the way.

"My offer is a standing invitation to my office. Call me, tell me what you need. Come to see me - my door will always be open. This College belongs to the community, not to those of us who work here - we are just the stewards. My commitment is that we will be good stewards."

— Lynne Ness

— continued from page 15  
key goals for the people, resources and environment under his leadership.

"I would like to start moving on green initiatives. The campus needs to be a model in the community - a model of responsible stewardship for our environment. We need to have energy saving initiatives on site - and yesterday a student came to me with a sustainability initiative, asking for my support. Our youth demand we act on our environmental responsibility. We need to change the way people think. If an educational institution isn't going to do it, who is? It is our responsibility.

"Another thing is people's safety. It is a complex world, and I want to ensure that we create the safest possible environment for our staff and students. We don't have those things in place yet. We're getting there, we're close, but I think we need to do more.

"This College is sanctuary; a student called this "an oasis" in our busy, driven world. This should be a place of academic, cultural, social,

economic, and spiritual safety. We are going to be held responsible for that. And what is important here is that we need to focus on the arts, on athletics, because these sometimes get forgotten. While we are caught up in the hustle and bustle of our environment, and the exciting needs for education and training, it is important for all of us to pay attention to our own wellness, to learn to live better lives, changing our lifestyles. Our lives move too fast.

"As a College we need to build programs around the needs of industry, and the needs of individuals. Today our responsibility is to serve the public of all ages - we had better give quality service. Over the past months I have been meeting with people throughout the community, hosting internal focus groups, public focus groups, meeting with Elders of the Aboriginal communities, meeting with business leaders. The strong future of this College is through networking, seeking solutions and direction together as a community. We need to connect with the community.



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## GPRC alumni

### '67 Phylis J. Anderson (nee Spence) Program – Education

I moved to Colorado with my family in 1982. In 1992, I went back to school to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree, with a major in accounting. I graduated from Colorado University – Denver in 1995. Just prior to graduating I took the Certified Public Accountants exam. I'm happy to say that I passed it and am now a CPA. I currently work as a Controller for a family-owned and operated business here in Denver. I have two wonderful children and four grandchildren and I am fortunate to live relatively close to all of them. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of the first class at GPRC. Living in residence was a good experience and provided me with an opportunity to make many friends. I was involved in a lot of activities and look back with fond memories of my year spent there.

### '86 Tammy Ledieu (nee: Haugen) Program – Office Administration

Since my time at GPRC, I have enjoyed many variations on my career. I first worked in Criminal Law for 10 years then moved on to governance positions. I was involved first with the regionalization of the Health Care System in Alberta, and most recently served as Secretary to Academic Council at Athabasca University. I have also worked in the pulp industry, providing support to three Vice Presidents at Alberta Pacific Forest Industries. I am married to the love of my life, Kevin, and have two wonderful children - Scott born in 1990 and Megan born in 1996.

### '89 Eric Sehn Program – Bachelor of Arts

I am now the Dean of Academic and Career Technical Programs at Northern Lights College; your BC neighbour to the west. In that role I get the opportunity to work with my colleagues at GPRC, which is very cool. My wife and I have two children, Naomi and Mateo. I really enjoyed my GPRC experience; the faculty make you feel like a person, instead of a just a Student ID number. When I transferred to the U of A, my experience was a solitary one. Larry Andriotti inspired me to pursue psychology as my major. I understand that he has now retired. I wish him the best. Give my regards to Leigh & Beth Goldie, as well as Harry Stevens, who actually recruited me to the Wolves volleyball team. I look forward to working further with GPRC in my professional role and will always appreciate the start that it gave me. You share my belief about what it means to be a post-secondary institution. It's about people. See you soon.

### '93 Carol A. Pelland Program - Nursing

When I attended GPRC, my name was Carol Schneider. Since graduation I've worked as a drug & alcohol testing nurse for Shell, I did insurance medicals, and worked on the pediatric ward at the QEII Hospital. Later on, I moved to Ponoka and worked at the general hospital there on the pediatric/surgical ward while simultaneously working at the Misericordia in Edmonton in General Emergency and on a medical ward. I moved to Australia in 2001 and worked in Cardiology at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in the state of Victoria. I then moved north to tropical Queensland where I've been ever since. Initially, I worked in a pediatric neurology ward for several years at the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane. Then I landed a plum job at the Royal Brisbane Hospital in a busy Diagnostic Imaging Department working mostly in CT and MRI. It's been a fantastic learning experience and I always recommend nursing to those who want to travel and experience different cultures. Nursing has allowed me the freedom to do what I want, where I want, and I'm forever grateful that I chose to become an RN!

### '97 Denise L. Hudak Program – Early Childhood Development

After graduating with my E.C.D. Diploma in 1997, I worked in the Baby Room at the QEII Child Care Centre for three years. I was promoted to Director, and stayed in that role until I moved to Southeastern Alberta in late 2001. While living in the Lethbridge area, I worked as a Special Needs Aide at the local school division with students aged 6 to 16. I also taught computer classes and was an internet site promotions coordinator. In 2006 I took a job at the local County office, and am now the payroll clerk. I love it, but do miss working with young people.

### '99 Robyn-Lyn Carey Program – Bachelor of Commerce

I majored in Accounting when I attended GPRC and subsequently worked in that field for almost six years. After that I became a Leadership Coach and also worked for a Not-For-Profit Organization called The Child Is Innocent Foundation. I have a son, Ethan, who is four years old. My favorite memory of GPRC is my English 10 teacher, Doreen Lakusta. I was taking upgrading before my college studies and she was instrumental in helping me believe in myself.

### '05 Ambjorn Adomeit Program – Bachelor of Arts (Major in History)

I am currently enrolled at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario in the B.Arts (Hon. History) program. I am co-authoring an article on the Canadian experience in Normandy during WWII with one of my former professors at GPRC, and am awaiting news on my application to an overseas research fellowship slated for this spring/summer. I am a member of ACUNS (the Academic Council on the United Nations System [www.igloo.org] and am pursuing membership with a couple of other international organizations.

### '05 Ashley Burns Administrative Technology

I just wanted to say a big "thank you" to the Administrative Technology department. You guys are wonderful! You all go above and beyond to ensure your grads achieve success! I am now a full time employee of Big Country 93.1 FM and I absolutely LOVE it!!! I grew up listening to this station and it is a dream come true to be a part of the team. It is fascinating to see what goes on behind the scenes and how it all works. As the Sales Secretary I am in charge of all administrative duties, accounts receivable and filling in for the receptionist. I am also able to do "traffic" which actually means to key orders and compile the commercial logs. This is a very important detail...if there is no log, there is no radio and that's not good! I love what I do and I appreciate all the help I've had along the way!

### '05 Jacynthia Rabesca Administrative Technology

After finishing my studies at GPRC in April of 2005, I proudly flew back to the Northwest Territories to my community of Behchoko, formerly Rae-Edzo. I achieved so much during my two years at GPRC, including an Intensive Diploma in Administrative Technology and a Microcomputer Office User Specialist Certificate. Today, I still reside in Behchoko and have been employed with the Rae-Edzo Housing Authority as their Receptionist since July, 2005. The Housing Authority administers, manages and maintains the public housing program, with a total of 183 housing units. During these two years I have gained valuable experience and skills from co-workers within the organization. I am also taking courses through the School of Community Government (Municipal & Community Affairs) to become certified as a Finance Officer. Attending GPRC has gotten me started on this wonderful path of life which has been very rewarding thus far. Masi Cho! (Thank you!).



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# Space cadets - and proud of it

*U of L students land internships with the Canadian Space Agency*

by Delon Schurtz

*Reprinted with permission from Lethbridge Herald*

Most students can't wait until summer starts but Ryan Humphrey and Nate Dekens Wagenaar also can't wait until it ends.

That's when they'll be able to put on their resumes that they worked at the Canadian Space Agency.

The two University of Lethbridge students start internships with the CSA in Montreal May 7. They'll be working in the Canadarm2 training and simulation centre where they will, among other things, build scale models and create animations for astronaut training, as part of Canada's contributions to the international space station project.

"It's fantastic," Humphrey said of the opportunity. "It's not something we can pass up."

The opportunity to work at the CSA was actually a fluke. An e-mail from the space agency, which was sent to other universities including York in Toronto and Concordia in Montreal, was mistakenly sent to the U of L. By the time the mistake was noticed and the application withdrawn, the two students had

already applied.

They must have made an impression because the CSA made some changes to accommodate them.

"We are creating two positions rather than just one as originally anticipated," CSA spokesman Viqar Abbasi said in a news release.

"Based on what we have seen, both are excellent candidates for the type of work we want to do and we have enough work to keep them both busy and productive for the whole summer."

Humphrey and Wagenaar were excited at being accepted, but not particularly surprised.

"We both thought we were strong candidates compared to other schools," Wagenaar said.

The pair will use the skills they have developed after four years in the fine arts degree program (new media). Neither Humphrey, who plans to work with visual effects in TV and film, nor Wagenaar, who plans to get his master's in architecture, then go on to designing "mighty and opulent" commercial skyscrapers, ever thought of working for the CSA. But it's on their minds now.

Although they don't know specifically what they will do for

the CSA, their work will involve training for the Canadarm2. The robotic system plays a key role in space station assembly and maintenance by moving equipment and supplies around the station, supporting astronauts working in space and servicing instruments and other payloads attached to the space station. Astronauts receive robotics training to enable them to perform these functions with the arm.

Launched on STS-100 (assembly flight 6A) in April 2001, the next-generation Canadarm is a bigger, better, smarter version of the space shuttle's robotic arm. It is 17.6 metres long fully extended and has seven motorized joints. This arm is capable of handling large payloads and assisting with docking the space shuttle.

"This is huge," Humphrey said. "I think it's going to expose us to experiences we've never had before."

And even if they don't pursue a career at the space agency, they believe the summer internship will certainly help them land a job somewhere else.

"Canadian Space Agency on a resume; that looks fantastic."

*Ryan Humphrey (left) transferred to University of Lethbridge after completing the Fine Arts program at GPRC.*



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