

Smith

FALL 2022



Who's Ready to Play?

How Kristi Herold turned fun and games for adults into a winning business

Mercy Mission

Bringing Ukrainian kids with cancer to Canada in times of war

Class Society

Professor Michelle Lee on the hidden impact of social class at work

The Future of Food

MEET SMITH TRENDSETTERS, INNOVATORS AND PRODUCT DEVELOPERS IN THE FOOD GAME

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Managing Editor
Robert Gerlsbeck

Associate Editor
Kristen Sears

Graphic Designer
Kat Hugo

Contributing Editor
Amber Wallace

Production Manager
Andrea Strike

Production Co-ordinator
Roxann Sadowski

Contributors

Bill Cassidy (graphic design), **Kari Knowles** (graphic design, digital), **Julia Lefebvre** (digital content), **Alan Morantz** (Smith Business Insight), **Wendy Hookey** (graphic design), **Iryna Vivchar**, Development and Alumni Engagement: **Jessica Duggan**, **Heather Hayhow**, **Roxanne Lockyer**

How to reach us

Submit an alumni note
Visit: smithqueens.com/alumninotes

Submit a letter to the editor
Email: smithmagazine@queensu.ca

Update your mailing address
Email: smithmagazine@queensu.ca
Include your full name, current address and new address

Story ideas/editorial contacts

Robert Gerlsbeck: 613.329.7252
robert.gerlsbeck@queensu.ca

Kristen Sears: 613.888.1105
k.sears@queensu.ca

General alumni inquiries

Email: smithalumni@queensu.ca



Smith School of Business
(general inquiries):
877.533.2330
smithqueens.com

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FSC

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Alumni Notes



Happy trails

DAN TISCH, EMBA'06, and his parents, Felix Tisch and Elin Edman Tisch, took a trip in December to explore their family's roots in the wine capital, Montebello, to visit his parents' vineyard in the Brazilian border. Tisch writes...

times in their lives and countries. People reach out through a host site, such as insuraface.com, and are paired with a mentor who journeys with them through life's challenges. It's been really rewarding work!

2000s

PETER GRAY is living and h...

Queen's women's water polo team that achieved a silver medal for the first time since 1993. Go Gaels!

MICHAEL STEIN, BCom'93, lives in Vancouver and writes. "After spending almost 15 years in finance in Eastern Europe, I downsifted and founded Colindale Beach Villas, which provides executive-class accommodation on a beachfront property not far from Cabot Cliffs Golf Course in beautiful Cape Breton, Nova Scotia."



LEANNE HILL, BCom'99, has been working in the travel industry for the last 20 years. Recently, she accepted a position with Royal Caribbean International as the strategic account manager for Western and Central Canada. Leanne lives in North Vancouver, B.C. where she enjoys hiking and the outdoors. Most of all, she enjoys spending time with her two French Bulldogs, Levi and Mr. Fitz.

STEPHEN MACEWEN, MBA'98, BSc(Eng)'94, colindalebeachvillas.ca

RICHARD BARBER, EMBA'97, has been appointed chief client officer of Bridgepoint Financial. In 2021, Richard received the Institute of Corporate Directors' ICD.D designation. He also serves

JACQUELINE CHILTON, BCom'93, is excited to share that her daughter, Jessica, is enjoying her first year at Smith in the Commerce program. She is co-captain of the

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Submissions will be published in the next issue of Smith Magazine.

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DEAN'S MESSAGE

Enhancing the student experience

I'M THRILLED TO HAVE students back on campus, in Goodes Hall and at SmithToronto! The energy and enthusiasm are palpable. I love connecting with students and have been encouraging them to stop me in the halls to chat. There is really no better way to get a sense of how they're doing—and how we're doing in delivering an exceptional academic experience (although it does make getting to meetings on time challenging).

I have now been in my role as dean for 16 months. While I've been leading the school through a new strategy development process (more to come in the next issue of *Smith Magazine*), I have been focusing on some immediate priorities. One of these priorities is integrating more experiential learning (EL) across our programs.

Providing real-world experiences for our students is at the heart of Smith's approach to business education. From undergrads to Executive MBAs, experiential learning enhances student learning while better preparing them for employment after their degree.

We now have an established Experiential Learning team inside Smith's Career Advancement Centre to connect organizations to valuable student talent through opportunities such as internships, capstone projects, Living Cases and design challenges. In addition to getting help on business projects, there are also various incentives, such as tax credits and grants, available to organizations.



Here are just two examples of EL in action at Smith:

- The Strategy Report Project enables partners to receive an in-depth analysis and strategic recommendations from multiple student teams on how to solve an existing organizational challenge.
- The Global Consulting Project gives partners the benefit of 500-plus hours of consulting services to help solve a global business challenge.

In April 2022, we launched an EL initiative that is very near and dear to my heart: **Smith's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization Internship Program**. EDI³ provides internship and mentorship opportunities for equity-deserving Commerce students in first, second and third years.

While Smith's Career Advancement Centre provides robust support to any employment-seeking student, many undergraduate students find summer employment through their own

networks—networks to which equity-deserving students don't always have access.

Through the EDI³ program, we helped 62 equity-deserving Smith Commerce students secure mentors and summer employment in business-focused jobs across Canada. Many thanks to alumni who stepped up to offer jobs or volunteer their time to mentor and create opportunities for these students to build their own networks.

Please get involved, if you are not already. Learn more about how to participate in our many experiential learning options at smithqueens.com/engage.

Wanda M. Costen, PhD
Dean, Smith School of Business
at Queen's University
wanda.costen@queensu.ca

Want to make a **real impact** on important social issues?

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Queen's
UNIVERSITY

Say cheese!

IN-PERSON IS BACK! For the first time since the pandemic began, convocation was held in Kingston! In June, Smith welcomed members of the class of 2020, 2021 and spring 2022 to celebrate this monumental event of university life. Across Queen's University, an estimated 8,000 graduates and their families celebrated in the Limestone City during 10 ceremonies held over four days.

New associate deans named

Three Smith faculty have been appointed to new roles as associate deans.

In September, **ARCAN NALCA** took on the newly created position of associate dean, undergraduate programs. He will oversee the Commerce program and Certificate in Business.

Nalca, who is an associate professor of management analytics, joined Smith in 2008. He has been assistant dean, teaching and learning since 2020 and academic director of Commerce since 2021. He was co-chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee from 2018 to 2020.

In July, **LAURENCE ASHWORTH** became associate dean (research). Ashworth is a professor of marketing and he arrived at Smith in 2003. He studies social and emotional

influences on consumers' decision-making. He is vice-chair of the Queen's General Research Ethics Board and founder and chair of the Smith Research Pool.

Ashworth's position is also new. Previously, one associate dean oversaw both research and the PhD and MSc programs. But the job was split at the start of the year. [**LYNNETTE PURDA** became associate dean (graduate programs) in January. See *Smith Magazine*, Spring 2022 for more.]

Meanwhile, **WEI WANG, PhD'06**, takes on the role of associate dean, professional graduate programs on Nov. 1.

Wang is a professor of finance and founding director of the Master of Finance-Beijing program. He has taught in Smith's professional master's, MBA and EMBA programs, as well as at major international business schools such as Wharton and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Business School. He joined the Smith faculty in 2007.

Wang takes over from **ELSPETH MURRAY**, who successfully led the growth of the school's MBA and master's programs for over a decade. Murray remains a faculty member and will continue to teach. She is also the director of the Centre for Business Venturing at Smith.

Breaking down colonial barriers at Smith

Sitting in a lecture hall. Enjoying a meal in a dining hall. Sleeping in a dorm. These are the experiences that make up undergraduate university life. Now, imagine getting the chance to go beyond the university brochure and immerse yourself in campus life before making that big leap.

This summer, students from the Mohawk territory of Akwesasne got to do just that, as part of a pilot initiative. It was organized by Smith Commerce in conjunction with the Centre for Social Impact at Smith, the Queen's Enrichment Studies Unit and Akwesasne Career & Employment Support Services.

Over four days, the high-school students stayed in residence, ate lunch at Leonard Hall, participated in lectures at Smith and took part in a simulated business pitch competition. They also toured the Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre on campus. Several Queen's faculties, meanwhile, hosted a fair that gave the students information on the range of programs and support services available at Queen's.

"Inspiring and increasing participation in post-secondary education is one way we can break down colonial barriers to successful careers in business for Indigenous people," notes Ann Deer, Indigenous recruitment and initiatives co-ordinator for Commerce. "Early outreach allows Indigenous youth to see themselves at Queen's and how higher education can help them realize their dreams."



The Smith Commerce team of **MICHELLE CHOU, Comm'24**, **BILL LE, Comm'23**, **MARTIN BORRERO, Comm'23**, and **BEN ROSEN, Comm'23**, captured first place at the University of Technology Sydney Global Case Competition in early September. The team bested teams representing 14 universities across the globe in all three rounds of the competition, and was presented with the Most Purpose Driven award for its focus on solutions based around responsible business practices. Bill Le also took home the Best Speaker award!

Smith scores Top 8 athlete

For the second consecutive year, a Commerce student has received a prestigious national award for combining success on the court and in the classroom.

ERIK SIKSNA, Comm'23, a member of the Queen's men's volleyball team, was named a U Sports Top 8 Academic All-Canadian for the 2021-22 season. Last year, **SOPHIE DE GOEDE, BCom'21**, (women's rugby and basketball) made the Top 8.

An outside hitter for the Gaels, Siksna was named Ontario University Athletics' East Division Most Valuable Player last season. He is also a Gaels tutor and student-athlete academic mentor. In the classroom, he holds a 4.1 GPA.

Siksna grew up in Markham, Ont., and played hockey and basketball as a youth. He took up volleyball in junior high, inspired by his parents, who also played the sport. He hopes to play professional volleyball in Europe and aims for a career in accounting.

So how does he juggle a heavy Commerce schedule with sports and more? "There's definitely a lot of time management," he says. "But it's really about being present. When I'm at practice, I'm not thinking of my schoolwork. And when I'm in class, I'm fully invested in that."

The Top 8 began in 2013 when then Governor General David Johnston created the Governor General's Academic All-Canadian Commendation. All-Canadians must maintain an average of 80 per cent or better while competing for one of their



Erik Siksna in action during a Gaels volleyball game

university's varsity teams. One female and one male student-athlete from each of the four U Sports conferences are selected annually to make up the Top 8.

Just seven Gaels have ever made the Top 8. The three latest have a Smith connection. Besides Siksna and de Goede, men's hockey player **SLATER DOGGETT, Artsci'19, CIB'19**, won the award in 2019-2020. He earned a Certificate in Business at Smith.

New cross-university program in social impact

The world's deep-seated problems—hunger, pollution, water access—can't be solved in isolation.

For example, "a solution developed to address a water

access issue might require knowledge of legal aspects, it might require engineering solutions, it might require a business model," says **JEAN-BAPTISTE LITRICO**, associate professor and director of the Centre for Social Impact at Smith. "So what we need are ways to bring together different strengths of expertise and resources to address these social challenges," he adds.

That's why Queen's University has launched the Advanced Leadership for Social Impact Fellowship (ALSI). Litrico and Ted Christou, associate dean of graduate studies in the Faculty of Education, are co-directors of the 12-month program. It aims to equip leaders with the knowledge, skills and networks to tackle the root causes of some of the world's grand challenges.

The 12-month program will welcome its first group this October. Students will

participate in a blend of in-person and online learning taught by faculty and instructors from across the university, as well as sector specialists. The curriculum focuses on the three core mindsets—discovery, design and delivery—required to enact sustainable change.

"What distinguishes this program is that it will actually help people deliver on their initiatives," Litrico says. Many programs stop at the design phase, he explains. "We want to make sure there are some concrete, tangible projects that are made feasible."

The ALSI builds on Queen's commitment to advancing sustainability and social impact. For the past two years, the university has ranked in the Top 10 globally in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, which measures contributions to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. ■



GLOBAL

Innovation in Vienna

Study abroad inspires MMIE students to approach business differently

AS MEMBERS of the Smith community, many of you will be familiar with the school's extensive exchange partnerships with business schools in more than 38 countries. If you're an alumnus of the Commerce, Full-time MBA or Master of International Business programs, there's a good chance you studied at one of them.

But did you know the Centre for International Management at Smith also offers international study opportunities for students in the Master of Management Innovation & Entrepreneurship program?

In May, **ANTHONY IGHOMUAYE**, **HIMMAT KAUR** and **IMANE BOUDAA**, all **MMIE'22**, spent two weeks in Austria participating in an international short program on innovation management at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business.

The Vienna Innovation Program brings together master's students from WU and its international partner schools for an intercultural experience, with students working on real-life group projects.

"This program shifted my mindset and enhanced my experience at Smith by providing me with a skill set for doing business internationally," says Kaur, who just started as an account manager at Lever, a software company with customers in over 60 countries. ■

EVENTS

LESSONS ON TURNING PRO

Retiring professor Peter Kissick delivers parting advice in the last lecture

APRIL MARKED THE FINALE of a distinguished teaching career for associate professor **PETER KISSICK**, LLM'98, Law'88.

To mark his retirement, he delivered a "last lecture" to a crowd of current and former students, colleagues and family at the end of the winter term.

"Reflections of an Accidental Business Law Prof—What I've Learned About Being (a) Professional" covered 10 points Kissick used to encourage, inspire and challenge the aspiring business professionals gathered in Goodes Hall.

The "accidental" part of Kissick's lecture referred to his intended career path, at age 20, of being a downtown Toronto business lawyer. Kissick discovered that practising on Bay Street wasn't for him and so he relocated his family to Kingston and later took on teaching at Smith.

"Sometimes you have to deviate from

your path," he observed, noting that Smith graduates were well equipped for these sorts of curveballs of life.

He reminded those present of the responsibilities associated with their education, and that sharing your expertise and knowledge, whether through paid or unpaid opportunities, is part of the job.

"If all I wanted was money, I would've stayed in Toronto," Kissick said. "Sometimes, by not chasing money, good fortune finds you."

His advice to the crowd also included a reminder to stay curious, to proudly share knowledge and accomplishments while not taking yourself too seriously, to take risks even if it means failing, to be thankful, and to remember you can't succeed on your own.

Kissick taught law and ethics at Smith for 24 years and was recognized for his teaching prowess with 12 separate



institutional teaching awards and five additional nominations.

In addition to teaching in the Commerce program, Kissick was previously the program's director. He also taught in the Smith Executive MBA and Master of Management Innovation & Entrepreneurship programs and at Queen's Faculty of Law. ■

Decisions that stick with you

Professor Kelley Packalen studies integrity in entrepreneurship

BY PHIL GAUDREAU & KRISTEN SEARS

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT ONCE said, “I am who I am today because of the choices I made yesterday.”

Kelley Packalen is familiar with the sentiment. She knows the outsized impact that one’s decisions have, because she’s researched it in the field of entrepreneurship. “Who an entrepreneur is as a person and the environment in which they are located shapes the type of company they found,” says the associate professor of strategy and organization.

This phenomenon, known as “imprinting”, is a central part of her curriculum. “I bring this idea of integrity and imprinting into my teaching of entrepreneurship, innovation and strategy . . . the outsized impact initial decisions can have and how quickly a culture may form,” she says.

As an example, consider a startup founder who starts off trying to do the right thing, but then begins to engage in small, and then more significant unethical business practices for competitive advantage gain.

“When students push back and say, ‘Well if I don’t do it another firm will,’ I tell them that they are right, but that the only decisions they control are those that they make, so they need to make decisions that align with their own values and what they believe is the right thing to do, not necessarily the most profitable thing to do.”

Each semester, Packalen meets one-on-one with her students to get a sense of their background and goals for the course. Mindful of the impact of initial decisions, her aim is to better understand how she can support them in meeting their objectives.

Packalen’s own decisions led her to where she is today. She grew up in Sarnia, Ont., and completed her studies in the U.S. She has a BA in psychology from Wellesley College and a master’s in sociology and a PhD

in industrial engineering, both from Stanford. That unusual educational trifecta has given her a distinct window on what makes people tick and allows her to unpack questions from both a business and social sciences perspective.

Grad school is where she met her husband, who is from Finland and an economics professor at the University of Waterloo. They have three boys and Finland is the family’s second home. It’s where they hunkered down at the height of the pandemic. “I love foraging for mushrooms and berries in the forests of Finland,” Packalen says.

At Smith, where she’s been since 2004, Packalen’s research agenda has grown to include academic integrity and mental health. But imprinting has been a throughline in her work.

More recently, she was part of a team studying the impact of “work integration social enterprises” (WISEs) in Ontario. These are revenue-generating businesses with a focus on supporting the labour market for vulnerable community members.

“The WISE project brought together so many of the topics in which I was interested, including social entrepreneurship and mental health,” she says.

Looking ahead, Packalen wants to extend the research that she’s been doing on integrity in entrepreneurship and investigate more systematically how founders’ values and prior life experiences are imprinted onto their firms.

“If the research that I am doing and the conversations I am having with students in my classes lead individuals to be more deliberate in their decisions—to stop and pause to consider why they are doing what they are doing and what might be the unintended consequences of those decisions—I’ll be happy.” ■



STUDENTS

Ready, set, go green

Can sports be sustainable? Oluseyi Smith is determined to make it happen

BY WANDA PRAAMSA



OLUSEYI SMITH, EMBAA'23, has set his sights on a lofty goal: making sports a net zero carbon emissions business.

Smith, a retired two-time Olympian who competed in the 2012 summer and 2018 winter Games in the 4X100m relay and bobsleigh, respectively, has seen first-hand the environmental impact (particularly waste and emissions) of international sporting events.

“Looking back on my experience and what was happening in the world, I realized how different sectors—aviation, mining, agriculture—were stepping up to move the needle when it came to sustainability. But when I looked at the sport sector, I didn’t see an equal parallel. I didn’t think we were being the leaders that I thought we should be,” says Smith, a Game Plan award recipient in the Executive MBA Americas program.

In response, the electrical engineer with a background in renewable energy founded Racing to Zero. It works with sport organizations to measure their environmental impact and

develop sustainable practices.

Racing to Zero performs sustainability audits for events, measuring everything from waste and energy and water consumption, to communications and procurement strategies. It supports carbon improvement projects, such as travel emissions reduction programs or waste management strategies. It also runs workshops and webinars.

“Our mission, right now, is to take it sport by sport and equip provincial and national organizations with the drive and passion to do something, to take that first step,” he says.

For example, this past summer Racing to Zero worked with Athletics Ontario (AO) on a strategy for its provincial championships. They calculated the baseline CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) emissions and waste produced per athlete, overall water consumption and evaluated event suppliers and AO’s existing sustainability strategy and objectives. The organization received a Racing to Zero sustainability score, along

with recommendations.

When Racing to Zero launched in Calgary in 2019 (with seed funding from the International Olympic Committee’s Young Leaders program), it concentrated on greening track and field events. But over the past year, the social enterprise has broadened its mandate to include all sports.

Smith says his engineering background, his life as an elite athlete, and his time in the EMBAA program combine to help him push Racing to Zero’s mission forward. He also has the support of fellow athletes and Olympians Oliver Scholfield, **MARTHA MCCABE, MMIE'19**, Donna Vakalis and Melissa Humana-Paredes, who joined the Racing to Zero operating team.

“For many organizations, the biggest impediment to change is getting started—finding the time, money and drive. Our goal at Racing to Zero is to give them a helping hand. We encourage them to start small,” Smith notes. “If we all do something, I believe the cumulative impact will be significant.” ■

Beyond the bottom line

New Commerce course emphasizes experiential learning and community impact

THE EXPECTATIONS OF BUSINESS are changing. Increasingly, businesses are being called upon to contribute to solving the world's biggest issues. Organizations need talent that understands the changing role of business in society.

"Issues such as social impact, sustainability and ethics are no longer just a nice to have. They've become central to the work of businesses," says **JEAN-BAPTISTE LITRICO**, associate professor and director of the Centre for Social Impact at Smith. "A business school like Smith has to anticipate these

trends and equip students with the tools they need to deal with these issues effectively."

That's why Litrico is revamping the Commerce program's mandatory course on social impact. "Business for Good—An Introduction to Impact-Driven Leadership" will replace "COMM 104: Introduction to Business Ethics". The new course has received funding through the Queen's University Principal's Impact Courses initiative, which supports the development of teaching and learning experiences with a focus on the world's most significant and urgent challenges.

"The intention is to give the new course a broader base and a more hands-on experiential component," Litrico says. "Students will work as part of a team to address a social impact challenge submitted by a real organization in the community. It's a wonderful learning opportunity and it's a chance to actually make a difference."

The new Business for Good course will be added for the 2023-2024 academic year. ■

PROGRAMS

Science masters

A Smith program celebrates a milestone

WHEN NICK TURNER, BCom'96, MSc'98, Artsci'97, finished his undergrad, he wasn't sure what to do next. Unlike many Commerce classmates, he had no desire to work in consulting or high finance. But thanks to psychology and organizational behaviour courses he took, he was interested in what made leaders tick. So when he found out about a new 12-month graduate degree at Smith that would let him pursue that area of study, he immediately applied.

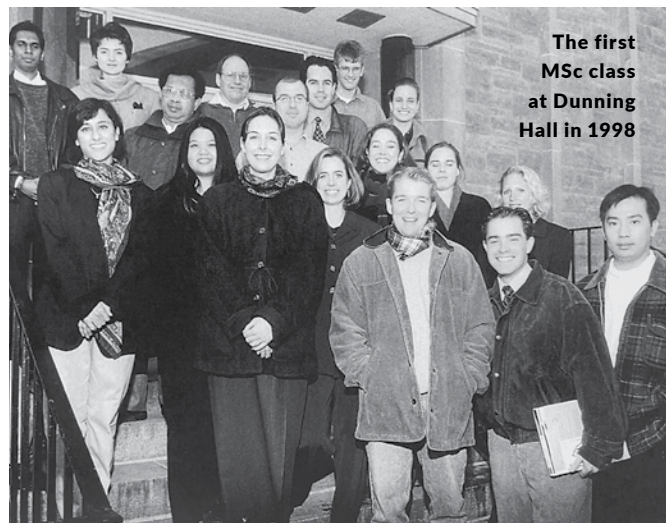
That program was the Master of Science in Management. This year marks the MSc's 25th anniversary.

Turner was in the inaugural class. He credits the program's research rigour for helping launch his career. After

graduation, he went to Sheffield University in England to earn a doctorate in psychology. Today, he is a professor of organizational behaviour at Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary and an expert on healthy work. The MSc, he says, "gave me a grounding in how to do research. It showed me where to look."

The MSc is unique in the university world: a one-year graduate business degree that's research-intensive and provides a solid grounding in the science of management—unlike more practice-focused MBAs. At its launch, few similar options existed in Canada.

Professor **JULIAN BARLING**, who helped create the MSc and was its first program chair, says the MSc creates a path for undergraduates to pursue academia. "It has allowed many students to realize their dreams." Indeed, grads have gone on to earn PhDs at Harvard and other universities, and to professional careers at London Business School,



Michigan State and the University of Maryland. The MSc remains as relevant today as when it started. Maybe more so. That's because, in a big-data world, companies need people who can analyze complex information and answer tough questions. Just like a researcher. **LYNNETTE PURDA**, associate dean (graduate programs), says industry job opportunities for MSc grads are increasing.

VIVIEN WONG, MSc'10, thought she might move

into academia but pursued business instead. Today, she is assistant vice-president of strategy, global data technology, at Manulife in Toronto. In addition to research skills, the program made her a better communicator. Researchers, she notes, have to write a lot and make clear, concise arguments backed by facts. "The program taught me to not act at the surface level but to think deeper," she says. "And that has real-world applications." ■



Insight

FACULTY RESEARCH • IDEAS • ALUMNI EXPERTS • ADVICE

Ready and able

Why do companies so often avoid hiring people with disabilities?

BY ANGELA KRYHUL

CANADA HAS A PRETTY DISMAL track record employing adults with disabilities. And it's not because job seekers lack education, training, a desire to work or the skills to do the job.

The employment rate among Canadian working-age adults with a disability is 49 per cent compared to 79 per cent for those without a disability. In the United States, the numbers are even worse. An estimated 34.9 per cent of people with disabilities are employed compared to 76 per cent without disabilities. That's according to a paper published in the *Journal of Business and Psychology*, co-authored by **CATHERINE CONNELLY, MSc'00, PhD'04.**

"The bottom line is that, all over the world, a person with a disability is less likely to be employed than a person without a disability," says Connelly

who is a professor of organizational behaviour and Canada Research Chair at McMaster University in Hamilton.

The term "disability" itself is not always well defined, so it's not clear to everyone who is disabled and who is not. In a workplace setting, however, disability means a health condition that interferes with how an employee goes about their daily activities. "We have this idea that disability means using a wheelchair, but that's not always the case," Connelly says.

For example, a worker whose arthritis makes it difficult to use a pen may require a tablet or dictation software to get the job done. "It definitely doesn't mean that you cannot do anything," Connelly adds.

So why then do companies fail to hire more disabled people? After all, many firms have inclusion policies. And many governments have fair-hiring laws. Yet Connelly's paper ["The Participation of People with Disabilities in the Workplace Across the Employment Cycle: Employer Concerns and Research Evidence"] finds that stubborn misconceptions persist among some employers, for example, equating disability with an inability to work.

Connelly says employer concerns can be summarized in three key areas: a perceived dearth of applicants;

misconceptions around accommodation costs; and worries about negative impacts on workplace culture. Here, she helps us understand each one, plus offers potential solutions.

Misconception No. 1

Few disabled people are qualified for, or apply to, job posts

Hiring managers—and this can include anyone from the company owner to human resources personnel—often underestimate the number of disabled job applications they get. They also underestimate how many disabled people their company has already on staff. "There's a bit of a myth that there are not enough people with disabilities who are qualified to do excellent work and who are interested in the jobs available," Connelly says.

Connelly has spoken to countless employers who, when asked how many people with disabilities they have on staff, will say "zero." But, based on what is known about the workforce, "zero is very unrealistic," she says.

Around 11 per cent of Canada's working-age population reports living with a disability. But job applicants don't always disclose their condition in an interview

What's a stay interview?

BY JORDAN WHITEHOUSE

We're all familiar with exit interviews. When an employee leaves a company, HR asks why they quit and what they liked (and didn't) about the company.

Stay interviews are the opposite. Employees are asked about their motivation to remain, what could be improved and how they see themselves growing. In today's never-ending war for talent, stay interviews can be a powerful retention tool, says Matthias Spitzmuller, associate professor of organizational behaviour at Smith.

How do stay interviews work? First, to elicit honest answers and for confidentiality, they should be done by HR rather than a direct boss. As for who to target, Spitzmuller suggests positions that are difficult to replace with high turnover. Stay interviews should be taken seriously. "If they're used to just check boxes, then they can be very frustrating for employees," says Spitzmuller. "You have to have open ears and really listen."

What should be discussed? First, the employee should be told that they are valued, that the interview is about learning what they need from the firm to stay. Then get into specifics. Pay may be an issue. But often money isn't what pushes people to quit. Relationships with peers and supervisors are usually important, so ask about those. So are growth opportunities. Does the person feel they can develop skills? Ask how the firm can help.

The final step? Follow up. "Many organizations solicit input, but then nothing happens with the input they get," Spitzmuller says.

In that case, your next meeting with up-and-coming talent may just be an exit interview.



or during the hiring process. Nor do employees always report when a disability, such as hearing loss, develops during their years with a company. Reasons range from a fear of rejection or negative repercussions to their careers, to simply not wanting to feel different from their peers.

Connelly notes that while some managers still equate disability with an overall inability to work, this outdated attitude is thankfully changing. At work, the focus should be on whether, and how, a disability may affect one's ability to perform specific tasks. "Your health condition just means that you change your approach to the work that you do," she explains.

Whether to disclose a disability is a highly personal decision. To help employers prepare for a disclosure discussion, Connelly's paper suggests several helpful resources including those developed by the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion at Cornell University (askearn.org).

Misconception No. 2

Accommodations are expensive and complicated

While many disabled people are successful at work without any type of accommodation, managers are apprehensive about perceived costs. They often overestimate the outlay, Connelly says.

Studies show that employers typically spend less than \$500 for things like a standing desk or an adaptive computer mouse and keyboard. Connelly's paper suggests that, instead of expecting recruits to request all possible accommodations when first hired, it may be more cost-effective in the long run to revisit and adjust accommodations at periodic intervals.

Accommodations often cost nothing at all. Connelly notes that when employees do ask for an accommodation, "usually they're looking for schedule flexibility or the ability to work from home." Such requests are often similar to what an employee with no disability would ask for. Among the

solutions to the accommodations issue: Move the discourse away from equating accommodations solely with disabilities. Make support for the diverse needs of all employees, regardless of disability status, a core organizational value.

Misconception No. 3

Negative impacts on productivity and workplace culture

Managers mistakenly worry that co-worker attitudes towards disabled colleagues could hurt overall morale. For example, could employees without disabilities perceive that disabled colleagues receive special treatment or that their workloads will increase to compensate for lower productivity? These assumptions are often false, Connelly says, because disabled workers are typically above-average employees.

In a separate paper recently published in the *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* ["Building the Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities"], Connelly and co-author Sandra L. Fisher of the Münster University of Applied Sciences in Germany, show that employees with disabilities often provide higher net value to organizations. "We found that they were fantastic workers because their accommodation costs are actually low and, most importantly, these are very loyal employees who have low turnover rates," Connelly explains.

Looking ahead, Connelly says the biggest challenge to having more people with disabilities in the workforce is to change the mindset of employers who assume that people with disabilities are this "other" group. But there is progress. The labour market is tight and many companies and industries will face worker shortages for years to come. As a result, employers are broadening where, and how, they recruit.

"Anecdotally, I have heard that many community service organizations that support finding employment for people with disabilities are busy and that there's possibly more of a recognition that these workers are excellent and have a lot to contribute," Connelly says. ■



Why don't we talk about social class?

Professor Michelle Lee delves into an often invisible, but crucial, dynamic at work

BY ALAN MORANTZ

SOCIAL CLASS IS ALL ABOUT socioeconomic status— income, education and occupation mixed with perceptions of rank. Your social class upbringing can be a powerful predictor of how you think and act at work.

Yet, despite a push for greater diversity, social class is an underappreciated force. Michelle Lee, assistant professor of strategy and organization, has studied social class. Here, she discusses the evidence, and why this is a topic of personal interest, with Alan Morantz, senior editor at Smith Business Insight [smithqueens.com/insight].

Alan Morantz: The role of social class doesn't seem to come up as often as one would expect given that the class advantage of the more affluent in North America has grown over time. Why is that?

MICHELLE LEE: For a while, we thought we had gotten rid of the class system. With all the social mobility in the '60s and '70s, it didn't seem relevant. But it's now recognized as an important topic because we see it's not a level playing field. There's more of a gap between the wealthy and poor in the U.S. and Canada, and upward mobility has been declining sharply since 1980.

Class also hasn't been prominent because it's been tied in with other issues. In the U.S., race and class are tightly connected. But you have to study class as well because race is not the only factor that contributed to all the issues that came up with the Black Lives Matter movement.

As you move up the ranks in organizations, diversity among managers and executives goes down. In the case of social class, how much is this the result of recruitment and retention practices versus issues already baked in before people enter the workforce?

Education definitely determines whether you'll even get a chance to enter these organizations, and a good education is often the result of your social class background. But there's also research that indicates there are organizational practices that advantage those of upper- and upper-middle-class backgrounds.

One might be a matter of hiring. There was a resumé audit study that looked at the type of entry-level candidates that law or consulting firms preferred. They found that class cues on resúmes made a significant difference in determining callback rates. If you came from what seemed like a higher social class background—if you played lacrosse versus basketball or track—that influenced the likelihood you'd be given an interview.

And then, even within organizations, researchers have found that those from lower social class backgrounds feel like outsiders, and it's often because of different cultural cues. It might be differences in your sense of humour, hobbies or how you get along with people. These sorts of cultural similarities matter for hiring and promotion decisions.

Social class experiences also shape perceptions. If people brought up in less advantaged circumstances are asked to compare how they're doing relative to peers, they tend to place themselves better than they really are. This must have implications for how they negotiate raises, for example.

Interesting that you brought up pay because there's research showing that if you come from a lower social class background, your pay tends to be lower than your upper-class peers. Even if your skills are the same, those with an upper-class background tend to be perceived as more competent because

they seem more confident.

I'm working on a study now that looks at whether class background can influence the pay of executives under conditions of good and bad performance. The results show that when a company performs well, executives from lower social class backgrounds seem to be paid more than their peers from affluent backgrounds. But when the company is not doing as well, their pay is more penalized than their peers and they're more likely to be dismissed.

What do organizations lose out on when they have few managers or executives with different social class origins?

People with a different class background, who are not as well networked, may be more willing to engage in something considered "deviant" or innovative. There was a fascinating study that looked at the wave of corporate diversifications in the 1960s. It found that CEOs who were from a lower social class background were 38 per cent more likely than upper-class CEOs to initiate a diversifying acquisition. The study also found that having a Jewish CEO [many who were outside the social elite during this period] increased the probability of completing a diversifying acquisition by 79 per cent. Research also shows if you come from a lower social class background, you're more likely to focus on others and be more pro-social. You might see firms led by CEOs from lower social class backgrounds engaging in more corporate social responsibility.

What can organizations do to be more sensitive to the dynamics of social class?

If you're hiring based on networks or cultural fit, it can disadvantage those of lower social class backgrounds. As an alternative, when recruiting, you

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could target different universities than the typical top universities, which tend to have a disproportionate number of people from wealthier backgrounds. The other practice that can help is having a formal mentor system, which can guide people of different backgrounds through social situations.

Recent research also shows that greater teamwork can bring out better team performance, especially for those of lower social class backgrounds. Encourage employees to collaborate more and you might get better results. For the most part, organizations seem to reward star performers rather than prioritize teamwork.

What's your motivation to research social class?

I've always been interested in studying how peoples' backgrounds affect them later in life. I saw my parents, who emigrated from Korea [to the U.S.], start at the bottom in what would be considered working-class jobs. In situations like going out to a restaurant or interacting with others, I've seen how people treated them based on the way they dress or speak with heavily accented English. They run a souvenir shop now and experienced some social mobility, but they've definitely encountered challenges in their mobility.

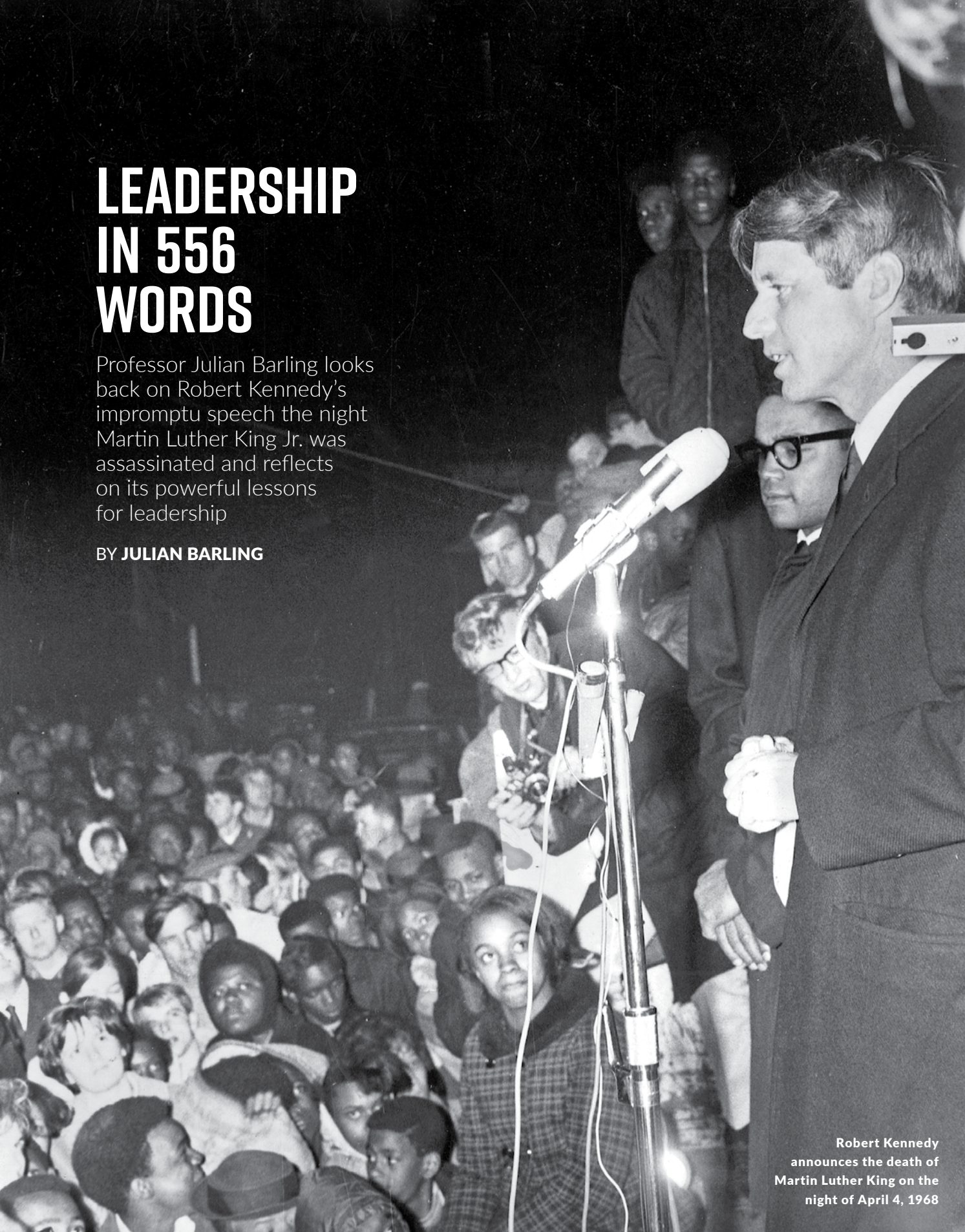
My parents were barely home when I was younger, so a lot of my time was spent watching TV or reading, rather than in dinner conversations about culturally relevant topics. I didn't have a background that gave me a social network or the skills to speak well in job interviews. It was through talking to friends and mentors at university that I figured out how to speak in interview situations.

I remember one time, we [a work team] went out on a client dinner after we finished a project. We ate at a steakhouse. I didn't grow up eating steak and didn't realize that the cut that I thought was two cuts was actually one, which the waiter corrected me on. Later, I heard my co-workers make fun of me for not knowing this. These are the outsider type of situations that come up with class differences or not being culturally in tune. ■

LEADERSHIP IN 556 WORDS

Professor Julian Barling looks back on Robert Kennedy's impromptu speech the night Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and reflects on its powerful lessons for leadership

BY JULIAN BARLING



Robert Kennedy announces the death of Martin Luther King on the night of April 4, 1968

I WAS STILL A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

in South Africa in 1966, when Robert F. Kennedy's brief visit to South Africa electrified the anti-apartheid movement, and terrified the apartheid government. RFK, then a United States senator, was hardly known as a gifted orator, especially when compared to his brother, President John F. Kennedy, who had been assassinated two-and-a-half years earlier. Still, RFK's visit to South Africa is mainly remembered for his remarkable "Ripple of Hope" speech at the University of Cape Town. Starting with disarming, self-deprecating humour, when he noted the similarities rather than the contrasts between South Africa and America, RFK used a metaphor that has stood the test of time to paint a picture of what might be achieved in South Africa.

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Despite this speech being regarded as one of the greatest in political history, it is not the one most closely associated with RFK. That honour goes to the speech he delivered in Indianapolis on April 4, 1968, when he informed a crowd of mostly African-Americans that Martin Luther King Jr. had just been assassinated.

RFK was supposed to deliver a campaign speech that night. A few weeks earlier, he had announced that he was running for president. So the crowd that came to hear RFK in an African-American community in Indianapolis was expecting a political rally. But just hours before RFK arrived, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in Memphis (where he had gone to support striking sanitation workers) while standing on the balcony of his motel room. After learning that King had succumbed to his injuries, the police advised RFK not to address the thousands of people who had already gathered. The police feared that they could not guarantee his safety given how angry the audience

might become after learning that King had been assassinated. But RFK went ahead anyway, knowing that it would be up to him to deliver the tragic news.

How can we understand RFK's speech? Research by leadership scholar John Antonakis and his colleagues provides a framework for understanding the power of this speech. Charisma, they tell us, comprises a set of nine verbal and three non-verbal behaviours. Verbally, charismatic leaders use metaphors (and other figures of speech), they tell stories and share anecdotes, they are rooted in moral conviction, they share sentiments of the collective, communicate confidence, heighten contrasts to draw attention to their message, use lists, and ask rhetorical questions. At the non-verbal level, their voice is animated, and they use both bodily gestures and facial expressions that reinforce what they are saying.

At this stage you would be forgiven for throwing up your arms, believing that there is no way anyone could accomplish all that. The good news is that leaders don't need to do "all that"—nor should they try. Indeed, research shows that leaders can be too charismatic for their own good. Not even RFK used all 12 charismatic behaviours. Instead, RFK's use of three charismatic behaviours (sentiments of the collective; the use of contrasts; and an animated voice) was enough to influence the crowd to just go home.

Facing the predominantly African-American gathering, it was critical for RFK to reduce the distance between himself and the crowd. One way he accomplished this was by using sentiments of the collective—in this case by mentioning his own brother's assassination in reference to King's murder. He told the crowd:

"For those of you who are Black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man."

Towards the end of his speech, he again draws people closer together, reminding those gathered that despite

the massive racial divisions in the country (or maybe because of them):

"... the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of Black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land."

Foreshadowing Nelson Mandela, RFK knew that the best of leadership was not about making everyone in attendance love him, but rather drawing them closer and closer to his vision.

Another major feature of RFK's speech was his exquisite use of contrasts to reinforce his message and give people a choice of which direction they wanted the country to go in. He said:

"In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are Black . . . you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization—Black people amongst Black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love."

A little later, RFK offered a call to action for a better America:

"What we need in the United States is not division . . . is not hatred, violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be Black."

What RFK was doing was deliberately using contrasts to create a greater sentiment of the collective.

Another crucial aspect of RFK's speech is his voice. It's utterly gripping. Antonakis and colleagues suggest that charisma is reflected in an animated voice. But when you listen to RFK, you will appreciate that his entire speech is a shining example of a calming voice in the midst of the storm. Don't be misled by his almost monotonic

presentation. Focus instead on how his frequent pauses gave the audience a chance to catch their breath and reflect on his message.

Something else adds to the power of RFK's speech—its brevity! Remarkably, his speech is a mere 556 words. In one of the 10 most watched TED Talks in 2021, Smith alumnus and current London Business School professor **NIRO SIVANATHAN, MSc'02, Artsci'01**, reminds us that when it comes to influencing others, brevity is key. Including non-relevant, extraneous information is not just ignored, it detracts from the main message. In Indianapolis, RFK spoke directly with his audience. Not a word was wasted.

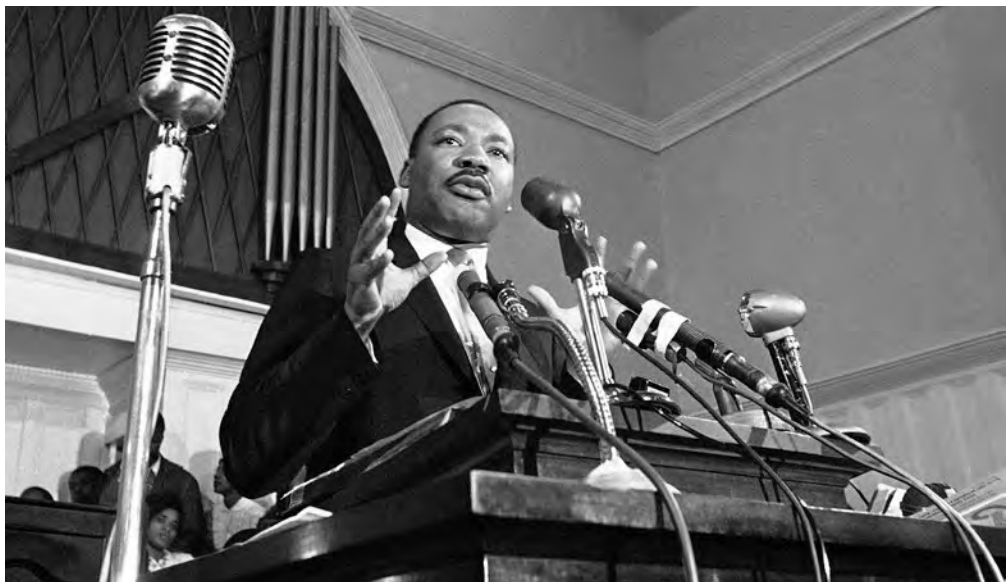
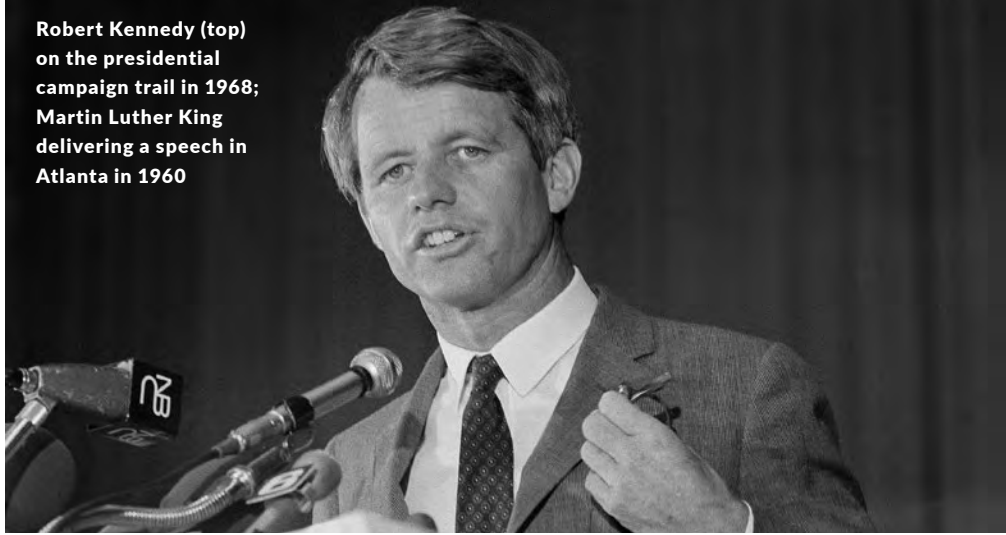
The power of RFK's speech is evident from what happened when he finished. Racial rioting broke out in virtually every major city in America when people learned of King's death. But the people of Indianapolis just went home. (Alas, RFK would be gunned down two months later.)

Aside from its obvious historical importance, RFK's speech has invaluable lessons for our own leadership today. So what can we learn?

Let's start with those 12 charismatic behaviours that the researchers identified. As I mentioned earlier, an effective speech does not require all 12 of them. Recent research reaffirms even using a few charismatic leadership behaviours will help you be more influential. That being the case, are some charismatic behaviours more important than others? The good news is that there is simply no evidence that some are more important; instead, whichever you do choose to use, just ensure they are authentic expressions of yourself.

Speaking of authenticity, you may wonder about the speechwriters who fed RFK his words that night. After all, most of us don't have professional writers to craft our words when we speak. And you don't need them. RFK didn't. One of the remarkable aspects of RFK's Indianapolis speech is that he wrote it himself in the time taken between leaving his hotel and arriving at the venue. He did have a formal campaign speech written, but ditched it when he realized that it would be totally inappropriate.

Robert Kennedy (top)
on the presidential
campaign trail in 1968;
Martin Luther King
delivering a speech in
Atlanta in 1960



And RFK did not read his speech! He literally spoke to the audience, cementing the bond between them and him.

Another factor that may spring to mind is charisma. While many people believe that charisma must surely be something that some lucky people are born with, this is not the case. Here again, RFK is Exhibit A. Though he certainly possessed some of the Kennedy family charm, RFK was not a natural speaker. Few ascribed to him the soaring eloquence of history's greatest speechmakers, like his brother, JFK, or Martin Luther King Jr. But as RFK demonstrated, each of us can learn to use some of the charismatic leadership behaviours, which will be more than enough to enhance our influence.

But are the effects just limited to speeches? No. There is every reason to believe that we can be charismatic in emails as well. Contrasts, metaphors, lists, sentiments of the collective and asking rhetorical questions—all of these can be used to make your emails more influential.

Taken together, what does RFK's speech teach us? The very best of charismatic leadership is about the smallest things you do, at the right time, to help people re-imagine a better future for themselves and others. Especially in their darkest moments. ■

Julian Barling is the Borden Chair of Leadership and Stephen Gyimah Distinguished University Professor at Smith. He is an authority on transformational leadership and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He is the author of 15 books, including the forthcoming *Brave New Workplace: Designing Productive, Healthy, and Safe Organizations*.

Hazy finance

A Smith researcher finds a new cost of pollution

BY ALAN MORANTZ

IT'S ONE THING TO LOOK AT pictures of Beijing shrouded in smog and imagine working under such conditions. It's another to spend your days in one of the capital's buildings that feels like a hotbox run by chain-smokers.

Professor **WEI WANG, PhD'06**, knows that feeling. Wang teaches in the Master of Finance-Beijing program. His most challenging times are on windless winter days, when a dense mass of fine particulate matter from nearby coal plants seeps into buildings, causing eyes to water and chests to tighten.

Hanging out with his colleagues from Renmin University, Meng Miao and Zhengyu Zuo, conversation turned to the deleterious effects of air pollution, from high crime rates to low worker productivity. It's well known that fine particulate matter reduces our physical and cognitive capacity. One study linked short-term variations in fine particulate matter in Manhattan to substantial movements in the S&P 500. Another study in China showed that investors make worse trades on hazy days.

Wang and his colleagues took a different angle: the initial public offering (IPO) approval process led by the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC). The critical IPO review

meetings involve a seven-member committee of the CSRC and company officials and occur in standard government offices in Beijing, where an air purifier is a luxury and therefore not allowed.

The researchers speculated that on meeting days with a high PM2.5 level (particulate matter of 2.5 microns in diameter), environmental conditions could affect committee members—and their judgment—in one of two ways. First, their cognitive capacity could be overly taxed. And if they're not thinking clearly, lax regulatory oversight on polluted days would lead to more low-quality firms successfully listing their stocks. Alternatively, hazy days could put members in a foul mood and prompt them to reject IPO applications, leading to more high-quality firms getting rejected.

The researchers decided to test these theories. They built a sample of 1,488 IPO applications filed with the CSRC between 2014 and 2020. They identified which were approved or not and cross-referenced them to committee members who reviewed the applications. Next, they obtained the transcripts of the review sessions, paying particular attention to committee member questions. Finally, they gathered air quality data from the monitoring station closest to the CSRC offices.

Counting losses

When the researchers analyzed the data, the results pointed in a clear direction: on hazy days in Beijing, CSRC committee members showed uncharacteristically poor judgment. The IPO pass rate on polluted days in Beijing (days with

high PM2.5 levels) was five percentage points higher than on clear days and 12 percentage points higher on very hazy days. As expected, IPOs from firms in green-related industries were more likely to be approved on polluted days. But plenty of firms were approved that were not ready for prime time on the stock market.

Real-world evidence proved as much. Compared to IPOs approved on clear days, IPOs approved on polluted days had lower profitability and return on equity and worse stock returns within one year of listing. "Our back-of-the-envelope calculation," says Wang, "suggests that the total investor loss as a result of lax oversight by the review committee amounts to close to 28 billion renminbi (US\$4 billion) between 2014 and 2020."

Next, Wang and his colleagues used natural language processing to analyze transcripts of the discussions between regulators and the IPO firm representatives. They found that on hazy days reviewers asked fewer, shorter and less complex questions. They were also less likely to ask followup questions. "The evidence reflects the deterioration of reviewers both physically and mentally," says Wang, "as followup questions rely more on improvisation than on preparation."

Given these findings, there appear to be simple workarounds if regulators care to implement them. In financial centres with recurring air pollution—Beijing being Exhibit A—government offices can be outfitted with air purifiers. Failing that, meetings scheduled on hazy, smoggy days can be postponed or moved to safer locations. ■



THE WORK OF

PLAY

In building one of North America's largest adult sports leagues, Kristi Herold, BCom'93, made recreation her vocation. Now, thanks to a pandemic pivot and a whole lotta hustle, she's bringing the fun to the corporate world

BY **DEBORAH AARTS, ARTSCI'04**



Kristi Herold,
founder and
CEO of JAM

The worst day of Kristi Herold's professional life happened in paradise. Herold and her middle child had flown to Mexico early in the second week of March 2020, for a long-planned group holiday to celebrate the latter's upcoming high school graduation. It was supposed to be a week of fun and relaxation. Within hours of arrival, the Covid-19 pandemic escalated from a vague threat to acute global crisis, plunging Herold—as founder and CEO of Sport & Social Group, an adult recreational sports company running leagues for hundreds of thousands of players in 12 cities across North America—into the ominous work of preparing for the unprecedented.

As her daughter and friends made the most of the beach resort, Herold shuttered herself in her room, fielding calls and triaging the rapidly evolving situation. As a joiner by nature and a games-monger by profession, missing out on the fun was a drag. But that paled next to the ever-bleaker prognosis facing the business she'd been building for 25 years. Sport & Social Group's core work was enabling groups of people to congregate, sweat and share food and drink—normal “before times” activities rendered suddenly, nauseatingly verboten as governments and health authorities scrambled to contain the virus.

By Wednesday the 11th, Herold—like countless leaders around the world—had mapped out several contingency plans for how her company would respond, ranging from moderate to severe. In the highly unlikely worst-case scenario, Sport & Social Group would have to halt all programming and temporarily lay off all but 14 of its 40-person team.

Less than 48 hours later, on Friday (the 13th, by grim coincidence), Herold found herself on an all-hands video call doing just that. “It was shocking. It was that quick,” she recalls. “I had to tell my team, ‘This is our reality. We don't know what's going to happen, but we have to stop our operations immediately.’”

The next few months passed in a



blur of uncertainty and helplessness. Back home in Ontario, Herold's natural energy and ebullience disappeared; many days she struggled to get out of bed. “I was a complete mess,” she says. “I just didn't know how we were going to survive it.”

But Herold isn't one to sit on the bench for long. By May, the entrepreneurial verve that had powered her since she was a teen started to return. Sure, the in-person sports that had fuelled Sport & Social Group's success were temporarily impossible. But *fun* was still allowed. In fact, it felt more essential than ever.

So Herold did what she does best: She found new ways to play.

Kristi Herold was a go-getter from the jump. She grew up playing pretty much every sport available to an energetic kid in Sudbury, Ont., signing up for whatever she could convince her mom (a homemaker) or dad (an entrepreneur) to drive her to: soccer, basketball, volleyball. As a teen, she was both a competitive ski racer and the quarterback of her high school flag football team.

The Herold home valued work as much as play. Dinner conversations were as likely to centre on finances and how to run an independent business as the results of that day's games. These conversations helped shape a can-do

worldview in the young Herold. She started a business cutting lawns before she could drive, going door to door to drum up clients “as far as I could push my mower.” Within a year, she'd bought a few used machines and hired a couple of neighbourhood kids. The quick growth of her modest horticultural empire brought with it a revelation: She loved running a business. “My world opened up,” she says. Suddenly, she had a plan: After high school, she would study business and become an entrepreneur.

She squeaked into the Commerce program and arrived on campus, keen and green, in the fall of 1989. On the first day of Introduction to Business, Professor **FRANK COLLOM** asked students how many had designs to run their own companies. Herold was the only one of 200 to raise her hand. “I remember thinking ‘wait, why are you guys here?’” she laughs. “I was so confused. They all wanted to get into finance and investment, and I didn't even know what that meant.”

In addition to a full course load, she plunged into non-academic pursuits, including competing on both the rowing and ski teams and starting up two side businesses, one of which was her own College Pro painting franchise, which she describes as “a real entrepreneurial training ground.”

This was not without its trade-offs. By the end of first year, her average had dropped enough to warrant a call to the



Kristi Herold (left) founder and CEO of JAM, promotes the power of play, whether through her company's adult sports leagues or its in-person and online corporate events

to sign up. If someone said yes, she'd ask them to share their address book, and then she'd cold-call every stranger listed within. She printed 800 flyers, but could only afford 400 stamps, so she enlisted her boyfriend, a semi-pro cyclist named Rolston Miller, Artsci'92, (who became her business partner, then her husband, then her amicable ex-husband—he maintains the first and third role today) to ride across Toronto to hand-deliver the other half.

The grassroots hustle worked: 52 teams signed up for the first season. It was an intense time. Herold was spending 16 hours a day on the job, doing everything from bookkeeping to HR to selling sponsorships to checking in on the matches. But it was invigorating. She'd clearly tapped into something. The need to play doesn't go away with jobs and mortgages; adults should get to have fun, too. Sport & Social made it easy: no need to bother with scheduling or logistics. All players had to do was amass a group of pals or co-workers—or agree to be grouped with strangers—and show up. "People really loved what we were doing," Herold says. "They were having fun and they were connecting with others. Everything about it felt so positive. Then they'd tell their friends, and they'd tell their friends." By the end of the first year, when the number of teams enrolled had quintupled to 250, she realized the business could be much bigger than her initial ambitions. "I was like, 'OK, wow, we really have something here.'"

Powered largely by word-of-mouth, Sport & Social Group grew steadily for a decade, adding more teams, entering new Ontario markets and hiring a larger team (including now-president **ROB DAVIES, BCom'98**, who joined in 1999). It chugged along steadily and healthily for 10 years after that, even as Herold stepped back a bit to spend more time with her three young kids and dabble in other interests (including founding a community musical theatre group, called Bedford Park Players, whose shows raised more than half-a-million dollars for charity). The business is responsible for innumerable marriages, friendships and, in Herold's estimation, "thousands of babies." Some teams that formed in the '90s still play



dean's office. Ease up on the extracurriculars, he warned, and focus more on the books. She acquiesced to drop rowing but stuck on the ski team. The dean didn't know about the businesses, so she kept them going, too, earning Canada-wide College Pro manager of the year awards three years running. "My marks never, ever got better," she says with a smile. "But I had a great four years."

After graduating in 1993, she moved to Toronto. As a "small town girl living in the lonely world" of the big city, she (naturally) sought out sports to make friends—by then, she'd added tennis and ultimate frisbee to her repertoire—but struggled to find anything that wasn't a) competitive and b) for kids. She was getting itchy in her day job—she was then on the College Pro payroll, serving as general manager for several franchises—and was ready to do something of her own. She'd heard of organizations in San Francisco and Chicago that organized adult rec league sports, where groups of folks could have some fun on a field and then grab some drinks and snacks after. Like intramurals for grown-ups, but with beer. What if she tried to get something like that going in Toronto? Thus was born Toronto Sport & Social Club (later known as Sport & Social Group). "I never had a vision for it becoming what it has become," Herold says. "I just wanted my own lifestyle business. And frankly, I thought it would be fun."

The expectation of fun was put to the test when she actually had to find paying players. In 1996, client acquisition took considerably more grit than hitting "send" on an email or "post" on an Instagram ad. Herold spent four months calling everyone in her address book and asking them if they wanted

5 WAYS TO PLAY AT WORK

Kristi Herold's tips for creating joyous team building activities at work

1 MAKE IT FUN

Choosing interactive activities—like *Family Feud*-style game shows or group scavenger hunts—creates the kinds of laughs and friendly competition that builds camaraderie.

2 MAKE IT REGULAR

Like any good habit, repetition deepens the positive effects of play. Herold recommends monthly scheduled sessions—ideally, with a running leaderboard for player and/or team scores—for best results.

3 MAKE IT CROSS-FUNCTIONAL

Organizations see the best benefit when activities aren't siloed by function or by team. "It's a really great way for very junior people to connect with very senior people, and vice-versa," Herold says.

4 MAKE IT OPTIONAL

Some folks just aren't into structured fun and games, and mandating it can be counterproductive. "I always tell companies to encourage it, but not to force it," Herold says.

5 MAKE IT SAFE TO BE SILLY

To play is to be goofy, and that can be tough in a professional setting. Outside facilitation (like that provided by JAM) encourages openness and reduces hang-ups.

together today. It is not an exaggeration to say Sport & Social Group has changed lives.

By 2016, with her children older and more independent, Herold was "a bit bored" and ready for a new challenge. She briefly considered selling the business but opted instead for some deep soul-searching about her motivations and her desired legacy. "I wanted to think about what brings me joy," she recalls. "And I realized what brings me joy is driving down the street and seeing people playing soccer or ultimate frisbee or flag football and knowing that they are there because of our company. It brings me so much joy. And I wanted to do more of it." So she turned her full energy back to the business and crafted an ambitious growth plan: to enrol one million players annually, and to do so by acquiring other regional operations. "Our industry is very fragmented, and we had grown into one of the largest operators in North America," she explains. "We're really good at customer service, and we have a really strong culture. I thought, 'there's an opportunity here.'"

Sport & Social Group completed eight acquisitions between 2017 and March of 2020 (including into the U.S.), with two more that would have doubled the company's size in due diligence when Herold boarded the plane to Mexico and, as she puts it, "got hit in the face with a frying pan."

It was hard, initially, for Herold to wrap her head around a pandemic pivot that would work for Sport & Social Group. One of her two brothers, Cameron—himself a successful business coach and author (cameronherold.com)—suggested she look into offering virtual classes. Herold was skeptical: "You can't play beach volleyball over your phone," she remembers thinking. But she didn't have the luxury of meticulous strategy. She and her skeleton staff needed to find ways to bring in money, and fast. What could they do that would deliver the convivial spirit of the company to laptops and phones?

The team started by offering a few activities to Sport & Social Group participants that they figured might translate

well to the new Zoom reality: trivia, bingo, scavenger hunts, even speed dating. The good cheer and friendly competition of these sessions proved to be a welcome reprieve from the isolation, unease and sheer boredom of lockdown life. Teammates were missing one another and craving connection, Herold realized, and not just sports teammates. Maybe, she thought, work teammates needed this kind of thing, too; maybe these virtual games could give co-workers a chance to reconnect and have a few laughs.

Sport & Social Group had always been a consumer-facing outfit; transforming into a business-to-business operation was a shift, ideologically and practically. One long-term employee called Herold in disbelief: "Let me get this right," he said. "We're selling bingo? To companies?" It felt surreal and a bit impossible—but then a lot of things did that spring. So Herold and her team invoked the spirit of 1997 and started working their contact lists. It turned out many Sport & Social Group players managed people at work and were open to trying the new offering. It was simple ("we built it to be turnkey," Herold says), it was fun, and it was a hit. In the months that followed, the company hosted more than 1,000 virtual events for corporate teams in 25 countries and adopted a new name, JAM, to better encapsulate its mandate to connect people through different types of play—not just sports.

Does it pay to play at work? Yes, says Kristi Herold, who outlines the reasons why in her new book, out in November. She wrote it to help business leaders understand the benefits and ROI of playing, and it contains play ideas that can easily and affordably be put in place at work





and tease out silliness. It makes fun a priority, and for Herold, that's where the magic happens.

"When we play," Herold says, "we strengthen friendships and bonds, and we are then that much more trusting of our colleagues. We're more willing to be vulnerable. We're more willing to be creative and innovative around them. We'll throw ideas out because we trust them not to hurt us. And that happens because we've built these friendships through a little playtime."

Today, Herold's days are filled with building up JAM, which now comprises two divisions: one for sports leagues (the rec sports activities of Sport & Social Group have returned, in active recovery mode after 16 months of lost revenue during lockdown) and one for corporate events (now offering an ever-evolving range of in-person, virtual and hybrid events to meet the changing needs of employers). "At times, it feels like I have a 27-year-old who just got off of two years of life support, and a two-year-old toddler that keeps changing its mind about what it wants to do," Herold laughs.

Outside of work, she practices what she preaches, filling her life with things that spark joy. She hikes, bikes and does yoga. A few years ago, she picked up the guitar, a hobby she finds "meditative." This past August, she paddled the Nahanni River in the Northwest Territories and then flew to Poland to watch her son (Dax Miller, Artsci'26) compete in the world championships of ultimate frisbee. She's constantly planning weekend getaways for friends and activities with her husband, kids and "bonus-kids." She recently wrote her first book. It's called *It Pays to Play: How Play Improves Business Culture*.

Does it never get tiring, this business of play? "I do best when I'm busy," Herold reflects. "If I get bored, that's a dangerous place for me to be."

And as she sees it, fortune—however you choose to define it—favours those who opt in.

"I'm a big believer in saying yes to opportunities," she says. "We create our own luck by walking through the doors that open in front of us. If you don't, you'll never know what's on the other side." ■

The value of fun at work is well documented. When people find joy and mirth in the office, they're proven to be more likely to feel engaged, find purpose and stick around. These things mattered before Covid, of course. But the sudden, shocking introduction of remote work, coupled with the deleterious effect of the pandemic on employee mental health, assigned new importance to workplace happiness.

With no way to replicate the spontaneous moments of levity that can occur when folks walk the same bit of carpet each day—a laugh over the coffee machine, a funny elevator experience—it fell to bosses to manufacture

fun, and many had neither the bandwidth nor the temperament to do it well.

Professor **MATTHIAS SPITZMULLER**, who teaches organizational behaviour at Smith, says that many employees have experienced "a bit of a crisis" surrounding their work identities since the start of the pandemic, feeling physically and mentally removed from their jobs. "If your employees feel less belongingness, you have to offer them something that can compensate for that," he explains. "What can you offer to connect them to one another? Team-building activities can really serve an important function to do that."

Hence the appeal of bringing in JAM's professional merrymakers. As outside facilitators, they can transcend organizational drama, drum up enthusiasm

The Future of Food

Food innovators. Growers. Product developers and food trendologists. Meet some of the Smith alumni on the front lines of the food industry today



What will we eat next?

Jo-Ann McArthur, BCom'85, is one of Canada's top experts on food and beverage trends. Here, she explains what we're cooking (and ordering), and why

BY REBECCA HARRIS

As a trendspotter, brand builder and industry watcher, Jo-Ann McArthur knows what's sizzling in the food and beverage space. McArthur started her career on the consumer packaged goods side of food, with roles at Procter & Gamble and Unilever. She later became a divisional president at Molson Coors and led a marketing agency, before founding her own agency, Nourish Food Marketing, in 2009.

Toronto-based Nourish is billed as Canada's only full-service agency specializing in food, beverage and agriculture. The agency cooks up branding and marketing strategies for national and multinational clients across the food ecosystem. Nourish publishes an annual report, called the Nourish Network Trend Report, which dives into the key trends shaping the food, beverage and agriculture landscapes.

In this Q&A, McArthur talks about how eating habits have changed over the years and what trends are now defining food and beverage.

Smith Magazine: What made you open an agency dedicated to food?

JO-ANN MCARTHUR: Food and beverage was an area that I'd spent a lot of my career in on the client side and I loved it. Food is how we connect as a species. And it's recession-proof. Everybody has to eat. When you tell people you work in food, they smile because it's what connects us, it's what makes us feel good, it's what comforts us. It's just a really interesting area. But you don't want to go grocery shopping with me. My husband doesn't anyway. I will go up every single aisle, check out products and watch other shoppers. So, I always go alone.

How have eating habits changed since you started Nourish?

One big change is snacking. There's been a move away from the traditional three square meals a day to snacks, whether it's in between meals or as a meal replacement. Snacks used to be seen as a guilty pleasure and now they're just part of the way we eat. Another shift is the way we cook. What people used to consider scratch cooking is very different today. It's moved more to meal assembly in a way, hence the rise of charcuterie plates. And if I were to pick a third change, I'd say the movement to real food and shorter ingredient lists and away from ultra-processed foods.

What are some of the top trends shaping food and beverage now?

One is what we call "made matters," which means consumers want to know how their food was grown and how the workers were treated. If there were animals involved, how were they treated? What was the impact on the climate? This accelerated during the pandemic, as people read front-page articles on food systems and stories about workers in meat-packing plants and migrant workers. Before, the average consumer thought food sort of magically showed up in grocery stores. Now, they want to understand how their food actually got to the shelf.

When it comes to specific foods, there's an increased focus on gut health, and more research that shows our gut microbiome is at the root of human health and disease. So, we've seen the rise of fermented foods like kombucha and kimchi, which can positively impact gut health. There's a company called Viome that can test your gut bacteria to see if it's healthy or not and they'll provide recommendations on what you should eat. People have been doing those DNA tests [for possible health risks], but it turns out your microbiome probably differentiates you more than your DNA and there's more of a link to your health.

Are veganism and vegetarianism on the rise?

Those rates haven't really changed in Canada. But I do think we're going to see what I call "reduceatarianism,"



Jo-Ann McArthur
BCom'85

The next big thing?

Jo-Ann McArthur picks three food trends for your shopping cart

Algae milk

As almond milk production takes a toll on the environment because of high water and pesticide use, there's an interest in sustainable alternatives. One option is algae milk. The world's biggest food companies, like Tyson and Unilever, are spending in this area, with investment up 36 per cent in 2021, according to Nourish Marketing's Trend Report.

Seaweed protein

The health of the planet is fuelling demand for plant-based proteins, as meat production has a big carbon footprint. An emerging sustainable protein source is seaweed. According to Research Dive, the global seaweed protein market is forecast to reach US\$1.5 billion by 2030, growing 11.6 per cent annually.

Gut-friendly food

Covid-19 accelerated a lot, including people's desire to improve their immunity. Many now realize how gut health affects their immune system and are looking for ways to boost it. Enter fermented foods like kombucha and kimchi. There's also a growing appetite for high-fibre ingredients that are good for gut health.

which means reducing the eco-footprint of our food and beverage products. In France, "eco scores" are printed on the front labels of food products, based on their environmental footprint. The U.K. is piloting a similar program, and there's a movement in Europe to get a standardized eco-labelling system. That's something we will start seeing in Canada.

What role is technology playing in food?

From a consumer standpoint, we have become selective eaters. The majority of people have a specific way of eating, such as keto, vegetarian or paleo. Technology enables personalization and customization. For example, on Walmart's website, you can sort and choose products based on your lifestyle and dietary needs. It's the end of the one-size-fits-all way of eating.

On the food retail side, technology lets consumers get anything, anytime, anywhere. But the role of the grocery store is changing. Increasingly, people want to order their staple items online, but they still like to shop. And so, the grocery store is more about inspiration. Technology can play a part there too. For example, high-tech vertical farms [that are being placed in some grocery stores] are inspiring for consumers, and seeing plants and herbs that are harvested in-store provides a bit of theatre as well.

How might the labour shortage impact companies' ability to respond to the latest trends?

The labour shortage is definitely hurting innovation. Many manufacturers are rationalizing their

portfolios and putting their resources towards getting core products on shelves. At the same time, there have been some pretty incredible developments because of ongoing labour challenges. Mushroom farms, for example, are using robotics to map which mushrooms are ripe and they'll pick those specific ones. In foodservice, robots are doing repetitive tasks like flipping burgers. Robotics suddenly makes more sense when you can't find people to fill those jobs.

How do you see digital and social media changing or shaping food trends?

I always say tools change but the basic behaviours don't. We're social animals, so anything that makes us more social will win. It goes back to that old "telling stories around the campfire" experience. That's what social media basically is. Yesterday it was Instagram, today it's TikTok. But it's a shared experience. With the exception of live sports or events on television, there's no water cooler conversation the next morning. Nobody's watching *Seinfeld* the night before. Social media is now our shared experience, like, "Did you see the guy drinking beer at the Yankees game with that hotdog straw?" Everybody was talking about it because they saw it on TikTok. 🍔

Regeneration Nation

Andrew Witchell, AMBA'13, is pioneering a new way to farm that's good for the planet. And animals too

BY JORDAN WHITEHOUSE



Andrew Witchell
AMBA'13

JUST EAST OF the City of Woodstock in southwestern Ontario, about two hours from Toronto, is a hamlet aptly named Creditville. There are two farms in Creditville. One, down Old Highway 2, has 130 acres filled with soy. Andrew Witchell can see the long, straight, green rows out the window from his property next door, Provenance Farms. His 46 acres are about half trees and half pasture. Right now, he has a few hundred chickens, hens and turkeys roaming freely around one of his four fields. At first glance, the two farms



appear to be a stark contrast. But under the surface, both are placing a heavy emphasis on the same thing: soil. On the soy farm, rather than plowing the field to open it up, a grain drill plants seeds and keeps the soil intact. At Provenance Farms, Witchell's poultry forage, dig and deposit their nutrients into the earth. In a few years, there could be a couple thousand more chickens out there, plus dozens of lambs, goats and cows too, all of them transforming the soil across Witchell's entire property.

Both farms use a method growing in popularity around the world called regenerative agriculture. Witchell's farm is a far-reaching example, but the strategies he uses are being adopted, and even promoted with funding and regulation, in conventional farming as well. The basic idea is to rehabilitate and enhance the entire ecosystem of a farm by emphasizing soil health. Part of the point is to reverse some of the damaging impacts of the agricultural

sector, which, together with forestry and other land use, is responsible for almost 25 per cent of all human-created greenhouse gas emissions. By improving the soil, regenerative farming takes carbon from the atmosphere and puts it back into the soil.

There is a business case here, as shown by major companies like General Mills and Cargill, which are incorporating regenerative practices into their supply chains. Estimates suggest that regenerative systems are currently used on about 690 million hectares of land globally. By 2050, that number could hit 1.4 billion hectares. In short, it's cheaper to leave the soil alone, and soon it could pay off as carbon markets begin to open up.

Going green

Witchell and his life partner Eliana got interested in regenerative farming after reading Michael Pollan's book *The*

Omnivore's Dilemma. Eliana is a dietitian and Witchell is a technology executive with experience in the medical field, so health has long been a priority for them. But that book, and particularly the section about the Virginia farm of regenerative pioneer Joel Salatin, made them question the impacts of their food choices on the environment and animal welfare. In 2011, they visited Salatin and started putting plans together from their home in downtown Toronto for a farm of their own.

It helped that they had potential land to use in the Creditville property, which Eliana's parents had bought in the 1990s. The only problem was that Witchell and Eliana led busy city lives with busy city jobs and two young kids in school. It didn't seem possible to just pack up and leave.

That is until Covid hit. "You're locked indoors, school's cancelled and there's no end in sight," remembers Witchell. "And then my in-laws said, 'Come and stay at the farm and start working the land—we want to sell.' Well, we thought, it's now or never."

So, in the summer of 2020, they packed up and headed for greener pastures. Or, in their case, brown, compacted ones. The Creditville property had been conventionally farmed for over 100 years, which had left its four fields barren and depleted of nutrients. Over the next two years, they worked on one of those fields, planting crop cover, raising chickens and turkeys and transforming the soil. The basic process was relatively straightforward: put the poultry on one section of land for a day or two, they eat the crop cover and rummage around, they spread their manure, and then they're moved to another section to do it all over again.

Results came quick. What was once a brown section of dead earth when the family arrived was transformed a season later into a dark green patch of carbon-rich soil. Those lush patches have only grown since, as have the number of chickens, hens and turkeys. The Provenance team now sells eggs, chicken and microgreens to consumers via its website (provenance.farm) and home delivery, as well as to restaurants

Livestock at Provenance Farms in southwestern Ontario are doing their part to fight climate change



and private-dining chefs. They also donate 11 per cent of their products to food banks.

Animal welfare is a cornerstone at the farm too, where chickens have over 150 per cent more space to live and roam than organic regulations require. “If you’re an ethical omnivore, you want to eat meat, but you want to know that it’s treated as best as possible and you want to feed your children and your family the highest quality product that you can,” says Witchell. “That’s what we’re trying to deliver.”

More than profits

None of the work done by Witchell has been easy. But at this point, the most manually intensive part is monitoring the farm’s progress, he says. There’s a reason for that. Provenance Farms wants to be a model for how other farms can transform their properties into regenerative ones—and perhaps get paid for their efforts. Carbon credit markets are opening up in countries around the world, offering money for the amount of carbon that farmers store in their land. Canada doesn’t have such a system, but it could one day, and when it does, Witchell wants to prove Provenance has been a high-quality carbon sequestration farm. “So, right now, it’s boots on the ground, people literally measuring diameters of tree trunks and digging holes in the soil,” says Witchell. “But it’s not scalable.”

Witchell is hopeful that will change over the next decade, however, as carbon credit markets open up and new monitoring technologies are developed. Meanwhile, he and Eliana are working the farm while holding down city jobs as well. It’s something that wouldn’t



have been possible without the high-speed Internet that didn’t exist here just a few years before. Likewise, without the online community of regenerative farmers that has exploded over the past few years, they wouldn’t have been able to learn all that they needed to know to make Provenance Farms happen and turn a profit.

But as Witchell is quick to point out, the purpose isn’t to maximize profits. He wants more people to learn about regenerative farming. To that end, he and Eliana were finally able to host a launch party in August, where dozens of people showed up. They’ll also be launching a farm camp that allows families to visit and see exactly what regenerative farming looks like.

“We know there’s this sense of eco-anxiety out there. But I reject that term. You feel anxious when you feel like you have no autonomy, and we want to give people back some of that autonomy. There are solutions to climate change, and we want to be that sense of hope for food and climate and community. That’s really our goal here.” 🌱

Is plant seafood on the table?

Chris Bryson, BCom’06, is swimming upstream while developing a plant-based alternative to salmon fillets

BY CHRIS POWELL

THERE’S SOMETHING FISHY about Chris Bryson’s latest business venture. Only kind of fishy, though. The accomplished entrepreneur is the founder and CEO of New School Foods, a two-year-old Toronto company developing a plant-based seafood alternative, with the potential to ameliorate the environmental impact of our protein-heavy diet.

New School is among 31 semi-finalists in the XPrize’s “Feed the Next Billion” competition. The XPrize Foundation is a non-profit that promotes the use of technology to address the world’s major issues. In this case, the goal is to solve the challenge of how to feed future generations, with a grand prize of US\$7 million.

Entrants are trying to create alternatives to chicken breast or fish fillets capable of replicating or outperforming their animal-based counterparts in key areas such as availability, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, nutrition, taste and texture. A bonus prize of \$2 million will be awarded to the team that makes the breakthrough achievement of developing an animal-origin-free growth medium at the lowest production cost.

It is a lofty goal. Despite the emergence of plant-based meat alternatives like Beyond Meat and the Impossible Burger, as much



Chris Bryson
BCom'06

as two-thirds of the protein consumed by Canadian adults is still derived from animal sources, with the average Canadian eating 34.4 kilograms of chicken alone in 2020.

But Bryson brings a combination of unwavering commitment and significant business acumen to the challenge. He first rose to prominence when he founded Unata, a white-label e-commerce platform for major grocery chains. Unata was a digital marketing pioneer in the supermarket business when it launched more than a decade ago. And it quickly took off.

The U.S.-based grocery delivery company Instacart bought Unata for \$65 million (“reportedly,” stresses Bryson) in 2018. He might quibble with the reported cost of the acquisition, but Bryson could have lived comfortably following Unata’s sale. Instead, he turned his attention to the food sector and has since invested a portion of his wealth in startups specializing in plant-based food.

Climate action

Bryson is no stranger to entrepreneurialism. His father ran a sporting goods store in Montreal when Bryson was growing up and now operates a bike store in the city. His mother runs a custom linen company.

Bryson knows that cracking the code on something as complex, multi-layered and highly regulated as food isn’t as easy as riding a bike. But he’s also singularly focused on the cause. “I love a challenge and I love problem-solving,” he says. “I think there’s nothing more exciting than building a product that people would have said was impossible. When we started out, and I started talking to scientists about how to create a whole fillet of fish from plants, they’d look at me like I was crazy. That was actually enjoyable.”

As it happens, the worlds of digital marketing and alternative seafood are actually “shockingly similar.” It’s all about problem-solving, in this case

with food scientists taking the place of software engineers. “What’s surprised me is that many of the learnings I acquired [with Unata], I thought none of them were going to be of value. But a lot of it does translate,” he says.

An avowed vegan, Bryson says his commitment to ensuring the success of New School Foods is to address the “chaos” caused by today’s food system. That includes not just the food industry’s impact on animals, but also the long-term effects of greenhouse gas emissions created by cattle, and the impact of commercial fishing on the world’s oceans. “It is incredibly dangerous in terms of our future,” he says of the modern food system. “When you see something really bad, you can sort of look the other way. [But] it felt like I was in a position where I could allocate my time and resources to it.”

He says the development of plant-based alternatives is essential to achieving the Paris Agreement’s stated objective of limiting global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius. Agriculture, he says, is the second leading contributor to global warming, with between 15 to 20 per cent of total carbon emissions stemming from meat production alone.

“The problem is that you cannot stay below [the two-degree threshold] without touching food,” he says. “You can get rid of every other carbon-emitting source, and we will still surpass two degrees Celsius. If we don’t fix food, we don’t fix the planet. Period.”

While meat production has borne the brunt of the criticism surrounding the modern industrial food complex, seafood is not without its critics. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ report “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022,” global seafood consumption increased at an average annual rate of three per cent from 1961 to 2019. That is almost twice the 1.6 per cent annual increase in the world’s population.

Per capita consumption of seafood also increased, from nine kilograms in 1961 to 20.2 kg in 2020. An organization called The World Counts has pegged 2048 as the year the world’s oceans will be “virtually emptied” of fish.

Ready for growth

Bryson believes we’re at a crisis point. And he’s not alone in wanting to change the tides of human food consumption. According to the Good Food Institute, alternative seafood companies raised US\$175 million in investment in 2021, a 92 per cent increase from the prior year. There are currently



120 companies around the world producing alternative seafood. The *New York Times* last year reported that the fishless fish sector could be on the verge of “significant growth” as people in wealthier nations finally begin to understand not just seafood’s environmental impact, but also the health risks of consuming potentially contaminated fish from oceans said to contain anywhere from 60,000 to 80,000 tons of

mercury pollution.

So far, much of the work in plant-based seafood has come in fish sticks. The question is just how successful companies in the plant-based sector can be in developing a viable alternative to fresh seafood that not only possesses the same taste and texture, but is also widely available and affordable.

Bryson says that the science and technology behind plant-based meats and

alternative proteins are getting better with each passing year. New School Foods, he says, already has a viable plant-based salmon fillet that possesses the taste, colour and texture of its marine equivalent. Investors in the company have already tried the product and liked it, and Bryson expects to have a product available sometime next year. Restaurants are likely to be the company’s first customers.

But while there have been significant inroads in plant-based seafood, Bryson says the sector as a whole is “completely nascent.” His plan is for New School Foods to be among the leaders in a potentially game-changing space.

“I think we’re still very much in the first inning for alternative seafood,” he says, sounding very much like a person who’s ready for his new-school food company to step up to the dinner plate. 🍽️

Put me on the shelf

What’s it take to build a better food or beverage? Three alumni who’ve done it explain the joys and challenges

BY CAROLYN COOPER

JOSH BARR, BCom’10, recalls the moment he and his business partner, Amar Gupta, realized the market was ready for a functional cold brew coffee, paving the way for their startup, Brüst Beverage Company.

The two friends often worked out in the morning and, says Barr, “We’d have a protein shake in one hand, a coffee in the other, gym bag on one arm, work bag on the other. The protein drink we disliked, the coffee would be cold by the time we were ready to drink it, and it was this pain point we’d gripe over. Amar finally asked me, ‘What do you think of creating a better protein drink around this idea of healthy, sustained energy, in a convenient to-go product?’” Barr had worked at Nestlé and was familiar with both the protein bar and coffee categories.

That was in 2019. Today, the Toronto brand’s light and dark roast cold brew

coffees are on shelves at more than 700 retailers across Canada. The coffee has 20 grams of protein, zero to seven grams of sugar, and 120 to 175 mg of caffeine in each bottle. “It’s perfect for someone who is in a rush in the morning and who is looking for great tasting, healthy and sustained nutrition to help them through their day,” says Barr.

Innovations like Brüst are what drive change in the food industry, and entrepreneurs like Barr are reshaping grocery categories with new concepts that capture changing consumer demands. But not all new products make it in the highly competitive food industry. Approximately 80 per cent of new consumer product launches fail. That number climbs to 85 per cent for consumer packaged goods (CPG), according to NielsenIQ.

Yet without entrepreneurial passion, Canada’s food and beverage landscape

would look remarkably different. While a lot goes into a successful product, food and beverage innovations today have to meet consumer demand for healthier ingredients, greater functionality (that is, health benefits beyond basic nutritional value) and convenience. The thrill of finding something new and exciting can also motivate people to buy.

A good example of just such an item is Wild Tea Kombucha. Co-founder **EMILY BAADSVIK, EMBAA’22**, began drinking kombucha when she was training as an Olympic bobsledder. Later, she began home-brewing and selling her own naturally fermented, probiotic kombucha at Calgary farmers’ markets. In 2015, when Baadsvik and business partner, Brigitte Freel, were ready to commercialize, several kombucha brands were already on the market. To compete, they added a twist to their offerings, with organic, cocktail-inspired flavours like strawberry daiquiri and pineapple



mojito, and low-sugar soda-like kombuchas with five calories per can.

“We saw a gap in the market quite early for people who just don’t like traditional kombucha,” says Baadsvik. “We also wanted to bridge the gap between fun and function.” The duo followed with hard kombucha cider (five per cent alc./vol.) in three flavours and 110 to 120 calories per can. Because the kombucha category is now mainstream, she believes that future innovations will come from packaging. “People are looking for greener packaging, recycled packaging, compostable, less plastic . . . [they’re] trying to be conscious of their carbon footprint.”

Packaging innovation and convenience are at the heart of Toronto-based Easy Peasy Pancakes. The ready-to-make buttermilk pancake mix with 30 grams of plant-based protein packed in a shakable bottle is designed for time-crunched families looking for a simple and nutritious meal solution with no prep time or mess. The mixes are available in recyclable glass and plastic bottles, and compostable packages are in development. “Customers today aren’t willing to sacrifice taste or nutrition for speed,” says founder and CEO **ERIN BORGFIJORD, MBA’10**. “So healthy, delicious meals that can be prepared quickly will continue to rise in popularity. We have vegan and gluten-free versions of our protein pancake mix on the way, as well as bulk packages for more options, and our test kitchen is busy testing other plant-based food.”

Most entrepreneurs entering the food industry experience common challenges. R&D, marketing and initial

production costs can be high. And because of tight margins in food and beverage, financing can be difficult to find. “I’ve bootstrapped the business, so without outside investment we are limited to how quickly we can scale,” says Borgfjord.

Building a sustainable supply chain, getting on store shelves and scaling up can also be a tough and lengthy process. Supply chains have been especially strained over the past two years, as ingredient shortages and price increases put pressure on food makers, forcing many out of the market. “Covid accelerated the gap between the brands that are going to make it and not make it,” says Baadsvik.

Developing strong relationships with business partners and consumers can help alleviate some of the problems and lead to more successful launches. “Consumer tastes change often, and as a startup we are the first ones to hear about it because we’re in daily contact with our customers through social media, in-person demonstrations and events and local deliveries. Customer feedback is a vital part of our decision-making,” says Borgfjord. She adds that bringing Easy Peasy Pancakes to market also required educating the customer on how to add water to the bottle, shake and cook.

Focusing on consumer and retailer education has also been essential for Wild Tea Kombucha. “We switched our bottle to a can because it was cheaper, it was lighter, there was less breakage, we could have better product consistency,” explains Baadsvik. “But then it was the uphill battle of trying to promote kombucha in a can.” Ultimately, she says “liquid to lips” is the best way to educate consumers. That means doing plenty of product demos.

Despite the challenges, food and beverage entrepreneurs usually share another commonality—their love for the business and a passion for food. Then there’s the bonus of witnessing your products being consumed. “I enjoy seeing consumers drinking our coffee,” says Barr. “It’s such a cool thing to develop a product from nothing.” ☺



3 steps to get a product to market



Emily Baadsvik
EMBAA'22

Know what people want

“Do your research on everything—flavours, branding, etc. Make a mockup of your product and put it on a store shelf. Take a photo, see how it pops. Use your network and get customer feedback.”



Erin Borgfjord
MBA'10

Get help

“There are many incubators and accelerator programs that provide valuable resources and networks for startups. They help keep you on track with goals and timelines.”



Josh Barr
BCom'10

Build a team

“Create a product consumers love. And find great people and partners to bring it to life. It’s impossible to win without a product consumers want to repeat purchase and it’s even harder to win if you don’t have a great team.”





16 days IN March

How the Smith community came together to get sick kids from Ukraine to safety during a war

BY MEREDITH DAULT, MA'11

March 13, 2022. Jim Hamilton looked down at his cellphone and tried to decide what to do next. Hanging in the balance were a handful of Ukrainian children with cancer who were stuck at a triage centre in Krakow, Poland. At the start of March, Hamilton had inadvertently become part of a small group, many with ties to Smith School of Business, working to move the sick kids and their families to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto for treatment.

But the logistics of doing so were proving increasingly challenging. Thanks to a generous Smith donor, the group knew they had the money to charter the private plane they needed. But pacing in his office on a Sunday night, Hamilton, who teaches at Smith, waited for word that it was time to wire that money to secure the plane. ›

The group still needed confirmation that the patient list for Canada had been finalized before they could book the plane. Send the money too soon and it would take off without them. Wait, and they risked that the earmarked patients would be shuttled off to another country and they would have to start from scratch, further delaying treatment for potential patients. And then there was the question of the visas they were waiting to secure. Without visas, even a plane full of sick children would be turned around at the Canadian border. Hamilton knew it could all fall apart at any moment.

But against all odds, it didn't. This is a story about how the Smith community worked together over 16 intense days to bring sick kids to safety.

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine last winter, Hamilton was scrolling through LinkedIn when he came across a video posted by Wladimir Klitschko, the retired heavyweight boxing champion, urging the world to fight back against the invasion of his country. "I'm addressing the entire world to stop this war that Russia has started," Klitschko said, speaking directly to the camera. "There is no time to wait because it is going to lead to a humanitarian catastrophe." Posted on February 26, the minute-long video struck a nerve with Hamilton, listening to Klitschko's words from his home in Kingston. "We have to do something," he thought to himself. Like many, he donated money to support the people of Ukraine, but it didn't feel like enough.

It was while trying to explain the war to his kids that same weekend that Hamilton (who is not Ukrainian and has no direct connection to the country) realized he needed to better understand the situation unfolding in eastern Europe. That is when he put in a call to a Smith connection: Mike Coyle, a Canadian military veteran and founding partner and vice-president of Reticle Ventures Canada. Reticle offers strategic risk management and training services, along with tailored solutions to discreetly meet

the needs of both public- and private-sector clients. It has worked in partnership with Smith to put graduate-level students through complex team-based challenges that build resilience. Coyle ran Reticle alongside Stephen Day, who had recently returned to the Department of National Defence as a colonel. Thanks to his role as director of the Smith Graduate Diploma in Business program, Hamilton, who is also the Distinguished Faculty Fellow of Sales Management, had an easy relationship with Reticle's leadership team. Putting Coyle on speakerphone, the pair chatted about the war, while Hamilton's kids listened in.

That conversation set the stage for a call from Day the following Monday that would change the course of everything. "We've been asked to help with cancer patients in Ukraine," he told Hamilton. Day explained that thanks to their military experience in getting people out of war zones, he and Coyle had been asked to lend a hand in getting children with cancer, now triaged in Krakow, Poland, to safe countries for continued treatment.

Day, who was serving as the mission's de facto commander, wanted to know if Hamilton, with his sales experience and extensive network, could help in securing the money that would be required to fund the mission. Also playing leading roles in this effort would be **JEFF MAINLAND, MBA'05**, executive vice-president of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children and Brian MacDonald, another military veteran and the executive director of Aman Lara, a non-profit that evacuates people from war zones. Though Hamilton wasn't sure exactly how he was going to help, he did not hesitate to say yes.

While SickKids had agreed to take a handful of Ukrainian kids for treatment, everyone involved knew that getting them there was not going to be as easy as simply putting them on a transatlantic flight. The logistics were daunting. First, because of their unique medical needs, the children could not travel on a commercial flight. That

meant chartering a private plane and then finding medical staff to accompany the kids and their families. With his military connections, Day began working to secure a plane. That was no easy feat given the war and political tensions in eastern Europe at that moment.

SickKids, meanwhile, was keeping tabs on which children needed treatment through its work with the International Society of Pediatric Oncology. The children with cancer arriving from Ukraine at the Polish border were triaged at a clinic in Krakow (affectionately called the Unicorn Clinic) for a day or two before being sent, with their families, to other countries for treatment.



There were other complications too. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic was one of them. Time was also of the essence—not only because of the urgency of the children’s medical situations, but because every day more families arrived at the clinic in search of care. That’s when another member of the Smith community got involved with the team.

Hamilton had met **RICHARD HAMM, BCom’76**, some years earlier because of their shared interest in sales and sales education. They had been introduced by a mutual contact at Smith and went on to enjoy a relaxed friendship.

Hamm, CEO of the finance firm Bristol Gate Capital Partners, an asset management company, had maintained a close relationship with Queen’s University since graduation.

Hamilton and Hamm talked regularly, even playing the occasional golf game. That’s why, shortly after watching Klitschko’s video, it was Hamm that Hamilton called to talk through the global implications of what was happening in Ukraine. Before hanging up that night, both men agreed that they wanted to do something significant to help.

Shortly after, Day called Hamilton to say that he had located a plane they could charter but that it would not be

cheap. It was clear that time was tight. The team could not secure a plane until they were certain they would have the patients to put on it. But before finalizing the patient list, they had to be sure they had the money—an estimated \$100,000 to \$130,000—to pay for it.

Hamilton knew that it was a risky venture. He would have to ask someone to front the money to send a chartered plane into an explosive situation with absolutely no guarantees it would arrive in Toronto. He also knew that many pediatric cancer patients were moving through the triage centre in Poland, desperate for somewhere to go. After some deliberation, Hamilton called Hamm, who has a

A group of Ukrainian children with cancer and their families arriving at Toronto’s Pearson airport in March for treatment at SickKids Hospital



history of philanthropy. Without skipping a beat, Hamm agreed to pay for the plane. “Go get ‘em,” he told Hamilton.

Meanwhile, every day was critical for the children and their families lining up for care at the triage centre in Krakow. Not only had their treatment programs been interrupted by the war, but none were certain about where they were headed next. With many families wanting to stay close to home, demand for cancer treatment in other parts of Europe, especially Germany, grew.

But as the days ticked over, Mainland at SickKids looked to see if families were ready to make the transatlantic journey for treatment in Toronto. With Hamm having provided the funds for the plane, Hamilton, Day, Mainland and others began meeting regularly over Zoom to move the mission forward.

Back in Canada, Hamilton sensed that the team was still “flying blind” though. It had no intel on the number of kids they were going to move or how many family members would travel with them. It was clear that without their own feet on the ground, they were too dependent on third-party information about what was happen-

ing. And while the money for the plane was a sure thing, the logistics of securing a flight was causing

headaches. The problem, in a nutshell: It was impossible to book a plane without fronting the money. But nobody wanted to give that money over until they knew they had the kids lined up to travel. Even then, it could take at least 24 hours to wire money to Europe—sometimes longer—and most companies needed that money in-hand at least 48 hours before departure to guarantee a plane. Finally, many families were arriving in Poland without proper identification, something the group knew would not fly with Canadian immigration.

Soon, Mainland got word that at least 100 sick children were headed for the triage centre in Poland. Some were ready to travel to Canada for treatment. Led by Day, the team decided to fly someone with military experience over to Poland to be their eyes and ears on the ground. Securing a plane was proving more challenging by the day, and the price tag was rising, with new estimates putting the venture at \$165,000. Hearing about this price increase, Hamm was unfazed, telling the team to continue with the mission.

In short order, the group learned that three families were ready to make the trip. After losing another potential plane, the group found one that would do the trick. But the outstanding visas still threatened to derail all they had accomplished so far. It was the weekend when Mainland learned that their earmarked patients needed to be out of the Unicorn Clinic the next morning. While their man on the ground in Krakow was working to keep the patients and their families updated, no one knew when the paperwork would be ready for them to travel. Hamilton and Day remained in constant contact about what to do next. However,

thanks to a Queen’s connection, they got a break. Lubomyr Luciuk, Artsci’76, MA’79, a Kingston-based Ukrainian, had a connection to the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, who in turn, had a direct link to Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. The president asked the group to provide her with a letter that she could share with Freeland and other ministers to expedite the visa process. Hamilton and the rest of the team went to bed that night with bated breath, fully prepared that they could lose another batch of potential patients and another plane.

But it worked. The approvals went through and the fast-tracked visas were granted. While the cost for the mission had by now jumped to close to \$185,000, Hamm was still on board to see the flight through. When the nurse they had secured to travel with the children got waylaid at an airport in Germany due to a strike there, they scrambled successfully to find someone who could monitor the children during the flight.

Finally, with support from their point person on the ground, the children and their families boarded the plane. Hamilton, Day and the others tracked the flight as it made its journey. When the plane finally touched down at Toronto’s Pearson airport and the children and their parents deplaned, 16 days after the initial call between Day and Hamilton, the team felt nothing but relief. While they still do not know much about the patients and families thanks to confidentiality agreements, they do know that their efforts made a powerful difference. Even better, they were ultimately successful in repeating their efforts and bringing a second plane full of sick children to Toronto. Currently, nine children and adolescents are receiving care at SickKids as a result.

For Hamilton, it was yet more evidence that the Smith community is capable of making big changes in the world by working together. “I guess the beautiful part of the Queen’s and Smith mindset is always ‘how do I help,’” Hamilton mused after the mission. “It’s not ‘should I help’ or ‘convince me to help.’ For us, the answer is always ‘yes’ first.” ■



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ALUMNI NOTES • EVENTS • PROFILES • COMMUNITY



Yield of dreams

Jenny Lemieux, MMAI'20, is using artificial intelligence to help fruit growers unearth the ultimate harvest

BY ROSALIND STEFANAC

JENNY LEMIEUX GREW UP IN THE farming community of Ilderton, just outside London, Ont. It's fitting then that she has gone back to her roots by creating a technology solution that helps growers optimize their fruit production.

"I've always been impressed with farmers of all kinds," she says, citing her grandfather and uncle as examples. "Not only have they had to understand agriculture and horticulture, but the futures market, farm inputs, sales and such a broad variety of challenges to make their crop production viable."

Fruit growers, she says, have it especially tough. There's the weather and pests that affect crop yields of course. But unlike regular row crops, fruit trees can't be monitored from the sky by drones or satellites. "With outdoor fruit production, you have the variability of dozens of fruit varieties and tree setups and ages that need to be managed differently," says Lemieux. "Many growers are predicting output based on gut. If they're wrong, that's money lost and food wasted."

After years of experience in software and machine learning, Lemieux saw an opportunity to use artificial intelligence and analytics to address these challenges. With her co-founder, Jonathan Binas, she started Vivid Machines in November 2020. The goal: to build an AI-driven solution that helps

growers improve the volume and quality of their fruit production while reducing labour costs and food waste.

Fast forward to today: The Toronto-based company's Vivid X-Vision system integrates a small, five-camera, high-resolution sensor mounted right onto a grower's farm equipment to "digitize" every plant in the orchard. The sensor can capture the plant's visible and chemical details in real time from bud to harvest. "Right now, we are using information collected to predict apple count per tree, but we'll also be able to predict apple size before harvest, and predict the yield of a given crop weeks or months before [it was] previously possible," she says.

Lemieux expects the technology to

ultimately help farmers manage growth and earlier diagnose pests, diseases and nutrient deficiencies. "Even at the end of season, a more accurate prediction of yield means farmers don't end up with apples they can't sell because they have already planned for those particular sizes and varieties," says Lemieux. The system's prediction accuracy rate is about 80 per cent early in the season and over 90 per cent for end-of-season crops. Those rates are improving as the technology evolves, she says.

Lemieux developed her love of software and machine learning after earning degrees in chemical engineering and product design. That included an intensive year in Italy for a master's in product design. As a 2020 graduate of

the 12-month Master of Management in Artificial Intelligence program, she credits her time at Smith for giving her the knowledge to develop a marketable business model for Vivid Machines. "There's no way I would be doing what I'm doing without that degree because I wouldn't understand the underlying concepts of AI enough to be able to identify a problem that could be solved through machine learning," she says.

During Entrepreneur First—a global investor program connecting tech entrepreneurs—she met Binas. He had expertise in building hardware to optimize machine learning and he shared Lemieux's passion for food security (his family ran an organic food business). They clicked instantly and Vivid Machines was born.

While apple growers are their primary target so far, Lemieux says the sky's the limit for other potential fruit growers and even new industries where their system could be applied. "The opportunities are huge. It's just a matter of making sure the technology is working at its best first," she says.

To that end, the company is currently working with nine pilot farms in Ontario, New York and Washington state. It has also partnered with apple growers in New Zealand and Chile. "We are seeing new varieties of apples, and, as our dataset grows, that requires us to continue work on perfecting our models," she says.

Vivid Machines has also partnered with Cornell AgriTech (a leading agriculture and food research centre in New York) to study common diseases in grapes. "Not only are we providing services to growers, but we've had so much interest from pack houses and marketing agencies to get data about the growers they work with," she says.

Ultimately, Lemieux's vision is for Vivid Machines' technology system to become a key part of the fruit supply chain worldwide. "For that supply chain to work, everyone needs visibility into the farm to know what's being produced," she says. "Food security is one of the most important problems of our future. We believe we can be an integral part of supporting growers, pack houses and marketers to solve this problem in fruit." ■



Vivid Machines'
Jenny Lemieux.
Her company's tech
helps apple growers
predict the harvest

Dollars and sense

Royce Mendes, MFin'12, helps people understand the economy in an uncertain age

BY ROSALIND STEFANAC

PREDICTING ECONOMIC PROGRESS (or lack thereof) is difficult at the best of times. But throw a pandemic into the mix, and any financial norms become moot. Yet every day, Royce Mendes and his financial team monitor and forecast the Canadian economy—and with notable success.

“The last couple of years have tested a lot of long-term dogmatic beliefs about the ways economies work. It has been a time where economists like me either sink or swim,” says Mendes, managing director and head of macro strategy at Desjardins Capital Markets.

Not only is Mendes a regular commentator for national media outlets like *The Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *CBC* and *Bloomberg*, his teams have multiple times been recognized for their accuracy in monitoring and forecasting the Canadian economy. “It’s always more fun making forecasts when the economy is roaring and businesses are doing well,” he says. “But it’s necessary to conduct the analysis throughout all periods because it helps governments, businesses and citizens navigate these uncertain times.”

Born and raised in Unionville, Ont., Mendes jokes that he would have become a baseball pitcher had he had enough talent. In university, he studied two opposite disciplines—economics and philosophy—and he believes that both have contributed to his career.

After graduating, he secured a job at a Toronto-based equity hedge fund willing “to take a risk on me.” He went on to earn his Chartered Financial Analyst designation before enrolling in Smith’s Master of Finance program in 2011. “What I wanted to get from Queen’s was not only knowledge and a world-class education, but an opportunity to meet people striving for similar career goals because I hadn’t developed those networks yet.”

The networking paid off. After various positions at the Bank of Canada and then CIBC Capital Markets as an executive director and senior economist, he joined Desjardins at the start of this year. At 38, it was an opportunity to build his own team. “There is nothing more thrilling than getting up in the morning and seeing how markets have moved overnight and how that fits with my own views—and then sharing it with our clients and the public.”

Making sense of the markets for a living can be all-consuming. Mendes often puts in long hours, but he also advocates for work/life balance. “I have always believed you have to give 110 per cent at work. But my mom taught me at a young age that it cannot come at the expense of your family or friends,” he says. “Being able to clearly separate work and real life allows me to come in every day fresh and with a new perspective.” ■



Suite success

Indu Brar, EMBA'18, has managed some of the world's top luxury hotels

BY **BRENDA BOUW**

INDU BRAR WORKED her way to the top of the hotel management business the old-fashioned way—from the ground up, and with an innate ability to make guests feel welcome, which she picked up from her immigrant parents.

“My parents were the kindest souls who would give you the shirt off their backs. There was always a seat at our table,” says Brar, who grew up in Calgary, the middle of five children.

She recalls some strict protocols when guests came to the family home. She and her siblings would serve tea and converse politely before being allowed to retreat to their rooms. “There was a big emphasis on making people feel comfortable and welcome,” says Brar, whose parents came to Canada from India in 1966.

Brar was 18 when her father passed away, and she took a switchboard job at a Calgary airport hotel. That first job, her childhood experience with family visitors, and her genuine interest in what makes people tick, shaped her “calling” in hospitality. “I just needed a job, but then I fell in love with the work,” Brar says. “I was in awe of the interactions; how kind and gracious the staff was with the guests, and how quick-witted, innovative and organized they were. I think that’s when I knew there could be a career for me in this industry.”

While in her early 20s, Brar worked her way up to middle-management roles at Canadian Pacific Hotels (now part of the Fairmont Hotels and Resorts chain), before a series of promotions at marquee hotels across the chain. She was a director at Fairmont hotels in Edmonton and Lake Louise, managed The Plaza in New York City and was general manager at the chain’s



top hotels in Winnipeg, Boston and Vancouver before being tapped to oversee the \$60-million renovation at the iconic Fairmont Empress Hotel in Victoria, B.C., in the spring of 2016.

Under Brar’s leadership over the next five years, the Empress (first opened in 1908) was not only refreshed for a new era, but it also received international accolades, including “Best Hotel in the

Americas” in 2020 by Historic Hotels Worldwide and was listed as one of the “Top 21 Iconic Hotels in the World” by *National Geographic Traveler* magazine, to name a few.

Perhaps more impressive is that Brar helped pull all this off while getting her Executive MBA and helping care for her elderly mother. While Brar acknowledges it was a lot—even too much, in



Indu Brar, photographed inside the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto. Below: The Empress Hotel in Victoria, B.C., where Brar led a \$60-million renovation while she earned her Executive MBA

hindsight—to take on at once, having her mother around kept Brar focused on what’s important in life. “You can have all the big titles and responsibilities, but none of that matters if your family is not OK,” she says. “It kept me grounded.”

Still, Brar is delighted with the renovation and rebranding of the Empress, which she describes as a “showpiece” for the Fairmont brand and Victoria. “I’m so proud of how we lifted the team, the destination and the community,” she says. “Everything was just so thoughtfully done,” she adds, from the selected artwork to naming the resident dog, Winston (after Winston Churchill).

While the Empress revitalization was a big success, the arrival of the pandemic in early 2020 put a damper on the hotel and the broader hospitality industry. Brar gets teary-eyed while describing the lockdowns and layoffs as “heartbreaking” for the hotel and its staff. She worked hard to rally her team while also using the unprecedented circumstances to focus on becoming a more resilient and compassionate leader.

“I can be very tough. I’ve always been

driven by an underdog mentality,” she says. “But I realized during the pandemic that I don’t have to be strong all the time. I learned to let things go a little bit and to be more balanced around what people need personally. It’s not all business.”

In summer 2021, as pandemic restrictions eased and Brar did her part to help the hotel get back on its feet, she was tapped by Fairmont’s parent company, Accor, to take on a very different challenge as senior vice-president of customer technology services for North and Central America.

In her new gig, based in Toronto, Brar is helping drive the company’s technology transformation. The role includes a range of responsibilities, such as moving to the cloud, integrations and what she sees as most important—“ensuring technology is an accelerator to support and enhance the experience across each touch point of the guest journey.”

It’s a whole other world for Brar, given her career up until then was working in luxury hotels. Still, she embraces the challenge with the same enthusiasm as all her previous promotions.

For Brar, each posting in a new city is also an opportunity to experience different communities and cultures. “My desire has always been to travel and see what makes the world go round,” says Brar, who is single and the proud aunt of eight nieces and nephews. She not only experiences new places through her work but many personal pursuits such as running, cycling and attending community arts and cultural events. Brar also travels to different places on vacation, including a cycling trip to Italy in August.

Travelling also brings Brar perspective on people, reinforcing what her parents taught her: That everyone deserves to be treated with respect, regardless of where they’re from or what they do for a living.

“My work must be fulfilling, yet life is about so much more than what we do for work,” she says. “I believe life is meant to be about living, lifting each other up, being generous with your strength and spirit, feeding your soul and, ultimately, never forgetting to be curious about the world.” ■





Space jam

Satellites. Space junk. Earth orbit has lots of stuff. Stewart Bain, EMBA'02, wants to make sure it doesn't end in a big bang

BY PETE RUSSELL

HUMANS HAVE NEVER lacked existential threats. War, famine and disease have been here since the beginning. Today, climate change and dying oceans imperil us.

But another danger looms on the horizon. Well, higher up. *Way up*. Orbiting the Earth is an alarming amount of debris: dead satellites, abandoned rocket stages and fragments from 65 years of space exploration. NASA tracks more than 23,000 pieces larger than a softball. But there are half-a-million marble-sized chunks and over 128 million smaller bits.

Travelling at more than 15,000 miles an hour, even tiny pieces pose a danger to satellites and spacecraft. Governments and businesses plan to launch thousands more satellites in coming years. That will only add to the chance of collisions. Experts fear there will eventually be so much debris that it

will no longer be feasible for humans to use space. Earth orbit will be one big demolition derby. Ever-more colliding space junk creating ever-more space debris. That will have dire consequences for a world that relies on satellites for communications and more.

"The problem is very serious," says Stewart Bain. "Already satellite launches are being delayed because a cloud of debris is moving through and the rocket cannot launch during that period."

Bain is CEO and founder of NorthStar Earth & Space Inc. The Montreal firm wants to be the first to reduce the danger by tracking objects from space to prevent collisions. It plans to launch a constellation of satellites with telescope sensors to track orbital debris for companies and governments that operate satellites.

Right now, space junk is tracked from the ground. That isn't as accurate as doing so from space. NorthStar's monitoring system will eventually be able to predict the trajectory of orbital debris "precisely, accurately and timely" so that "people can operate responsibly and safely and to make the space environment sustainable," Bain says.

The ability to plan orbits and navigate around debris is crucial. That's because spacecraft move more like ships than sports cars. They don't swerve fast. In

2020, the International Space Station had to course-correct three times to avoid debris. Each manoeuvre took five hours. "There is still a lot of room to do navigation in space, so the important thing is that you get the information sooner rather than later," Bain says.

An eye on Earth

Bain is a child of the space age. He was born in Montreal just weeks after John F. Kennedy, in 1962, called on the U.S. to put a man on the moon. Bain still vividly recalls a late night seven years later when his parents woke him up to watch on TV as Neil Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface. Pretty soon he was building model rockets and dreaming of space.

In university he studied engineering, graduating in 1986. He has spent more than three decades in aerospace since. Bain helped design the Canadian Space Agency's Radarsat 1 and 2 satellites, worked with NASA and designed advanced composite materials and optical systems for satellite applications around the world. He enrolled in the Executive MBA program at Smith, he says, to apply business skills to his aerospace work. In 2012, he and colleagues founded NorthStar.

If all goes well, Bain hopes to launch the company's first satellites next year. NorthStar is working with governments (including Canada and Quebec) and private investors, and it has partnerships with international space agencies and satellite service operators.

But while NorthStar aims to make space safer, it may also help here on Earth. Last year, it began working with the Canadian Coast Guard to develop a system to monitor environmental threats such as coastal erosion and marine pollution from space. Bain says NorthStar's hyperspectral optics and sensors will be powerful enough to track changes on land and sea that result from climate change. One example: NorthStar could eventually analyze the health of forests and map and predict the spread of forest fires. "With accurate information, we can start to make better decisions to address these challenges," Bain says. "It's technology meets environmentalism." ■

INDIGENOUS GROWTH

With an explosion of consortiums to develop infrastructure, real estate, natural resources and more, Indigenous led companies are playing a bigger role in Canadian business. Smith Alumni Chapters Calgary and Vancouver hosted an online event to discuss how firms can work with and support them.

THE POTENTIAL

“The Indigenous economy in this country is estimated at around \$100 billion in potential. Indigenous Peoples, as stewards of Canada’s most valuable resources, her natural resources, are rightsholders who have a place in nearly every venture, every board table and every business discussion across this country today.”



Luticia Miller
EMBA’22, CEO,
Ninelrons

HAVING A STAKE

“What we’re seeing in our work with organizations is this movement of partnerships of equity share and equity participation. It’s Indigenous communities, Indigenous businesses and Indigenous Peoples really becoming shareholders on some of the biggest projects in Canada.”



Gillian Hynes
AMBA’17, director,
reconciliation, inclusion &
strategy, Rise Consulting

OWNING REVENUE

“Equity partnerships are the way Indigenous nations want to participate. They want to be a controlling partner. It will create sustainability for their communities because they are going to get dollars to run their programs and not be dependent on federal programming. It’s to have what we call ‘own-source revenue’ and autonomy.”



Brittane Laverdure
EMBA’22, regional VP,
Indigenous wealth, RBC

THE CHALLENGE

“When companies look at partnering with an Indigenous community, they should make sure it’s a tangible business fit—things you can measure. Don’t just do it because it will look good in a sustainability report. Do it because it’s the best deal for your company and your partner.”



Robert MacCuish
president and chairman,
CanadianEagle (and
a Smith parent)

PUT YOUR BUSINESS ON SMITHCONNECT

Are you a business owner looking to spread the word about the products and services you offer? Do you know you can do exactly that on SmithConnect?

For example, PlantEd Project (plantedproject.com) is a sustainable living brand bringing plant-based cooking, eating and living into the everyday lives of others, founded by **GEORGIA FOX, MMIE’22**.

PlantEd is one of over 55 businesses you can learn about on the SmithConnect Business Directory. A platform showcasing Smith alumni-owned ventures, the business directory connects students and alumni with exclusive discounts and is a way to support your fellow Smith graduates.

Visit SmithConnect.com to learn more and publish your business listing for free on the SmithConnect Business Directory.

Watch “Indigenous Business: Its Role in Canada’s Economy” and other Smith Alumni Chapter events at smithqueens.com/alumni (event recordings). And visit SmithConnect.com to learn about upcoming in-person and virtual alumni events.





Alumni Notes

1970s

WAYNE SMITHIES, BCom'72, had several jobs after graduating from Commerce, including a brief stint as a commercial real estate agent, before discovering property management. He retired in June after 34 years as president of Martello Property Services. "Edi and I left Toronto to move to Vancouver in 1975 . . . We recently bought a home in the Phoenix area and plan to winter there starting this year. Too old to ski anymore!" he writes.

JIM LEECH, MBA'73, was awarded the Distinguished Service Award from Queen's. The award recognizes individuals who have made the university a better place through their extraordinary contributions. Jim served as chancellor of Queen's from 2014-2021. He is also a former trustee and chair of the University Council. He continues to sit on the advisory board for the Institute for Sustainable Finance at Smith.

GEOFF LOUCKS, MBA'76, tells us that he has been retired for seven years following a 36-year career in the pharmaceutical industry. Geoff is a lifelong music lover and a musician. He and his wife have formed the duo WatersEdge, releasing their original music at watersedge.hearnow.com. When not travelling with Susan, Geoff enjoys playing cover tunes in two bands—one rock and one country—in venues in his hometown of Burlington, Ont.



JILL NYKOLIATION, BCom'93, and her team at Juniper Park\TBWA, were presented with a Glass Lion at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity in June. The Toronto-based advertising agency earned gold in the category that celebrates culture-shifting creativity for its work with the Canadian Women's Foundation on "Signal for Help".

from the National Angel Capital Organization. The new award highlights business leaders who are driving positive change in Canada.

1990s

TANYA VAN BIESEN, BCom'91, has joined Korn Ferry as managing partner, CEO succession Canada and as a senior client partner at Korn Ferry's global board and CEO services practice. Prior to joining the consulting firm, Tanya spent six years working for Catalyst, a non-profit focused on accelerating progress for women in the workplace.

SEAN SILCOFF, BCom'92, has had a film adapted from the award-winning book, *Losing the Signal*, about the spectacular rise

and fall of Blackberry, which he wrote with fellow journalist Jacquie McNish. The film, which stars actors Jay Baruchel and Glenn Howerton as Research in Motion heads Mike Lazaridis and Jim Balsillie, explores the relationship between the two co-founders and the collapse of one of the world's first smartphones. Sean is a reporter at *The Globe and Mail*.

1980s

ERIC WINDELER, BCom'82, writes, "I'm very pleased that the class of '82 has decided to support Jack.org as part of their 40th reunion celebrations." Eric founded the national youth mental health charity with his wife Sandra Hanington after they lost their eldest son Jack to suicide in 2010.

"We've seen tons of growth at Jack.org during this vital time for youth mental health . . . if you want to add your support, you can do so at jack.org/queens82reunion." Eric also shares that he and Sandra finally got away this summer for their twice delayed hike in the Alps, which was planned for his 60th birthday in 2020.

JOHN STACKHOUSE, BCom'85, author of *Planet Canada*, was an inaugural recipient of the Nation Builders of the Year award

2000s

DAVE RODGERSON, EMBA'00, and **CARL BOUTET, AMBA'05**, recently connected at the Retail Council of Canada's "Store" conference. Carl was there to promote his new book, *The Great Acceleration: The Race to Retail Resilience*. Dave was at the conference to represent

(cont'd on pg. 51)



Flying high

IAN PORTER, MBA'87, his wife Michelle and their children Sydney, Samantha and Christopher flew out of Vancouver in June for a 14-month trip around the world in their single engine plane. Daughters Sydney and Samantha—both pilots—will share flying duties with Ian as they travel 70,000 kilometres and visit over 50 countries as part of a \$1-million fundraising expedition in support of SOS Children's Villages. Follow along and support their journey at 5inthesky.com.



Smith Remembers

When **BRENDA TRENOWDEN, BCom'89, LLD'21**, became chair of the U.K. chapter of the 30% Club in 2015, she set an ambitious goal: raise female representation on FTSE 100 corporate boards to 30 per cent, up from 12.5 per cent just a few years earlier. By 2018, that target was achieved.

Trenowden died Aug. 29 after a six-year battle with Pseudomyxoma peritonei, a rare cancer. She was 55.

A well-known diversity champion and financial professional in London, England, Trenowden eventually became global chair of the 30% Club. In 2018, the *Financial Times* ranked her No. 1 on its list of Top 100 Female Champions in Business. That same year the Queen awarded her the Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) for her work in finance and gender diversity, and recently Queen's University recognized her with an honorary degree.

Trenowden grew up in Halifax and moved to the U.K. in 1991. In more than three decades in finance, she worked at Peregrine, Citi, BNY Mellon, Lloyds Banking Group, BNP Paribas and ANZ Banking Group. She left ANZ in 2019 to head up the diversity and inclusion practice at PwC. Her commitment to Queen's never wavered throughout her career as she served as past-president of the alumni London, U.K. branch, was a long-serving member of the board of Bader International Study Centre (now Bader College) and a member of Smith's Global Council. Trenowden is survived by her husband, Mark, and their two children, India and Teddy.

Cancer did not slow Trenowden's determination to bolster the number of women in executive ranks. As she told the *Financial Times* in 2018, "for some people, if you have major surgery or chemo, their view is to stop everything and just rest and recover, but for me it's kind of the opposite . . . If you deal with something like cancer, it concentrates your mind more on thinking 'I want to know that I've done something that has had an impact.'"

BRIAN HUMBY, BCom'59, died in Toronto on April 14. He was 87. After graduating, Brian embarked on a retail career with the Hudson's Bay Company that would take him to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Toronto. He became a course co-ordinator at Seneca College before retiring to spend time with his family, travel and summer at Surprise Lake. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Aila, sons **ROSS HUMBY, BCom'83**, and Michael, BSc(Eng)'87; and five grandchildren.

BRUCE ALEXANDER, BCom'60, Law'11, died on June 1 in Toronto following a stroke and subsequent diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. He was 84. Bruce spent his career in government and law. At Queen's, he was Alma Mater Society president in 1960 and later spent more than a decade on the university's Board of Trustees. He was also a longtime reunion co-ordinator for his class. For his contributions to Queen's, he received the John Orr Award in 2001 and an honorary degree in 2011. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Andrea, a son and three grandchildren.

ROBERT CARTY, BCom'70, died on June 8 in Montreal after a struggle with COPD. He was 73. Bob lived life on his own terms, retiring in his early 40s, wintering in Florida and summering in Montreal. He became an enthusiastic genealogist, recording his family's story. Bob is survived by his five siblings, including Donald, Artsci'68, Law'01; Kenneth, PhD'77; and Douglas, Artsci'78.

JOHN MARK STINSON, BCom'78, died suddenly on July 19. He was 66. Mark spent over 40 years as a corporate lawyer at Fasken. He was beloved, trusted and admired by colleagues and clients around the world and equally loved by his family and friends. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Stephanie, Artsci'78, Ed'79, and two children.

JOB (JOE) CHERIAN, MBA'12, died on May 14 after a three-year battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He was 40. Joe spent his career in project management in industries such as manufacturing, oil and gas and transportation. Most recently, he was in program planning and operations with aerospace company Blue Origin. Throughout his life, Joe travelled extensively. Joe is survived by his wife, Greena George, and their daughter.

CHARLES VINCENT, MBA'17, Law'13, died on April 16, following a seven-month battle with cancer. He was 31. After completing his MBA, Charles joined Pape Salter Teillet LLP in Toronto where his focus was on Indigenous rights law and supporting Indigenous clients in growing their economic opportunities. Charles is remembered for his ability to make everyone feel included, his deadpan sense of humour, his love of rich food and his strong moral compass and sense of duty. He is survived by his wife, Annie Orvis, Artsci'14, (they met during their time at Queen's); his parents and two siblings.



NAANAK SODHI, MBA'21, met Simu Liu (left) at a Google event in Toronto in August. The Google senior account manager says he had the opportunity to ask the Canadian actor, who plays superhero Shang-Chi in Marvel's film *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, about his approach to building his career. "His insight in a nutshell was, 'just put your head down and work,' and 'don't say no to any opportunity.' "

JOANNA GRIFFITHS, BCom'05, has started a new chapter with her company, Knix. The intimate apparel brand and pioneer in the leakproof underwear category, was acquired by Essity, a global hygiene and health company. Joanna maintains a 20 per cent share of Knix and will remain as president.

ALLISON FREEMAN, BCom'06, has been appointed CEO of Chairman Mills Corporation, which positions itself as Canada's leading tent and event rentals company. Most recently, Allison was senior vice-president of customer strategy at Sleep Country Canada.

MIKE SMALL, EMBA'09, has joined Akkodis, a global digital engineering, IT and research and development consultancy and solutions provider. Mike is leading the organization's North American footprint.

(cont'd from pg. 49) infrastructure services provider Kyndryl as its partner, retail business development. Dave tells us he also recently accepted a new role as a strategic adviser to Oongalee Technologies, a digital out-of-home advertising and entertainment network in the restaurant space.

ERIN ZIPES, BCom'00, tells us that she was recently appointed iPassword's first chief legal officer to help the password management and credentials security company grow to meet demand for its security solutions. Erin also continues to invest

in women and non-binary founders as part of the angel investing collective Backbone Angels. She lives in Ottawa.

JASON FLOWERDAY, EMBA'04, became the CEO at VoxNeuro, a software as a medical device (SaMD) brain-health company that analyzes brain-based biomarkers to assess cognitive function. Jason's eldest daughter, Victoria, is into her third year at Acadia, studying psychology and swimming for the varsity team. His son, Thomas, is looking at Queen's and a host of schools for undergraduate studies

and basketball starting in September 2023. "Julia's not far behind as she races head-on into Grade 10 at Leaside [High School in Toronto], wishing it was university!" Jason says of his youngest.

SARAH GRANT, BCom'04, has relocated her family and home organization business, Be.neat Studio (beneatstudio.com) to Kelowna, B.C. "We are making the most of our new setting by exploring B.C., learning to golf and ski, meeting new neighbours (including local alumni), and hosting friends from out of town," she says.

2010s

AZIZ GARUBA, AMBA'12, has launched BlackTies, a global community platform with a mission to develop high-performing Black professionals. The platform, which can be accessed via web browser or mobile app, allows members to connect and engage in community groups related to industry or interests and to access resources and curated job opportunities targeted at Black professionals. "Since we launched in February

2022, we've seen amazing growth and our members tell us that what we've built is a much-needed solution for the community. We plan to launch career consulting services and learning and development opportunities in line with our mission." Go to blacktiesapp.com to learn more.

COLIN BROWN, MBA'13, Law'14, serves as chief legal officer of The Parent Company, a California-based cannabis company formed by rapper/entrepreneur Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter, entertainment company Roc Nation and leading cannabis operators. Colin also sits on multiple boards and served as vice-president of corporate development for Tilray before its sale in 2021.

JENNIFER REYNOLDS, BCom'13, GDA'13, has joined CPA Ontario in the new role of vice-president

of equity, diversity and inclusion. A CPA, Jennifer says she "looks forward to making a positive impact on the profession" and will focus on executing strategic inclusion initiatives that benefit the association's members as well as students.

REETIKA BHAGAT, MBA'13, was asked to join Deloitte's partnership after nine years working for the company in Calgary. Reetika also let us know that she got married in December 2021 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

ED MARTIN, EMBA'14, has been named director of the Memorial Centre for Entrepreneurship at Memorial University in Newfoundland. Ed has a professional background in educational technology, television production and international development. Previously he

was CEO of an education technology startup that was bought by Carnegie Learning.

RYAN VANJOFF, AMBA'15, has joined Leaders International Executive Search as the principal responsible for the Saskatchewan market. Ryan, his partner Kimberly and their five children live in Saskatoon. The kids attend French immersion schools "and already speak better French than their father," Ryan writes.

ALEXANDER CARBONE, BCom'16, says he recently graduated from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania with an MBA, concentrating in finance and strategic management. He was named a Palmer Scholar for ranking in the top five per cent of his class and received a Ford Fellowship for ranking first in his first

year in the program. He lives in Toronto.

CONNOR O'SHEA, EMBA'17, tells us that his clean energy technology startup Westgen Technologies closed a \$21-million Series A funding round in May. Connor, who lives in Calgary, says this funding will help Westgen to expand further into the U.S. with its methane emissions reduction solutions.

RUSHI CHANDARANA, MIB'19, let us know that he's started a new role as the logistics and marketing head for Pirates of Coffee Inc. He looks after imports and exports as well as packaging design and marketing tactics for North America, the Middle East and Central Asia. Rushi also travelled to Ocho Rios, Jamaica, proposed to his girlfriend of 10 years and got his motorcycle licence.

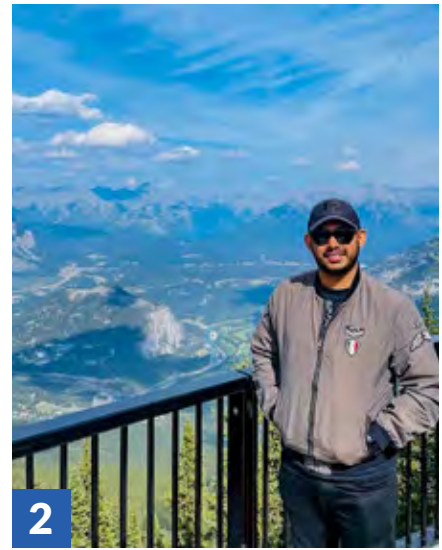
Let's read!

TERESA VASILOPOULOS, EMBA'14, a seasoned fundraising executive, has written a children's book on the impact of giving. *What Can You Do With Just One Dollar?* follows Jack Jupiter, Gracie Green and their friends as they come up with imaginative ways to do good in the world with just one dollar. Proceeds of the book will support WoodGreen, Toronto's largest social services agency. Teresa is the organization's executive director and was recently named the 2022 Outstanding Professional of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) Global.





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4

Round the world

With Covid travel restrictions eased, Smith alumni were out seeing the sights once again

1. **LAUREN DELANO, BCom'22**, tells us she went on her first solo trip and spent three weeks exploring Australia, capping it all off by going skydiving. "It was the trip of a lifetime and a great graduation gift to myself!"

2. **MUSTAFA ANSARI, MMIE'19**, visited all 10 provinces over the past two summers to better understand Canada's history and culture before taking his citizenship test. He rounded out his tour in Newfoundland this August after passing the citizenship test in July.

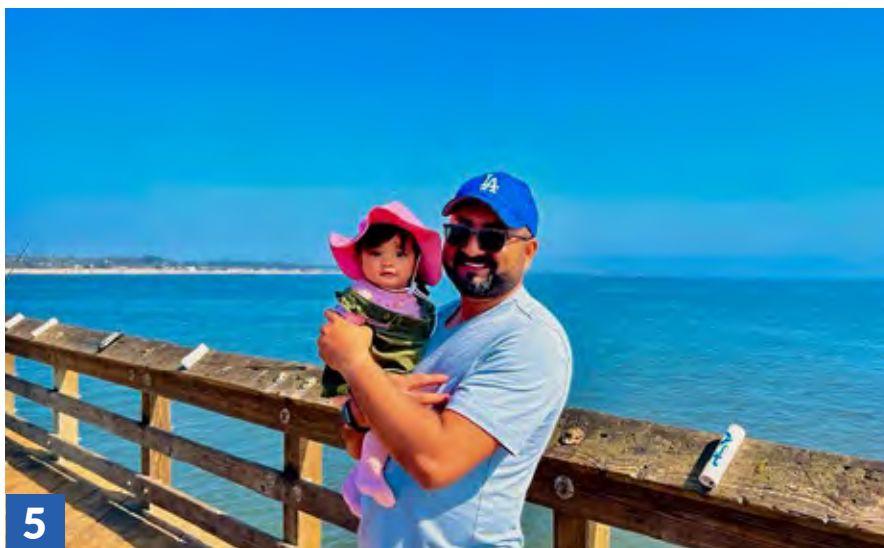
3. **KEVIN CAMPBELL, MBA'21**, tells us he just returned from a four-week trip to Europe. "This picture is from San Sebastian, Spain, drinking sagardoa and enjoying (probably too many) pintxos," he writes.

4. **SATHYA KRISHNAMURTHY, MIB'22**, visited more than 10 U.S. cities in three months, including Las Vegas (pictured). Sathya is also dedicating more time to producing content for her mental-health Instagram page @mindavinci.

Celebrations

Births, engagements, weddings and other reasons to celebrate. Let Smith Magazine know about your special occasion (and share your photos) at smithqueens.com/alumninotes

1. **CONNIE BLAIR, BCom'09**, and her husband, Stéphane, welcomed daughter Audrey on May 31. In 2019, Connie moved to Nanning, Guangxi, China. She is looking forward to sharing this international experience with her daughter.
2. **GAURAV KAUSHIK, MFin'20**, married Neha Kaushik on April 20.
3. **LAUREN DI PEDE, BCom'13**, married **ALEX DRAKE, BCom'11**, on Aug. 21, 2021 at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica in Toronto.
4. **JOUMANA AL BARMAKI, MIB'15**, and **STEFAN LEHNER, MIB'15**, were married on July 29 in Lebanon. They even brought along some Smith attire for their big day.
5. **ROHIT MATHUR, MBA'16**, and his wife welcomed a baby girl on March 18. The three recently enjoyed some travels to Los Angeles and Los Cabos.
6. **CASSANDRA UHRICH, EMBA'22**, and **MITCHELL JOHNSTONE, MMAI'20**, were married on June 25 in Canmore, Alta. They are living in Melbourne, Australia.
7. **LAUREN MARTIN, MIB'16**, welcomed a son, Brayden, on March 14. She says he's on his way to being part of the next generation of Smith graduates.
8. **RICHA PAREEK, MBA'15**, and **KRISHNA PANDEY, MBA'15**, welcomed their son, Arjun, in July 2021.





MARINA DARLING, MMIE'19, Artsci'16, says it's been a big year. She started a new role as an organizational development consultant at Queen's University in May and celebrated her marriage to husband Peter in August. Marina tells us she also continues to work with impact-driven entrepreneurs as an independent innovation and strategy consultant.

ABIGAIL KINGSWOOD, BCom'19, and Divya Makkar, MEng'19, won \$5,000 in the Summer Pitch Competition at the Dunin-Deshpande Queen's Innovation Centre (DDQIC). Their company, ARKE News, positions itself as a news aggregator that measures the bias in news content, offering users access to real-time bias profiles personalized to their news consumption. "We were excited to be recognized by the DDQIC judging panel and will be utilizing the seed funding we received to bring our consumer-

facing applications to life," Abigail says.

2020s

KIMBERLEY SHUYA, AMBA'20, recently accepted a job at BMO Financial Group as senior leader, strategic initiatives. Kimberley lives in Edmonton.

DONATA BAUER, MIB'21, tells us that before taking on post-graduation career opportunities, she spent six months backpacking and travelling to 13 countries. She recently completed a summer VC internship program based out of Dubai. She has now joined Accenture in Toronto as a strategy analyst. "This marks my cross-continental move from Europe to Canada," she says. "Exciting 2022 so far."

HANG NGUYEN, MBA'21, tells us the hard work, job

searching and networking paid off and she's joined consumer health-care company Haleon Canada as a category strategy manager. Prior to starting her new job, Hang enjoyed a trip to Quebec with her husband, where she caught up with her Full-time MBA class president **CHRIS JAZZAR, MBA'21**, in Montreal.

TING LI, PhD'22, has joined Ivey Business School at Western University as a tenure track assistant professor in information systems. "Coming to Queen's and studying under the guidance of the digital technology group at Smith is the best decision I have made in my academic career. I received strong and coherent support from my supervisor and dissertation committee during

my doctoral study and job hunt," she writes.

NICOLLE SIRISKO, EMBA'22, and business partner Shayne McGregor of Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory launched AndThenIWasFree, a non-profit focused on addiction, mental health and LGBTQ2S+ support and education. Guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings and best practices in social work, the organization offers holistic programming, workshops, teachings, education and more.

Submit your announcement to smithqueens.com/alumninotes to see it featured next issue!



BRAD GUSHUE

AMBA'22

BRAD GUSHUE IS ONE OF CANADA'S all-time great curlers: four Brier titles (he's tied for the most ever as a skip) and one gold and two silver world championships. Then there's that gold medal team he was part of at the 2006 Olympics. Last February, Gushue returned to the Olympics, winning bronze. Shortly after, he graduated from Queen's with an Accelerated MBA, after enrolling in the program through Smith's partnership with the Canadian Olympic Committee and Game Plan. Here, Gushue answers our alternate resumé questions—from his first job, what drew him to curling, his time at Smith and why he avoids ice on vacation.

Where is your hometown?

I grew up in Mount Pearl, Newfoundland. When I was a teenager, we moved to St. John's. I've been here ever since.

When you were growing up, what did you want to be?

When I was really young, I wanted to be in the construction business like my dad. Later, an architect.

What was your first job?

Working at a golf course, cleaning clubs and carts.

When did you start curling?

At 13. I fell in love with the strategy. I found that curling was like chess on ice. You don't necessarily have to out-curl your opponent, but if you can out-think them, you can still win.

Name one thing that has helped you succeed.

My work ethic. There are more skilled players, but I don't feel anyone has worked harder than I have. When I was a teenager, I tried to practise on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day because I knew nobody else would.

What's your career highlight?

One was the gold medal at the Olympics. The other was winning the Brier in St. John's, my hometown. It was pretty amazing.

What's your best Smith memory?

Getting together with my classmates on campus last December for the first time. With the pandemic, it was hard to meet earlier. To finally see my teammates in

person—who I had spent so much time with on the phone and on Zoom—and to get to know them better was special.

Who was a favourite Smith professor?

Barry Cross. His classes had such high energy and always with a bit of humour.

What do you do when you're not working?

Hiking, kayaking, golfing. Anything outdoors. I love nature.

What's one thing most people don't know about you?

That I'm kind of goofy. I like to joke and be silly around family and friends. My wife and daughters [15 and 11] roll their eyes at me a lot.

Your favourite all-time movie?

The Shawshank Redemption.

Where's your favourite place to travel for vacation?

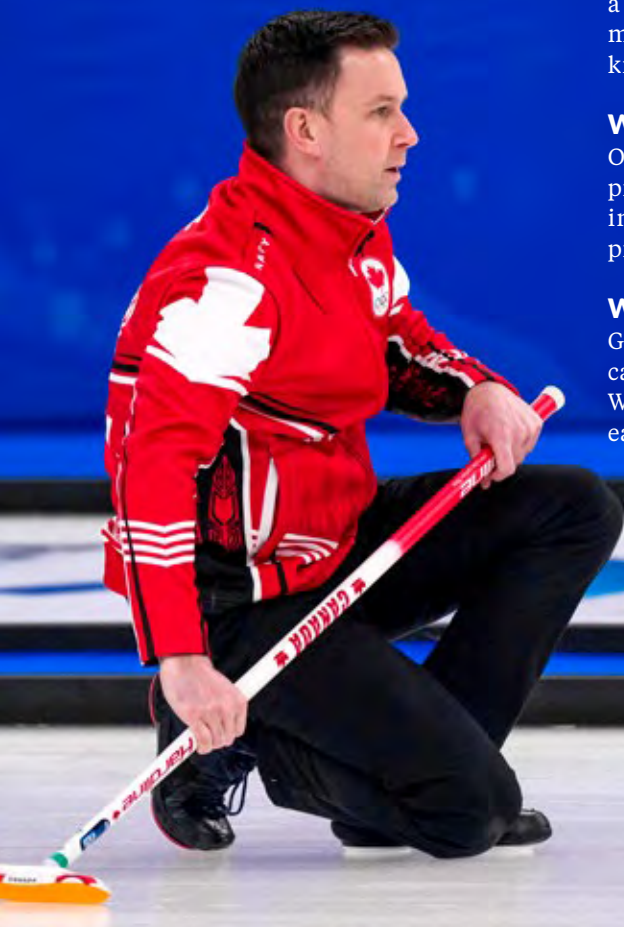
Anywhere warm. As a curler, most of my travel is in winter. So if I can put on a pair of shorts and flip-flops, I'm happy.

What's on your music playlist now?

Everything from Garth Brooks to Eminem. But there's a lot of country. Luke Combs and Eric Church are two of my favourites.

What's your idea of perfect happiness?

Going to my cabin with my wife and daughters, sitting by the pond, having a fire and just chatting. I wish we could do it more often.



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