

# Degrees

volume 34, no. 2 | fall/winter 2021

The University of Regina Magazine



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University  
of Regina



Lightning strikes light up the sky over the University of Regina during a July 2021 summer storm. The photo was taken by Greg Johnson, one of North America's top storm chasers and severe weather experts. Johnson is an accomplished photographer, speaker and workshop leader. Visit his website at: [www.tornadohunter.com](http://www.tornadohunter.com).

"Join us online"  
You see those words on the front cover of this issue of *Degrees* magazine but what do they mean?  
After 33 years, we have decided to move away from the printed version of *Degrees* magazine. We will now tell the remarkable stories of our University of Regina alumni community via the website and social media. Afterall, it's where the cool kids are hanging out these days!  
This decision has long been coming. We first talked about the possibility of moving exclusively online or transitioning to some form of hybrid delivery in 2017.  
The University's commitment to sustainability is certainly a key factor in our decision. By eliminating the printed version, we will significantly reduce our carbon footprint.

Printing *Degrees* magazine required us to use about 6,000 kilograms of paper each year. Each time we published, approximately 40,000 copies had to be shipped from the printer to Canada Post for mailing. Those that were not mailed were transported some 2,700 kilometres by truck to the University. That is not in keeping with our University-wide commitment to sustainability.  
But how will this decision impact our valued *Degrees* subscribers?  
The transition allows us to concentrate on our online presence. It means we will be able to bring you all the informative and engaging stories you've come to expect from *Degrees* and we'll be able to bring them to you more often, and with value-added visual content such as video or photo galleries.

We are excited by the prospect of bringing you enriched content.  
While we may no longer be printing the magazine we will continue to bring you stories and shine a brief spotlight on people in our U of R community who, in their own ways, are making the world a better place every day.  
The website, [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca), is now the place to go for the extraordinary stories of the alumni, students, faculty, staff and friends who make up our University community.  
You can be sure to be notified of the most recent *Degrees* website updates if you've shared your primary email address with us.

If you haven't already done so, go to <https://alumni.uregina.ca/degrees-subscribe> and submit your email address. Or scan the QR Code that appears below. Submitting your email address will ensure you don't miss any of these great stories. One submission, selected at random, will win an Apple iPad.  
I would like to thank our readers for their loyalty through the years and their understanding as we change with the times. I look forward to sharing more stories through the *Degrees* website.  
So "join us online" is more than just a new way to read these stories, it's an invitation to be part of our University of Regina community that is now more than 80,000 strong and spans the globe.

Greg Campbell BFA'85, BJ'95



[www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca)

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## Features

**The sky's the limit**  
According to one of her former professors, Natasha Jaques BA'12, BSc'12 was the most determined undergraduate he has ever come to know. She had her professional sights set early and true to form, she's now working for a subsidiary of one of the largest companies in the world – Google Brain.

**Doing her own thing**  
Meet Eman Bare BAJ'15, a determined young woman who is a force in ethical fashion design, yoga instruction, celebrity ghostwriting, investigative journalism and now, law.

**Flat out flourishing**  
Adrian Halter BFA'10 always dreamed of one day becoming a filmmaker. Now he's one of the creative forces behind an award-winning TV series *Flat Out Food*, a celebration of Saskatchewan food, farmers and chefs.

**Roads less travelled**  
This year marks the 50th anniversary of Regina's annual livestock show, Agribition. The CEO of Agribition is Chris Lane BAJ'02, a journalism school graduate who made a most unlikely mid-career move.

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## President's Note

### Concentric circles

In my first *Degrees* message to alumni as President and Vice-Chancellor of your alma mater, I want to speak about how important alumni are to the University of Regina and, at the same time, how important the University should be to you.

Our alumni connect us to the wider world, both in our immediate community and as a platform to pursue partnerships worldwide. When a university's relationship with alumni works properly, meaningful, effective partnerships are established. Connecting with people who believe in and are committed to the institution's success creates a positive impact. As graduates, alumni want to see their university shine; in many ways, the university's success is a positive reflection on them and the education they received. And, of course, alumni successes in different fields of endeavour reflect positively on a university and the education it provides.

With that in mind, I want to make the University of Regina the place where our alumni want to send their children. I want you to be justifiably proud of the University and inspired to contribute to this amazing institution, city and province. In short, I want to ensure that all our approximately 80,000 alumni feel and project pride in this place and all that we accomplish together.

So how does this focus on alumni connect with my broader philosophy regarding universities?

I believe wholeheartedly that universities are critically important in connecting with and building capacity in the wider community. I'm convinced that helping build that capacity is a fundamental component of a university's success in all its endeavours. Those connections enrich research, enhance teaching and learning, and help build partnerships in many other respects.

And you as our alumni are a key aspect of that. From my experience, reaching out and connecting with others enhances a university – bringing its dynamism and possibilities into a wider realm for the benefit of all. That philosophy underlies my approach to the University of Regina's relationship with alumni. Alumni are critical to the University's success – and given the work that has been taking place in this regard in recent years, we have tremendous possibilities ahead of us.

The University turns 50 in 2024, so we're a relatively young institution. That has many advantages in terms of being a progressive and forward-looking university, but it can also be a bit of a disadvantage in the sense that we don't have the most well-established, multi-generational and engaged base of alumni.

Of our approximately 80,000 alumni, only a small minority are truly and meaningfully involved with the University. This can be a consequence of being a commuter university, one that's comprehensive in nature, because it can be harder to establish a sense of place for students and eventually alumni at such an institution. This isn't unusual and it isn't an insurmountable challenge. We do need to be more active with our alumni, and it can be done.

We need to expand and promote the existing networking possibilities that are important to alumni and can connect them to current students. We need to demonstrate the mutual benefits – and even the fun! – of alumni involvement in University life. We need to better connect our alumni with each other and with the institution as valued parts of the University of Regina family so that you see us as an important part of your social and professional lives.

Expanding this alumni involvement has multiple benefits. It builds recognition, reputation and community awareness of our academic, cultural and social mission. Positive messaging and alumni success stories will bring more students to the University of Regina. This in turn will generate new generations of alumni ambassadors.

In general, the leading universities are the ones that have very active alumni – and

that's no coincidence. For our part, we need to enhance the active relationship between alumni and our University. An important means of doing so is engaging meaningfully with students before they graduate.

There are so many great examples of areas where alumni can get involved and help lead. So my challenge to you – and to myself! – is for us to work together to build on the great foundation we already have. I have accepted the Alumni Association's kind invitation to be an ex officio member of its Board. In the spirit of our University motto – As One Who Serves – I look forward to working closely with you and with the staff in our Alumni and Community Engagement area to enhance the University's profile, keep our alumni engaged with the institution and each other, involve our students both before and after graduation, and help find additional ways to closely connect the University with the communities that surround and support us.

Thank you for all you continue to do for your fellow alumni, our current students and the University as a whole. It's an honour to serve this great University with you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeff Keshen  
President and  
Vice-Chancellor



Left: Leanne Bellegarde  
Centre: Dr. Emmanuel Aito  
Right: Dr. Melanie Griffith Brice



### Accolades

In October, the University announced changes to its Board of Governors. Joining the Board for a three-year term is **Leanne Bellegarde BA'88**. She was appointed by the Government of Saskatchewan through an Order-in-Council. A member of the Peepeekisis Cree Nation, Bellegarde is President of Akawe Technologies, where her inclusion focus and consulting define and inform digital transformation to intentionally address diverse community needs. She previously served as director, Strategic Inclusion and Diversity at Nutrien; director, Diversity and Inclusion and director, Aboriginal Strategy at PotashCorp; director of Aboriginal Initiatives in the Edwards School of Business at the University of Saskatchewan; and senior vice-president, Corporate and Legal Affairs at Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority. Bellegarde holds a law degree from the University of Saskatchewan and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2017. She brings extensive board experience and a strong commitment to inclusion. With the expiration of the term of former Board chair Roger Brandvold, Dr. Marlene Smadu, formerly Board vice-chair, is now serving as acting chair. David Chow, Chief Cadmus Delorme CA'11, CCED'11, DA'12, CHTGEM'12, BAdmin'13, Mark Lang, Gary Bosgoed BASc'90, Dr. Art Opseth, Dr. Carlos Londoño Sulkin, as well as

ex-officio members Pam Klein BA'80 (chancellor), Hannah Tait (University of Regina Students' Union president) and Dr. Jeff Keshen (president and vice-chancellor) retain their positions on the Board.

**Dr. Emmanuel Aito** has been appointed to a second five-year term as director, La Cité universitaire francophone, effective July 1, 2022. Aito was appointed acting director of La Cité in August 2016. In 2017, he began his current five-year term as director. From 2006 until 2016, Aito served two consecutive terms as head of the Department of French. He also served as the interim department head of International Languages. Aito came to the University of Regina in 1998. He earned both his master's and doctoral degrees from Dalhousie University. His primary area of teaching and research is French linguistics, with a particular focus on specialized language and terminology. Despite his busy administrative assignment, he has continued to supervise the work of several master's and doctoral students, as well as heading the growth of the graduate program at La Cité.

The Faculty of Education has appointed **Dr. Melanie Griffith Brice** to serve as its inaugural Gabriel Dumont Research Chair in Métis/Michif Education for a five-year term. This new chair will increase research and teaching capacity in Métis/Michif education in the Faculty

of Education and enhance academic engagement with Gabriel Dumont Institute's Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). Brice's research will focus on learning, knowledge-keeping, language and cultural revitalization, reconciliation and inclusion with and by the Métis through formal education systems. Brice is an assistant professor in Indigenous Education, Language & Literacy Education, and Educational Core Studies with the University's Faculty of Education. Brice, a Michif (Métis) born in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan and raised in nearby Jackfish Lake, has a strong understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, languages and literacies, perspectives, educational experiences and cross-cultural education issues.

The University of Regina's Department of Film has presented its 2021 Distinguished Alumni Award to **Ron Forsythe BA'80**, a winner of multiple Gemini Awards and Canadian Screen Awards for his work as a director of TV Sports for CBC and Rogers. The award was presented at a reception on November 9. In addition to an exceptional career directing live broadcasts of major sporting events, Forsythe has the distinction of being the first student to graduate with a film degree from the University. His work as a director at the highest level of sports broadcasting

has earned him 15 Gemini and Canadian Screen Award nominations and six wins. Forsythe has directed 21 Stanley Cup finals, 16 Grey Cups, nine



Ron Forsythe

Olympic Games and dozens of other major sporting events including Commonwealth, Asian and Pan American Games, as well as World Athletic, World Cycling and World Swimming championships. Forsythe spent 39 years with the CBC, starting out as a production assistant. Since retiring from CBC, he continues to work as a director on NHL telecasts for Rogers.

On October 22, the University of Regina's **Fall 2021 Convocation** celebrated the accomplishments of 998 graduates who received 1,037 degrees, diplomas and certificates – both record numbers at a U of R Fall Convocation. The graduates join the U of R's alumni community that now numbers more than 80,000 strong and extends around the globe. For the first time in two years, the Convocation ceremony was safely held in person, although the event was limited to

graduates and a small platform party only (with COVID-19 safety protocols in place including proof of vaccination). Graduating students who were unable to participate in person were able to attend the event virtually via livestream. Friends, family, faculty, staff and current students were also able to watch and cheer on all the graduates.

**Dr. Jeff Keshen** was officially installed as the University's eighth president and vice-chancellor at the ceremony. Two graduates were recognized for their outstanding academic achievements and their contributions to the University and broader community.

**Dr. Amy Richter**, PhD in Environmental Systems Engineering, was awarded the



**Dr. Jeff Keshen was officially installed at the Fall Convocation. Keshen (right) is shown here with chancellor Pam Klein (centre) and Dr. Marlene Smadu.**

University of Regina President's Distinguished Graduate Student Award. Richter graduated with a grade point average of 95.50 per cent. During her studies, she received over 35 graduate awards for her academic excellence, valued at over \$170,000. Her research is in the field of Canadian waste management and she has over 50 publications, including 28 journal papers, 16 conference papers and nine magazine articles, in addition to consultancy reports and theses.

## Briefly

The **University of Regina** is preparing for a return to near pre-pandemic operations and activities for the Winter 2022 term, which begins January 5, 2022. This will include coming close to restoring the University's previous balance of approximately 80 per cent of its 3,200 class offerings being delivered in-person. The ongoing health and safety of students, faculty and staff continue to be paramount. The University plans to provide 163 courses that offer hybrid or hyflex learning options. Hybrid classes are delivered both on-site and remotely, allowing students to choose how they wish to take the class. Hyflex offers students the option of attending either in person or remotely from day to day and class to class as it fits their schedules. Students can access the Winter 2022 class schedule, which outlines how individual courses will be delivered, so they can start planning their class schedules. With higher numbers of people expected on campus this winter, the University is introducing more robust health and safety requirements. Students, faculty and staff who are on campus in Winter 2022 will be required to provide proof of full vaccination or, alternatively, undergo testing three times a week by an external agency at their own expense. The University will no longer provide testing services for those selecting this option except in cases of approved accommodations. In most instances, visitors to campus will also be required to provide proof of vaccination or a recent, negative test result.

The University of Regina is the first university in Canada to open a nurse practitioner-led **Student Wellness Centre** on campus, and staff are ready to provide primary healthcare

services to students. The nurse practitioners at the Centre, located in Room 119 on the ground floor of the Paskaw Tower, can provide several in-person services to students and the families of students who live on campus. They can order and interpret diagnostic tests, monitor lab work, prescribe drugs, renew prescriptions, perform minor



**On October 19, Minister of Advanced Education Gene Makowsky officially opened the University of Regina Student Wellness Centre. Also on hand for the opening was (left to right) Dr. Cheryl Pollard, dean of the Faculty of Nursing, President Keshen and Maureen Klenk, associate dean (Student Wellness) of the Faculty of Nursing.**

surgical procedures, and arrange referrals to specialists. They can manage and assist with chronic disease such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure, while helping augment the mental health services that are already available on campus. The Centre will continue to host COVID-19 vaccination clinics. A full list of the services offered can be found on the Wellness Centre's website. Students can book appointments online. Hours are Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The **Department of Computer Science** at the University of Regina is about to welcome the first cohort of students in one of two new professionally focused Computer Science Master's degree programs: one in Data Science and the other in Human-Centred Computing. Both fields

show an incredible amount of promise for new grads entering the workforce, and give existing professionals a chance to upgrade their skills to get into a new area of computing. While the Department of Computer Science has had a popular course-based Master's degree for many years, it's being replaced with these new programs that leverage the strengths of their faculty and address the needs of the computing industry.

The University of Regina's **Centre for Continuing Education** (CCE) has partnered with the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce to deliver programming to Chamber members across the province. With a focus on in-demand skills training, programming will include career and professional development through a suite of non-credit certificates, professional microcredentials, badges, prep courses and customized corporate training. The CCE meets learning needs by offering high-quality, accessible, innovative and responsive education developed in collaboration with local industry experts and the community.

The **University of Regina** and the **Regina Rams Football Club** celebrated the signing of a new community partnership agreement at a breakfast event in late October. The new agreement extends the partnership to 2024 and beyond. It allows the club to access a higher level of support and services from the University and positions the Rams to further build on their foundation of community support. The previous agreement was signed more than two decades ago, when the Regina Rams junior football team became affiliated with the University of Regina in 1999. That first year, they competed in the Canada West

Conference of what was then the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (known today as U Sports). One year later, the team won the Canada West Conference's Hardy Cup and the Atlantic Bowl, and were runners-up in the Vanier Cup.



**Lisa Robertson, the University's director of Sport, Community Engagement, and Athlete Development kicks off the U of R – Rams community partnership renewal announcement event.**

## Donor news

In late September, the University of Regina received its largest one-time donation – a \$2.08 million scholarship contribution from alumnus **Dr. Nevan Krogan BSc'97, MSc'99** and his partners. The donation supports the Children of Haiti Project Scholarship. Starting in 2023, 10 graduates from the Children of Haiti Project (COHP) will get the opportunity to pursue an undergraduate degree in the discipline of their choice. The support will include tuition, housing, immigration costs and living expenses. Krogan's interest in COHP started in 2015 when he became the director of the Quantitative Biosciences Institute at the University of California San Francisco. The work took Krogan around the world, including to Haiti, the birthplace of the Institute's chief operating officer and one of the co-founders of the COHP, Jacqueline Fabius. The COHP was started in the aftermath of the magnitude seven earthquake that hit just outside the Haitian capital of Port-au-

Prince in January 2010, killing an estimated 250,000 people and displacing more than two million others.



**On September 29, Dr. Nevan Krogan (right) announced the largest-ever one-time donation in U of R history. Krogan's \$2.08 million donation will go towards the Children of Haiti Project (COHP) Scholarship. Also on hand for the announcement was Dominique Pierre (left) co-founder and country director of COHP.**

**Royal Bank Canada Future Launch** has committed \$500,000 to support two key programs at the U of R that assist Indigenous students as they further their educations, serve their communities and work towards launching their careers. The monies will be used to support the Neekaneewak ("they are leading") Leadership Initiative (NLI) and the Full Circle Internship program. The NLI is an Elder-based leadership program that enhances cultural awareness and develops leadership skills in students through traditional and current ways of knowing. The NLI has four streams that are key to leadership development – personal, academic, professional and cultural. Supports within the NLI program are used to prepare Indigenous students to participate in career-related work experiences facilitated by the Full Circle Summer Internship Program – a program that has placed 775 Indigenous students in career-related internships since its inception in 2006.

## Research

Four University of Regina researchers received funding from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) to improve health outcomes for the people of Saskatchewan. SHRF Establishment Grants help early-career researchers in Saskatchewan establish an autonomous program of health research addressing Saskatchewan health challenges, and achieve the productivity necessary for obtaining major funding from national and other external agencies.

**Dr. Michael Dubnewick's** research project will help identify culturally-relevant ways to support Indigenous youth as wellness leaders in their communities. His \$119,787 grant will allow him to focus on the experiences of 10 Indigenous youth who co-facilitate the Growing Young Movers after-school program run out of Regina's māmawēyatitān centre – a place that offers integrated services in one central location to build and enhance the community. Māmawēyatitān centre brings people together to connect, learn, play, develop skills and celebrate culture. Māmawēyatitān is a Cree word meaning "let's be all together."

**Dr. Cameron Mang**, assistant professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, received \$119,947 for his research to help improve walking function and support positive change in the central nervous system of people living with multiple sclerosis (MS). Mang's team will conduct a clinical trial comparing the effects of task-oriented exercise, generalized resistance and aerobic exercise on walking function and changes in the central nervous system in people with progressive MS.

**Dr. Omar El-Halfawy**, Canada Research Chair in Chemogenomics and Antimicrobial Research, received \$120,000 to uncover the microbial weapons unleashed by superbugs during infection that make them resistant to antibiotics. Rather than work under standardized lab conditions – which don't adequately represent the infection situation – El-Halfawy's research will explore the microbial responses to antibiotics under conditions mimicking infection. The goal is to discover novel therapeutics that disarm the super bugs.

**Dr. Natasha Gallant's research** findings could lead to better chronic disease management in Saskatchewan and across Canada. Gallant received a \$116,410 grant to determine if therapy focused on helping individuals learn new ways to think and act in response to uncomfortable emotions will be as effective for people living with chronic diseases as it has been for those living with mental disorders.

**Twenty-four researchers** at the University of Regina have received more than \$3 million in federal grants to delve into dozens of projects that span multiple disciplines. The grants, provided through both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), will support projects ranging from the examining racialized hiring practices to determining if climate change is turning forests from carbon sinks into carbon sources.

# The sky's the limit

**Natasha Jaques BA'12, BSc'12 has come a long way since she first became fascinated by computers as a youngster. Today, after completing a PhD from MIT, she lives in Silicon Valley and works for Google Brain, one of the behemoth's research teams focused on artificial intelligence.**

**By Sabrina Cataldo BA'97, BJ'99, Cert. PR'04**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina  
Photography Department and courtesy of Natasha Jaques.

Not only does Natasha Jaques work in Silicon Valley for Google Brain but she's also a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley.

**"Y**ou stink." It's not the most elegant piece of programming code Natasha Jaques has written but, to be fair, it was her first program and she was only seven years old at the time.

"We had this old computer – a Franklin 87 – with a black screen and a flickering green cursor," she reminisces. Jaques' father, a lawyer, was always interested in computers, and he passed that fascination on to his children. That first program she wrote allowed the computer to ask questions and react to the responses. If it inquired "How are you?", and you typed "I'm sad", it would respond, "What's wrong?" If it asked your name and you answered with Sam, Jaques' brother's moniker, it would tell you, "You stink."

Jaques and her brother were so obsessed with computers that their parents imposed a timer system – each one got a 30-minute turn on the machine. "The only time we went outside was during the other person's turn," she laughs.

Despite her love of computing, Jaques was undecided about her major when she started undergraduate studies at the University of Regina. "I had no idea what I wanted to do. I was taking classes in everything – philosophy, sociology, psychology and, of course, computer science."

Then a professor suggested that she didn't have to choose just one discipline or even one faculty. An extra year of university would earn her two degrees: a bachelor of science in computer science and a bachelor of arts in psychology. She was thrilled to follow this path, and it's one that has garnered her great success in her career. "It's a bit of an odd combination, but it's like I'm a special butterfly. Businesses will say, 'We don't have a computer scientist and a psychologist.'"

After convocating from the University of Regina with her two degrees in 2012, Jaques earned an MSc from the University of British Columbia in 2014 and a PhD from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2019.

"MIT was great in terms of connecting you with a ton of opportunities. There were so many smart people to learn from. Through MIT, I was able to meet the top researchers at Google, creating career opportunities," she says. Jaques interned at DeepMind and Google Brain, with the latter hiring her on as a research scientist in 2019. She's also currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley, where she's combining her unique background of psychology and computer science to do research in reinforcement learning and affective computing.

Reinforcement learning involves building artificial intelligence (AI) agents that have intelligent capabilities. Affective computing uses computer science, machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques to detect and model human emotions and signals, for example, detecting a person's level of stress. "I'm interested in artificial intelligence agents that can interact effectively with humans and do complex tasks, making a series of decisions to accomplish a task," Jaques says.

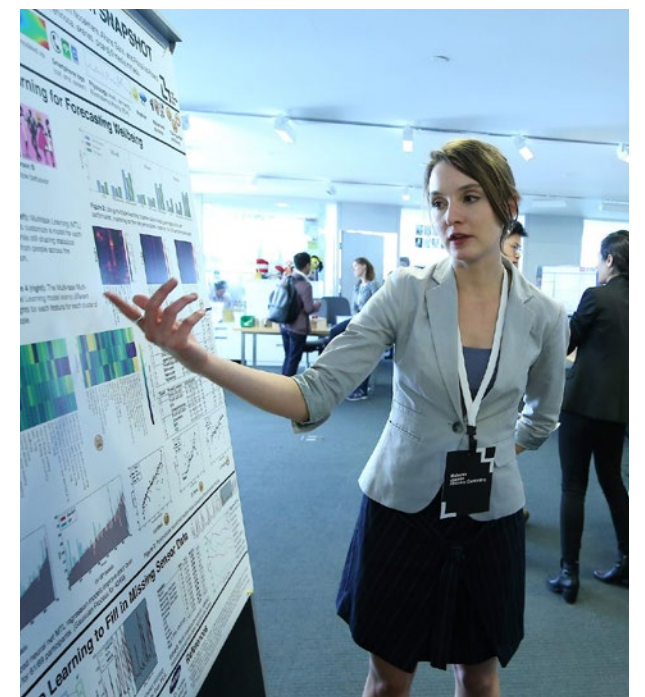
The research agenda she's working on at Berkeley is about how to use social learning to improve artificial intelligence. "What sets humans apart from other animals in terms of intelligence is social intelligence. There was an experiment with one-year-old children, where an adult would go up to a door carrying heavy books and would be unable to open the door themselves. The child would automatically open the door for them. They perceive what you are trying to do and want to help you. Apes don't have those abilities. Learning and co-operating makes us unique," she says.

"In certain niche areas, such as detecting tumours, AI can be better than a human. They can analyze MRI scans and medical images, and detect tumours with more accuracy than a team of oncologists. But there's no system that would be able to both detect tumours and play golf or move. In terms of walking and talking like a human, it's not even close," she says.

A real-world example of an application for reinforcement learning is autonomous driving cars. An autonomous car can learn to model the behaviour of other cars on the street. "If an ambulance comes, and others are pulling to the side of the road, the autonomous car should do that, too. Artificial intelligence should take cues from other agents and learn from them. That's an example of why I think my research agenda is important," Jaques notes.



The Jaques household was all abuzz about a new iMac in 2002. Jaques is seen here with her father Kevin and brother Sam.



When she first attended the University of Regina, Jaques struggled with choosing a major. It turns out her decision to pursue computer science and psychology has placed her on a most satisfactory career path.

Another example of reinforcement learning is controlling the switches in a power grid to improve energy efficiency. “Building electrical grid energy efficiency is really cool,” says Jaques, who has co-authored a paper on tackling climate change with machine learning. “Most grids have a combination of carbon-intensive sources and renewable sources. Solar and wind are unpredictable and there aren’t good batteries or storage for them. If we had better modelling of when solar and wind were available and of consumer demand – when everyone is going to turn on their dishwasher, for example – we could have better planning on how to turn on and off resources. By using artificial intelligence, we could save energy and reduce emissions.”

Jaques is also excited about recent developments in artificial intelligence that involve modelling language. “You can input text and ask it to predict what text comes next. If you do that with enough data, the model starts being able to answer questions. I expect that they’ll improve things like machine translation and web searches, and eventually improve things like Siri and Alexa. Far into the future, I hope reinforcement learning will bring improvements in robotics,” she says.

Jaques has received several accolades for her research, including an honourable mention for best paper in 2019 at the International Conference on Machine Learning – one of the top conferences in the field – and a best paper award at the NeurIPS ML for Healthcare workshop. She was also part of the team that received best demo at NeurIPS 2016. In computer science, it’s more prestigious to present at conferences than to publish a paper in a journal of machine learning research. “Computer science moves very fast; things are changing so rapidly, and the conference cycle allows you to publish things faster,” she says. Her work has also been featured in *Quartz*, *the MIT Technology Review*, *Boston Magazine* and on CBC Radio.

She recalls her time at the University of Regina fondly. “It was a wonderful place to learn. I had a good community there. The U of R allowed me to flourish without too much pressure.” It was where she discovered her love of research, being granted her first research opportunity by Howard Hamilton, computer science professor and director of the Laboratory for Computational Discovery. “That experience is the reason I went to grad school. He put me on to machine learning research. In the first year of my undergrad, I was doing genetic algorithms and reinforcement learning. Now I do that full-time.”

Hamilton is a strong supporter of undergraduate researchers. “It’s an important opportunity for them, because they see through at least one small research project and get an idea of what it means. Many students in their first year think that research is something you do in the library. It’s a revelation to them when we’re doing a creative computer program to do something we don’t know how to do yet. It makes a difference in the potential they see in research to learn this early on,” he says.

Hamilton notes that Jaques was “the most forward-looking undergrad student that I’ve encountered. She was the one who caught my attention for having this long-term plan for her career. She was able to make use of her time and resources because she had a goal. She was always crossing back and forth between computer science and psychology. She had a good plan.” Her plan was very specific: she told Hamilton that she was going to do two degrees in computer science and psychology and then go to MIT to get her PhD. “She’s the only one, halfway through her first year, to have her whole career



**Dr. Howard Hamilton, U of R computer science professor and director of the Laboratory for Computational Discovery.**

mapped out.”

In her time at the University of Regina, she also participated in a pilot project called the Supplemental Instruction program, headed by chemistry and biochemistry lecturer Stephen Cheng. Jaques was one of the first undergraduate students he hired. “She was exactly what we wanted – she had the personality, intelligence and people skills we needed,” he says. Students were assigned to a first-year class and attended the lectures. After each class, they would do three sessions per week outside the classroom. “In those sessions, Natasha would teach the lecture, go over examples and get the students to solve the problems on their own,” Cheng says. He was so impressed by her work that he later wrote recommendation letters for Jaques to do her MSc and PhD.

The day she convoked with her undergraduate degrees, the Department of Computer Science hired Jaques to teach a first-year class. Hamilton says, “It’s highly unusual for us to hire someone like that. But she was already providing special tutoring for all the students who took CS110. She went to the lectures for the class each time it was taught, and she was available in a friendly way for the students to talk to. I said, ‘Given you’ve attended the class all the way through four times, I’m sure you can teach it.’ When she taught CS110, she got sparkling reviews from the students.”

That experience will be useful as Jaques applies for faculty positions in the coming year. She plans to continue in the industry as a researcher as well, given that many universities allow professors to work 20 per cent of their time outside the institution.



**Living in southern California affords Jaques plenty of opportunities to indulge in one of her favourite pastimes – hiking.**

Teaching will give Jaques an opportunity to make a difference in an area that she’s very passionate about: inspiring more women to go into computer science. “The field is super male-dominated. In my undergrad, my psychology classes were 90 per cent women; in computer science, I was the only woman in a class of 30 to 40 men. When I graduated from the U of R, only 10 per cent of computer science degrees were granted to women. Ten per cent of papers accepted to conferences are by women. I think that’s a tragedy, because computer scientists have a lot of job security. It’s a hot area,” she says, noting that while she was doing her PhD, companies were desperate to hire anyone with expertise in machine learning. “In 2012, there was a revolution in artificial intelligence with deep learning and neural network techniques. Canadian professors were instrumental in this. The industry hired so many profs and salaries skyrocketed. There are so many opportunities in this field; so few women participating makes me very sad.”

Jaques does her part by participating in mentorship programs such as Girls Who Code. “It would be nice if more women would see it as a valid career choice that’s a lot of fun.” She would also like to see more ethnic diversity in the field.

**While she doesn't know where in the world her career will take her next, there's always a special place in her heart for Regina.**

Currently living in California, she enjoys the different flowers blooming each month and the fact that she can go running outside year-round. On the downside, there are “too many people, too much traffic and forest fires. You can go for a run outside in January, but not in August, because the air quality is too bad.” She loves hiking, backpacking and all things outdoors. “When work gets too stressful, I go somewhere with no cell service and bring my Kindle.” With her work at Google and Berkeley being remote because of the COVID-19 pandemic, she can work from anywhere in the world. At the time of the interview for this article, she was working from Mexico on a surf trip.

While she doesn't know where in the world her career will take her next, there's always a special place in her heart for Regina.

“I love how green it is, how uncrowded it is. When I was home last, I went for a bike ride. There were miles of super-safe, super-green, open parks. If you go biking in Boston, you can't find a park where you don't hear cars, and you're likely to get hit by a car when you're out biking. In New York, it's hard to see a blade of grass. Regina is beautiful and I miss it.”

*Sabrina Cataldo is an award-winning writer and communications strategist in Regina.*



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# ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

# Doing her own thing

**Eman Bare BAJ'15 is a renaissance woman ready to take on anything that moves her. She's been a force in ethical fashion design, yoga instruction, celebrity ghostwriting and investigative journalism, to name a few of her interests and professional pursuits. Now she's got her sights on passing the New York bar exam and righting some of society's ills in a court of law.**

**By Katie Doke Sawatzky MJ'18**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department, unless otherwise noted.

Eman Bare describes her upbringing as “the most bizarrely cookie-cutter immigrant story” — her father owned a convenience store in south Regina and she learned to work the till at a very young age. But what she recalls most is deciding to embrace the fact that, as a Black Muslim girl, she wasn't the norm.

**E**man Bare always knew she wanted to be a journalist; she's been documenting experiences and telling stories for most of her life. As a child of immigrant parents, she translated the news from English into Somali for her father and later wrote her parents' emails. Now, at 29, Bare is looking back on years of professional reporting for news outlets such as CBC and Global National.

During those years, there were moments that some might call blips or distractions, things wildly outside what might be expected for a newly minted graduate beginning a career in investigative journalism. Bare has become a yoga instructor, created an ethical fashion line, ghostwritten for celebrities and will soon prepare to take the bar.

**“I've just learned over the years that I need to stop listening to other people's ideas and thoughts on what I should do because, ultimately, it's never led me to where I want to be,” says Bare.**

Bare describes her upbringing as “the most bizarrely cookie-cutter immigrant story” — her father owned a convenience store in south Regina and she learned to work the till at a very young age. But what she recalls most is deciding to embrace the fact that, as a Black Muslim girl, she wasn't the norm.

When kids said her hair looked like spider legs, for Wacky Hair Day at school, Bare combed her hair into a full-on fro and put leaves and twigs in it. “A normal kid would have felt sad and upset, but I was like nope, this is my hair, this is what we're doing today,” she says.

Bare was one of very few Black Muslim students at Islamic school and at Campbell Collegiate where she finished high school. She was the only player wearing hijab and tights on the Campbell girls' rugby team, but joining the team was worth it to make friends and have fun.

“I don't really look like somebody who would go around tackling people. It was a very unconventional sport for me to be playing so I just fully embraced it, absolutely loved it,” she says.

Thinking about what it is that compels her to use her ability to tell stories to share the truth, Bare says it goes back to being that kid who was OK with not fitting in.

“It makes you feel crazy when all of these things are so wrong and people say, ‘What can we do about it?’ Well, we can actually just change it. We can decide that these are no longer systems that we want to work with.”

Bare studied at the University of Regina's School of Journalism from 2013 to 2015. The school has a long history of guaranteeing its students paid internships, which often lead to employment. Bare's experience was no exception. She worked at *Alberta Primetime*, a current affairs show, and then Global Edmonton, which hired her a few days after she started.

Drawn to investigative reporting, she continued to work with Global for her last year of journalism school. After she graduated, she moved to Toronto to work on *16X9*, a national Global News investigative program. Bare returned home to cover local news and investigate stories for CBC Saskatchewan, then moved back to Toronto in 2017 to work for CBC News Network, the iUnit (now CBC Investigates) and *Power & Politics* as an associate producer and reporter.

Mitch Diamantopoulos, associate professor at the School of Journalism, taught a class called “Journalism Topics” that provides undergraduates with space to discuss sensitive issues — gender discrimination in the workplace, reporting on race and class — before they encounter them in the field. He says Bare was often the first student to enter discussions and one he didn't have to prod to ask the right questions.



**Mitch Diamantopoulos, associate professor at the School of Journalism.**

“You want a journalist who is fearless and who risks not winning a popularity contest to get to the truth. It was pretty obvious, early on, that Eman had a lot of investigative zeal. I thought she was either going to end up in jail or win a Pulitzer,” he laughs.

While in journalism school, Bare won the CTV Investigative Journalism Prize, given to the student who completes the best investigative work while in school.

Since then, a pattern has emerged in Bare's journalistic work. She doesn't shy away from stories that highlight systemic injustice. Most recently, she's covered stories on Black identity in Toronto, racial slurs allegedly used by a teacher at an Ontario school, negligent care in Regina's General Hospital and Saskatchewan's drinking and driving culture.

Bare's motivation comes from her Islamic faith, which she engaged with more intentionally at 18 when she trained to become a yoga instructor. Verse 135 from Surah An-Nisa, the fourth chapter of the Qur'an which translates to “The Women,” is one she says she kept in mind particularly during journalism school.

“It talks about how, for people who have faith, to stand firmly for justice even if it's against your character, relatives or yourself,” she says. “God is always on the side of the truth-tellers.”

It may seem unusual to hear a journalist acknowledge their faith as their inspiration, but to Diamantopoulos it makes sense.

“The quest for justice, which is so important to so many people of faith, is also at the core of journalism,” he says. “Journalism is not simply about the truth... it's about the truth to empower the public to make their lives better, to improve the world.”

But while driven to tell the truth, Bare learned early on how rough a reporter's life can be. Working long hours for Global in Toronto, and under constant pressure to deliver stories in a city she didn't know well, took its toll. She soon became overwhelmed and decided to do what any overworked reporter would do: enroll in a fashion design program at Toronto Film School.

"My internal compass felt off. I didn't have the excitement and passion to be doing stories. I couldn't meet people because I was constantly in this newsroom. I thought doing something creative would bring joy back into my life," she says.

Ever since she was young, Bare has taken charge of the way she looks. While she wore hijab and was more covered up than other girls in high school, she wanted to look like a regular kid. So she improvised by wearing her father's dress shirts and cinching them with a belt, mastering a comfortable, feminine look that she says felt good.

"I wasn't going to be wearing Silver jeans, Ugg boots and a North Face coat," she laughs.

Honing her sewing skills and pattern design, Bare came out of the one-year fashion program with a vision: creating an ethical clothing line for Muslim women that supports the women making the garments. In a whirlwind two years that saw her return to Regina to work for CBC Saskatchewan and then return to Toronto, she designed a line of accessories, which she morphed into a full collection that debuted at Saskatchewan Fashion Week in 2017. A year and a half later she showcased her collection, "Al-Nisa," at New York Fashion Week in 2018.

"Her pieces seem to have this timeless classic-ness to them," says Rachel Mielke, founder and CEO of Regina-based jewelry company Hillberg & Berk, which sponsored and provided jewelry for Bare's collection at the New York showcase.

Photo courtesy of Hillberg and Berk



**Rachel Mielke, founder and CEO of Regina-based jewelry company Hillberg & Berk.**

"It's product that you can easily wear everyday but still makes a statement with simple silhouettes, beautiful fabrics and cuts to her designs," Mielke says.

Along with bold fashion statements, Bare's work addresses issues faced by women in the Global South and immigrant women closer to home. Bare's own mother, who worked as a nurse's aide, would bring Bare with her to work because she couldn't afford childcare. Her employers were understanding, and Bare wants to pass that empathy forward in her work.

"I wanted to create a space where women could work and wouldn't have to choose between being mothers and financially providing for their kids," she says.

A woman named Asima, who left three of her children behind with family in Myanmar to pursue work at a women's collective in Malaysia, has made turbans for Bare's line. Now on to her second collection, Bare has also employed women from Morocco, Bangladesh and Turkey, striving to create safe and supportive working conditions for them.

"She has incredibly audacious goals and dreams and she just makes it happen. She's an incredible model for women," says Mielke.

Bare was also the only designer to use all Black models at New York Fashion Week, which she says forced the company that hired the hair

and make-up team to make sure they had someone who knew how to style Black hair.

"The vision behind it for me was, yes, the representation when the women walk on the stage, but also what was happening backstage," she says.

Bare has no qualms about holding power to account as a journalist. After all, the phrase "Question Authority" is on notepads and magnets that J-School students receive their first week at the University of Regina. But she has experienced her share of frustration with power dynamics within news organizations.

As a minority reporter, she has felt under-resourced compared to her colleagues. "The problem isn't getting minority or marginalized journalists into newsrooms, it's investing in them once they're there," she says. "I've never been someone who has come out there to say 'I want to be a hijabi reporter.' I just wanted to be a really good journalist."

Bare's course of action when faced with adversity isn't to give up, it's to get better. Feeling the need for change once again, Bare applied to law school, not to become a lawyer, but to become a better storyteller.

"To be a good journalist, you have to constantly be learning," she says. "The more you know, the more nuanced, powerful stories you're able to tell. Because I wanted to do investigative journalism, law school made sense, in my weird brain it makes sense," she laughs.

Bare began her studies in 2018 at New York Law School on a full scholarship and will write the bar exam in early 2022. Through her research, she's discovered a treasure trove of potential stories, such as the role race plays in intellectual property and tax laws or how rap lyrics have been used as evidence by prosecutors.

After the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer on May 25, 2020, an act that sparked a wave of Black Lives Matter



**Bare studied at the University of Regina's School of Journalism from 2013 to 2015. Her paid internships with Alberta Primetime, a current affairs show, and then Global Edmonton, led to her being hired a few days after she started.**

mobilization and protests across the continent, Bare worked as a student attorney on Carr v. De Blasio with Alvin Bragg, her criminal procedure professor and former Chief Deputy Attorney General of New York State. The case was connected to the death of Eric Garner, a Black man killed in 2014 by a white New York Police Department officer who wasn't let go from his position until 2019.

"Reading all the documents and watching the police outwardly lie, it affects your faith in people," she says. "You just realize you're working with people with a completely different moral compass than you. I've always thought, 'People just don't know.' It's actually not that. People just don't care sometimes. They see things very differently than you."

As disheartening as that realization is, it's led Bare to think strategically about her storytelling and her audience.

"Am I going to focus on the devastation of police brutality on Black communities or on how much over-policing costs taxpayers? When you realize certain communities respond more aggressively to their bottom line than the death of an innocent man, it's jarring, but you realize you need to cater to your audience and pursue the truth."

This coming year, Bare will keep the many plates she has in the air spinning and see where they take her. Currently ghostwriting books and speeches for celebrities, she travels to Turkey this fall to meet the women who make some of her clothes and to study for her bar exam. Whether or not Bare returns to the newsroom, her hunt for stories will continue.

Photo by Arthur Ward



Currently ghostwriting books and studying for the bar, Bare travels to Turkey this fall to meet the women who make some of her clothes.

She says it's important to be out in the world in order to build community trust. That's where good stories come from. "You build understanding and you start seeing things from a different lens and a different perspective," she says. "You start asking different questions."

*Katie Doke Sawatzky is a freelance journalist in Regina. She is also the communications coordinator for the Mennonite Church Canada. She has written for Eagle Feather News, J-Source, Geez Magazine, and Briarpatch Magazine.*

# ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



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ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

# Flat out flourishing

One by one, the boyhood dreams of Adrian Halter BFA'10 are coming true. The award-winning filmmaker's latest achievement is winning the Ruth Shaw Award (Best of Saskatchewan) at this year's Yorkton International Film Festival for *Flat Out Food*. The TV series, produced by Halter's media company, celebrates Saskatchewan food, farmers and chefs.

**By Lynette Piper**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina  
Photography Department, unless otherwise noted.

Filmmaker Adrian Halter on location at The Wandering Market in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan for his documentary series *Flat Out Food*.

For as long as he can remember, award-winning filmmaker Adrian Halter loved to play pretend. A creative and industrious young redhead from the tiny village of Tramping Lake, Saskatchewan (about two hours west of Saskatoon), Halter would spend hours making up stories in his head. As he looked out at the expansive prairie skyline just beyond his sleepy little community, he dreamed of one day bringing those stories to life.

"My mom had me when she was really young, so there wasn't a lot of money growing up," begins the 33-year-old director and producer behind the highly acclaimed Saskatchewan documentary series, *Flat Out Food*. "I spent a lot of time with my imagination as a kid because we didn't have much. I got hand-me-downs from my mom's two younger brothers. They were a few years older than me and really encouraged my stories. So did my grandmother who was really key to my upbringing. And my dad played a huge role in encouraging my artistic side."

By the time Halter was nine, the family moved about a half-hour away to Luseland. "I was a huge fan of YTV and, for some reason, I had this urge to make my own movie. I thought, 'How hard can it be? I can do that!' So I fleshed out this story about aliens turning cows purple. The only problem was, I didn't have a camera," he laughs.

Undaunted, Halter knew that if he was going to make his filmmaking dreams come true, he'd have to work hard for it. So the affable young man with the toothy grin started knocking on doors and putting up flyers at the age of 11, offering his own lawn mowing service. "By the time I was 14, I had saved enough money to buy my very first video camera. I remember being driven into Saskatoon and picking up this new JVC Super VHS camcorder – it was pretty high tech for the early 2000s. I paid \$600 for it and it drained my bank account, but it was so worth it," he recalls. "I still have it on a shelf."

That single-minded focus and relentless determination has defined the filmmaker's career ever since. Today, Halter is a sought-after director and producer at HalterMedia, which focuses on visually stunning and profoundly impactful documentaries, both in the corporate and independent realms. His series *Flat Out Food* was this year's winner of the coveted 2021 Best of Saskatchewan Ruth Shaw Award at the Yorkton International Film Festival. The TV series, now in post-production for Season 2, celebrates unique ingredients and staple food sources grown and raised in Saskatchewan.

But Halter's film career, and his successful collaboration with *Flat Out Food* host Jenn Sharp, almost didn't happen.

Halter's trajectory towards film success got off on the right foot, but had an interesting twist along the way. In high school, Halter brought his prized camcorder to parties, demonstrating a natural talent for documentary. With money in short supply, Halter knew the only way to make his dreams – including a two-week class trip to Europe – come true was to roll up his sleeves. He mowed lawns, worked in a chicken barn, bagged groceries, delivered newspapers and participated in class fundraisers like the annual chocolate bar blitz. "I was lucky because my mom worked in a restaurant and would put the chocolate bars up at the till. They usually sold out quickly," he recalls. That grunt work and ingenuity allowed him to attend the class trip he knew his family couldn't afford.

"I took my camcorder with me and made a documentary about the trip. I think that sealed my career right there and then," he laughs. "I was a good student and people thought I might become an engineer, but I was singularly focused on going to film school. I did a work placement at a TV station and remember the teacher saying I needed a backup plan. I said, 'No – this is what I'm going to do with my life.'"

While Halter shone in his small-town high school as a member of the hockey team and the class valedictorian, attending his first year of studies at the University of Regina was a culture shock. "There were all these students and I didn't make friends quickly. It was so bad that I remember packing up everything after Thanksgiving and driving back home. As I wrestled with my thoughts on the drive, I decided I should probably go back."



*Flat Out Food* crew (left to right) Kaitlyn Schropp, Preston Kanak, tBone, Jenn Sharp, Adrian Halter, Joel Tabak, Adam Burwell.

*Continued on page 26*



The Egyptian obelisk in front of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City.

**Regan Shercliffe BA(Hons)'94**, completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Regina and his master's degree and doctorate in clinical psychology at Simon Fraser University. For the past 11 years, Shercliffe has worked as a staff counsellor with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). He currently is the chief of staff counselling for the World Food Programme, which was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 2020. Shercliffe lives in Rome where his love for photography is able to flourish.

"Pausing and thinking about what you are seeing before taking a photo makes you look at a country, city or town in a different way, you in essence stare a little longer and you find themes and patterns. For me, black and white photography allows you to emphasize those patterns in a way that transforms the scene and the image.

In short, black and white photography allows more room for interpretation. Plus we see in colour everyday, so why not use a medium that allows for a different perspective? I have been in Italy for four years — Rome specifically. Italians only rally around the country if it relates to football, otherwise it's all about what region or city you live in. If you like quiet and solitude, Rome is not for you. However, the pandemic changed all of that and for almost a year you could have the center of Rome all to yourself (or at least devoid of tourists). It was strange to say the least and never something I would have thought possible — very much like the pandemic. Some of these photos were taken before the pandemic, and others in the middle of the pandemic when Rome was quiet." - Regan Shercliffe



(Clockwise from top left) - Chairs in front of St. Peter's Basilica. Columns at the Vatican. A couple walks down a street after a posh wedding in Pienza, Tuscany. Scooters line a street in Florence.



(Clockwise from top left) – The Roman Colosseum with the Arch of Constantine on the left. The Pantheon, a former Roman temple that has served as a church since 609 AD. Ancient Flavian palace, Domus Flavia, on the Palatine Hill in Rome.

(Clockwise from top) Little Waterfalls under the Ponte Gregoriano in Tivoli, Lazio, about 30 kilometres north east of Rome. A step holds planters near Lago Bracciano, just north of Rome. Rome's famous Trevi Fountain.

It was a good decision. While Halter ended up missing about a week of school and two midterms, his return to university provided some new perspectives. “I started making friends and really got into campus life,” he smiles, noting he may have had his worst year academically, but it was a chance to learn some balance in his life after working since he was a boy.

“Getting into film school during my second year was so rewarding because I was with other students who felt exactly as I did about making movies. We all worked evenings and weekends crewing each other’s films.”

It was then that he met his future wife, Becky, who worked two jobs as well as attended full-time classes. “I admired her work ethic so much. She made me want to achieve even more because I wanted so badly to impress her,” he laughs.

Halter says he remembers a film class taught by Professor Sarah Abbott that really ignited his passion. “We got to pick our top three roles for this narrative film and I chose grip (lighting setup/camera support) and electrical. The script was about a young Indigenous woman and her Caucasian partner, and the moment of choice we face when the urge to be violent surfaces,” says Halter. “I was paired with Geoff Yates who was an active member of the local film industry. He was a fellow film school grad and very patient. I remember in school we used small ARRI light kits, and then we got to work with full grip/electrical trucks. I was blown away that they made lights that big. It was definitely a turning point in deciding to work in the industry once I graduated.”

One of his mentors, U of R professor and filmmaker Mark Wihak, says Halter showed promise as a student and has continued to impress throughout his career. “Halter is a really nice guy – he’s collegial and easy to get along with. In school, he always kept an open mind. He was curious and willing to try things. He’s built his own business from the ground up, and every year you can see it grow. That requires a lot of hard work, attention to detail and ambition,” Wihak says. “He also cheered for the Leafs, so he was clearly able to steel himself against difficulties and disappointments, and was ready for the long haul.”

Former university professor Will Dixon who taught Halter screenwriting, producing and production, chuckles at the Maple Leafs reference. As a long-suffering Leafs fan himself, he agrees Halter has the kind of personality that can see things through to the finish line, despite setbacks. “You simply could tell by his interest and inquisitiveness, his burgeoning talent and grasp of the TV medium, that he was going places.”

Halter says Wihak and Dixon both inspired him to be a better filmmaker. He graduated with his BFA in Film Production in 2010 and incorporated his production company, HalterMedia, the following year.

Halter made a point of keeping in touch with Dixon who, by that time, had left his teaching position to work for Rogers Media Inc. at Citytv in Regina as a program manager and production executive. Dixon explains, “Halter would call me for coffee once a year to catch up and pick my brain to try out a few TV pitches.” One of those pitches included a non-scripted reality TV series about Maritime workers relocating to the Prairies and working in oil rig camps. That series never really got off the ground, but Dixon kept encouraging Halter not to give up. “His drive and persistence definitely made a difference in the long-term when his *Flat Out Food* series proposal came along.”



U of R film professor and filmmaker Mark Wihak.



Halter’s mentor Will Dixon, a program manager and production executive with Rogers Media’s Citytv in Regina.

# ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



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Chef Scott Dicks and Jenn Sharp in the garden at Farm One Forty.  
(Photo by Michelle Berg.)

Halter was eager to learn the business from the ground up and took advantage of every opportunity available. He worked on a number of TV shows at the Saskatchewan Soundstage during Regina’s film heyday; he was a set dresser for *InSecurity*, a series produced by Vérité Films, the company behind *Corner Gas*.

“I always thought I would hone my craft here, impress the right people, then move to Toronto. That was always my trajectory, but life has a way of making other plans. The local industry changed significantly after the tax credit was axed. Then my wife Becky and I had our first son in 2014, our second son in 2017, and our daughter in 2020. Suddenly making it big in Toronto was no longer a priority. What became more important to me was being able to be a good dad and a good husband.”

Halter decided to focus his creative energy on corporate and real estate videos, and lent his talents to a number of organizations. He served two years as vice-president on the board of SaskCulture and ran youth video workshops. One of those corporate projects was TV commercial content for the Canadian Western Agribition.

“At the time, Jenn Sharp was doing social media at Agribition as a former Leader-Post/StarPhoenix reporter, and we started talking,” Halter explains. “I was working on a story about a former financial worker from Vancouver who was blind and had moved to a cabin in rural Saskatchewan to create a refuge for former criminals and drug addicts. Jenn and I thought about collaborating and working together on this documentary, but the project fell through.”

Halter says he knew he and Sharp had great work chemistry, so the two started brainstorming how to turn her book, *Flat Out Delicious: Your Definitive*

*Guide to Saskatchewan’s Food Artisans*, into a TV series. Sharp’s book takes readers from Saskatchewan’s southern grain fields to its northern boreal forests, and features interviews with small-scale farmers, city gardeners, beekeepers, ranchers, chefs and winemakers to tell the story of Saskatchewan’s unique food systems.

It was a match made in foodie heaven.

“I had started working on a pitch about unique foods from all over the world, but it focused primarily on the ingredients. Jenn’s book took a more holistic approach, focusing on the people who grew and sustained these ingredients, and it was based entirely in Saskatchewan. I could almost see the cinematic potential,” he enthuses. Halter made a pitch to Dixon at Citytv and received development money to create a demo reel and a production proposal.

“Everything was greenlit, and then the COVID-19 lockdown hit in March 2020,” Halter explains. “We had a pending application for money from CMF (the Canada Media Fund), but everything was in limbo. Our window for filming green grass was waning, so we decided to film anyway before fall and winter set in and our landscape changed. Thankfully, HalterMedia was able to access a federal loan from CEBA (Canada Emergency Business Account), which I then lent to the production to get things off the ground.”

Halter and Sharp proceeded to film that summer, along with cinematographer Adam Burwell, camera operator Preston Kanak, camera assistant Joel Tabak, field producer Rigel Smith, and production sound mixer tBone. The crew worked long hours capturing the diverse culinary experiences of “the land of the living skies,” showcasing field-to-plate stories about farmers, food artisans and chefs. With unique drone shots and plenty of golden-hour light, *Flat Out Food* looks and feels more like a National Geographic series than a food show.

“It’s Halter’s creative vision and attention to detail that’s made *Flat Out Food* the beautiful cinematic experience that it is,” says series host Sharp. “He not only has a creative eye, but he’s also an avid home cook and gardener who’s been watching food documentaries for years. I knew this series would be special. Halter’s always striving to put out the best quality work possible and it shows.”

Dixon couldn’t agree more. “Viewers have reacted so positively to the Saskatchewan subject matter and excellent production values. I believe it was our highest-rated new home-grown original documentary series we commissioned last year, and it was great to see the program recognized by the Yorkton Film Festival.”

After a successful first season, Halter and his team spent this past summer shooting Season 2, which is now in post-production. Halter says the company will never lose its commercial and corporate work, but definitely plans to grow its capacity for documentaries. “This year, we aired four hours of docs on TV. I hope to more than double that by 2024.”

While he still hasn’t made that movie about aliens creating purple cows from his childhood imagination, he has explored the unlimited possibilities of the delicacies Saskatchewan has to offer.

“I made the right decision to build my career at home,” he smiles. Viewers of *Flat Out Food* couldn’t agree more.

To watch *Flat Out Food*, go to [www.citytv.com/show/flat-out-food](http://www.citytv.com/show/flat-out-food).

*Lynette Piper is an award winning writer and filmmaker who is currently on a short hiatus from film school doing corporate communications. Her second film is currently in post-production.*

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Nominations will be accepted until **Friday, April 15, 2022**.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

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Incumbent Eligible for Re-Election

**District 3 (Assiniboia-Bengough)**  
Vacant

**District 4 (Swift Current-Gravelbourg)**  
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**District 5 (Maple Creek-Rosetown-Lloydminster)**  
Incumbent Eligible for Re-Election

**District 6 (Saskatoon and Area)**  
Incumbent Not Eligible for Re-Election

**District 7 (Melfort-Wynyard-Davidson)**  
Incumbent Eligible for Re-Election

**District 8 (Melville-Yorkton-Hudson Bay)**  
Incumbent Not Eligible for Re-Election

**District 10 (Moose Jaw)**  
Incumbent Not Eligible for Re-Election

For more information and to access the nomination/biographical forms, please visit our website at: [www.uregina.ca/president/governance/senate/elections.html](http://www.uregina.ca/president/governance/senate/elections.html) or email [senate@uregina.ca](mailto:senate@uregina.ca).

# Roads less travelled

**Chris Lane BAJ'02 thrives on challenges. The journalism school graduate was enjoying a long career at the CBC when opportunity came knocking in the form of the position of CEO of Canadian Western Agribition, the annual livestock show held in Regina. Today, Lane finds himself at the helm of the show, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.**

**By Bill Armstrong**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department.



Chris Lane was enjoying a satisfying career with the CBC when he embarked on a new journey as CEO of one of North America's premiere livestock shows, Agribition.

"I think people living on the Prairies feel ownership for agriculture because of their ties to the land."

Lane headed to the University of Alberta to become a lawyer, but university opened his eyes to all of the options available. "The liberal arts program I entered showed all of the different paths you can take," he says. Almost every course he took, from archaeology to theology, sparked an interest he thought might be worth pursuing. He even considered entering a seminary. At the end of his second year, while discussing the right fit with his parents around the kitchen table, they suggested something to do with writing – perhaps journalism – might be a better choice. Although he'd always enjoyed writing, he'd never considered it as a career until he did some research on journalism.

"I was impressed with the University of Regina and the feedback I received about the journalism program. I was sold on it," says Lane.

The program had many more applicants than spaces available and a rigorous application process. His interview was in Edmonton because there were so many applicants from Alberta. "It was my first real interview, and it was more of a conversation," Lane observes. "I realized that it wasn't so much about having the right answers, but about having the right approach – did I have the curiosity to explore things and figure them out."

Later, Lane recalls, his hands were shaking as he opened the envelope from the University. He was accepted! It then registered with him how far away he'd have to go to pursue his goal, 1,200 kilometres from friends and family to a city he knew almost nothing about and where he knew nobody.

"I remember the day my family moved me to Regina," Lane recalls. "I realized I was going to have to figure things out on my own." What made the move easier, he adds, was that he fell in love with Regina immediately.

After spending a few days exploring the city and surrounding area, he was raring to go. There were some surprises at first. Some of the liberal arts classes he attended at the University of Alberta were massive in size, while the U of R's School of Journalism brought together students from all over the country into small groups. Friendships blossomed, he notes, as did conversations among students and instructors about the concepts and principles of journalism.

"We had robust discussions about issues that might not have a right or wrong answer. Because the program combined the academic and the practical, while we were debating, we were also learning the mechanics of good journalism," Lane explains.

In particular, he credits instructors Patricia Bell and Jill Spelliscy for leading discussions and teaching him how to be a good journalist. Bell, who taught print journalism, research and interviewing courses at the time, and headed the school for three years, describes Lane as a very engaged student. He once did a feature story on the Masonic Temple, Bell recalls, taking the reader into what seemed like an extraordinarily secret and sacred place. "He did it not just because he's curious," she adds, "but because he believes it's the journalist's job to find out things that other people aren't able to find out."

For Lane, seeing the TV studio for the first time was another significant moment. The combination of taking the television course in his final year and the enthusiasm and passion that the instructor, Donna Pasiechnik, brought to the course confirmed that broadcasting was the right route for him. "I was interested in producing TV and directing a team," he says.

In 2002, his last year, Lane landed a four-month internship at CBC Calgary, which was extended into a four-month paid position. During that time, he received a scholarship from the Gemini News Service, giving him the opportunity to fly off to London to work for the agency for more than six months. While he was there, he accepted an offer for a full-time job as a producer back at CBC Calgary. "That offer was a direct result of the internship," Lane states. "I believe internships give journalism students experiences in the areas that are likely to become a career path. That was certainly my experience."

After working in different roles in Calgary for five years, Lane moved to Charlottetown in 2006 to become the senior producer of CBC's evening TV newscast for Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.). The experience was an eye-opener.



Despite all of the challenges, Chris Lane insists that as CEO of Agribition he has the best job in Saskatchewan, in part because he believes the province is coming into another golden age of agriculture.

“P.E.I. loves all things local,” Lane observes. “There was a story in the local newspaper about my arrival as the senior producer. There would be fans waiting in the parking lot to talk with us after the newscast. P.E.I. is different.”

Lane led what he describes as a fantastic team that was really invested in local news. The group received a Gemini News Award (now known as a Canadian Screen Award) for one of their live news productions. While he has warm, satisfying memories of his years in the Maritimes, the experience also reinforced the fact that he’s a Westerner at heart. He knew that one of his favourite instructors at the School of Journalism, Jill Spelliscy, had become a manager at CBC Saskatchewan in Regina, so when a job opening came up there, he made the move back to the Prairies.

“I wanted to work as a professional in an environment where she was involved,” Lane notes. “I was already such a fan of Regina that I wanted to make it my home, and there was also the challenge of leading something different.”

Merelda Fiddler-Potter, now a Vanier Scholar, executive-in-residence and PhD candidate at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, was a reporter and current affairs producer at CBC Saskatchewan during the time Lane was there. She recalls working with him on several projects, including some

partnerships with other organizations that brought fresh perspectives to TV newscasts.

For example, *The Boom Box* challenged Indigenous entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas to investor and philanthropist Brett Wilson, while *Taking the Pulse* partnered with a large team of professor and student researchers at the University of Saskatchewan to survey residents of the province on a variety of topics.

“Chris is good at seeing the value of doing these projects,” Fiddler-Potter says. “CBC Saskatchewan’s 40 Under 40 project, which identified 40 people under 40 years of age making a difference in the province, was a big one. It was about change-makers, but not just about telling the stories of these people doing different things in different areas of life. It was about bringing them all together, meeting them, networking and having fun.”

Good stories about people came out of those projects, Fiddler-Potter observes, and by bringing them to air, Lane changed the face of the supper-hour newscast.

Leadership at the Canadian Western Agribition noticed his work and when the CEO position became vacant, Lane received a phone call suggesting that he think about applying. He dismissed the idea at first, but the more he thought about it, the more he recognized that

journalism and Agribition had some characteristics in common.

Lane explains that, to the agricultural community, Agribition means the same thing local news meant to the people of P.E.I. Agribition’s impact on Regina is massive, he adds, and much more complex and layered than it might first appear. At the same time, he realized that being the CEO of Agribition would be an entirely different challenge and a significant turning point in his career.

“In university, you learn how to learn, to be adaptable and curious,” Lane says. “And in journalism school in particular, I developed a lifelong passion for curiosity and the problem-solving abilities that lead to success. I thought I could apply those attributes to the role of CEO for Agribition.”

Lane diligently prepared a presentation for the hiring panel, pinpointing the areas where he believed he could help. He knew what he had to offer was likely unique for the position, and that it might not fit what the organization was looking for.

Lane didn’t hear anything for a while, so he filed the experience in the back of his mind. A follow-up call to one of the members of the hiring panel changed that abruptly. “He told me ‘I’ve been meaning to call you; we intend to offer you the job.’”

Lane says that, at first, he was floored by the reality of stepping into a world he

hadn’t been trained for, until he remembered what he had told himself earlier – that there are far more similarities than differences between the two jobs. “It was a matter of transferring the education, training and experience I’d learned along the way.”

One of Lane’s aims was to extend Agribition’s reach beyond the show week in November and make the community more aware of its impact year-round. As he describes it, this includes being a cheerleader for what agriculture already does well and extending that through initiatives such as the Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship program, which enables eight young people from around Saskatchewan to be mentored for 18 months by leaders in Canada’s agriculture industry.

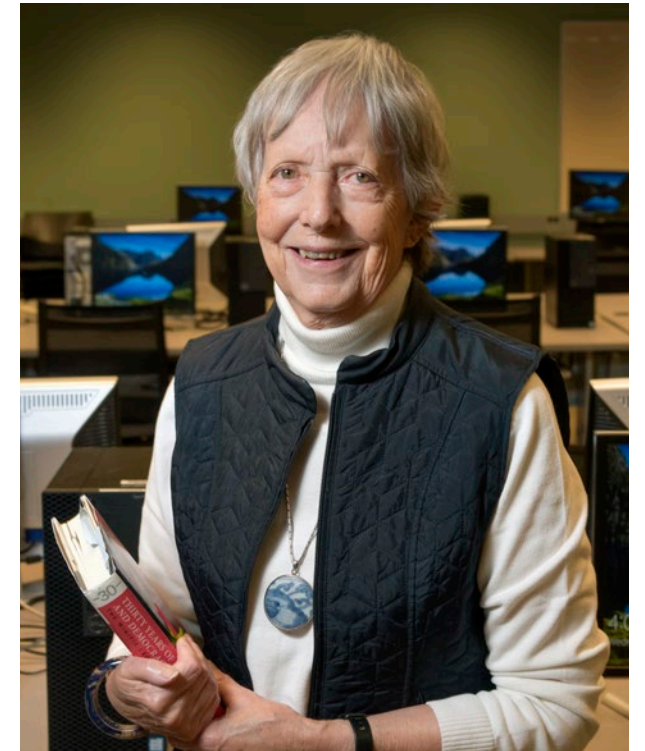
During his time with CBC Saskatchewan, several interns from the U of R’s School of Journalism had work placements there, a practice Lane has continued at Agribition, providing students with opportunities to practice media relations, public relations and content generation. “The internship sets them up to tell some stories about the people who attend Agribition, and especially to work with the media during Agribition Week.”

Agribition, like all events-based businesses, was affected in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the show has adapted, Lane says, “Agribition is built for the cattle and breeding industry, and the business in the barns doesn’t stop, so we were able to provide showcase options virtually in 2020.” The organization chose not to lay anyone off, with the goal of presenting the best possible show in 2021. With two months to go before Agribition 2021, Lane noted that 125,000 people attend the show over six days, and plans for presenting the show in a responsible and safe manner might change from day to day. “The COVID pandemic isn’t much different from TV shows on election night; the circumstances are always changing.”

With all of the challenges, Lane insists that he has the best job in Saskatchewan, in part because he believes the province is coming into another golden age of agriculture. He describes it as a coalescing of understanding and effort to make agriculture a driver of growth over the next 10 years, pointing to the investments in canola processing plants in southern Saskatchewan, the plan for a first-of-its-kind plant to convert waste wheat straw into pulp, and support for Saskatchewan-based agriculture startups though the Cultivator business incubator and the Emmertech venture capital fund, which support the development of agricultural technologies in the province.

“With our international business development program, there’s no better time for Agribition to be involved in what’s happening in agriculture, here and around the globe,” Lane says. “That’s one reason why I say I have the best job. I’m glad that people took a chance that a journalist who trained at the U of R had the right stuff to take on the job. I’m forever grateful for everything that’s led me here.”

*Bill Armstrong is a Regina freelance writer and amateur photographer with a strong interest in Saskatchewan history.*



Former School of Journalism instructor Patricia Bell.



Merelda Fiddler-Potter, a Vanier Scholar, executive-in-residence and PhD candidate at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. Photo by Rachel Buhr, Still Life Photography.



# ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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You might say that **Amanda Ruller BKin'12** is a good sport. More accurately, you could say she's good at sports. Ruller started competing in high-level sports at age six and never looked back. She was a record-breaking member of the U of R Cougars track and field team for five years. Her sprinting earned her spots in the Canadian Olympic trails in the 100- and 200-metre races and an invitation from the Canadian Olympic bobsled and skeleton teams to compete in the Canadian winter sports program. She also competed at a high level in soccer, basketball, softball and weightlifting.

Ruller played for Los Angeles and Atlanta in the Legends Football League for five years and was a running back for the silver-medal winning Team Canada football team at the 2017 Women's World Championships. After terms as a coach with the U of R Rams, she was hired by the McMaster University Marauders to serve as running back coach and strength and conditioning coach. She's also a prominent social media influencer with nearly 100,000 Instagram followers (@amandaruller).

**D** To what extent has your U of R degree helped your career path?

*My degree has helped me work with high-level athletes in sport. It gave me a base to be able to confidently coach strength and conditioning as well as football.*

**D** What has motivated you over the years in your sporting career?

*My biggest motivation is my father. He was my biggest fan throughout my sporting career. He passed away from brain cancer. So every day, I wake up knowing that I want to live for him. That makes me push as hard as I do.*

**D** How did you first get involved in football?

*I drove to Los Angeles for an open tryout for the Temptation. I was told I was too small to play and I wouldn't make the team. I showed up at the practices anyway until I was able to practice. Then I worked my way to a starting position.*

**D** What do you consider the highlight of your athletic career so far?

*Being invited by Tom Brady's agent to coach at an NFL free agency camp. He asked me to work with the running backs and defensive backs and to run the strength and conditioning programs.*

**D** What was it like to win a car on *The Price Is Right* as a contestant on the show in 2015?

*It was very exciting. The odds of that happening to someone are very slim and I did it. It was exciting to be on the show and to go through the emotions of winning a car and meeting Drew Carey. That's a memory I'll keep for the rest of my life.*

**D** What is next for Amanda Ruller?

*I promise, I will be the first female positional coach in the CFL.*

**D** What is your ultimate dream job?

*My dream job is to be a running back coach in the CFL and beyond that I want to be an offensive coordinator in the NFL.*

**D** What words of advice would you give to aspiring athletes?

*Don't let the opinions of others get you down. Go after what you want. And don't apologize for being great.*



# ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



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BSc'08, MSc'10

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ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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## Need to Read Alumni & Friends Online Book Club

The 2022 kickoff book is *In My Own Moccasins* by Helen Knott, which was published by the UR Press. The reading session runs from January to March; join the club today! <http://alumni.uregina.ca/bookclub>

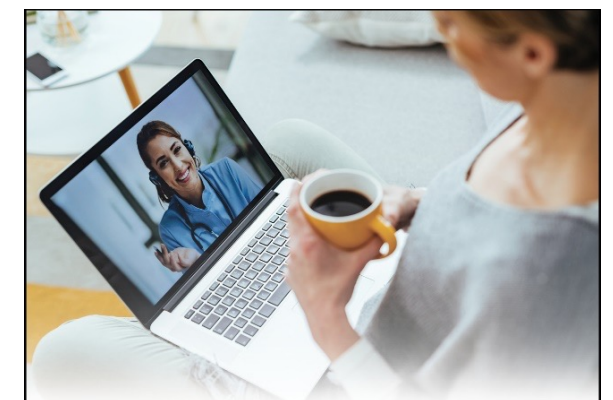
## University of Regina Alumni Association (URAA)

Welcome to the newly elected URAA 2021-22 Board of Directors! To learn more about URAA visit <https://alumni.uregina.ca/URAA>

For more information about upcoming alumni events, benefits and services, visit [alumni.uregina.ca](http://alumni.uregina.ca)

## Inspiring Leadership Forum

Join us in-person or online for the University of Regina's Inspiring Leadership Forum 2022, presented by TD, which will take place on March 2, 2022. The Inspiring Leadership Forum is a premier leadership development event that focuses on women in leadership. The event brings together people from Saskatchewan and beyond to connect with others through the inspirational stories of internationally renowned leaders, and in doing so, support the development of future young leaders through the forum's scholarships. This year's theme, Happy on Purpose, inspires us to choose joy. When faced with challenges, a focus on happiness can help pull us through dark times, making us stronger and more resilient now and in the future. For more information and to register, visit [www.uofrinspiringleadership.com](http://www.uofrinspiringleadership.com). Space is limited, so get your tickets early!



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# Meaning matters

**In three years, Alanna Mitchell LLD'11(Honorary) took 13 journeys to destinations around the world to learn the truth about our oceans and climate change. She snorkelled the Great Barrier Reef, walked the beaches of Zanzibar and witnessed a breathtaking once-a-year coral spawning in the waters off Panama. Those travels, and others, led to her riveting book and play about the state of the world's oceans.**

**By Alanna Mitchell**

*Photos courtesy of Alanna Mitchell unless otherwise noted.*

**C**OVID stalks us still, yet I'm in Belfast, Northern Ireland, getting ready to perform my play *Sea Sick* in front of a live audience. It's the first time in more than two years. And maybe because that feels so strange now, or maybe because I'm 5,232 kilometres from home during a pandemic, I feel philosophical. I'm asking myself why I keep doing this. Why don't I just stay home?

The play, which is based on 13 journeys I made with scientists over three years for my book *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*, is about how the carbon dioxide we put into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels is changing the chemistry of the ocean. The ocean has become warm, breathless and sour from all that carbon.

That extra warmth is forcing marine creatures to move, breaking up their communities, shredding the

ocean's web of life. The breathless zones that lack oxygen are afflicting more and more coastal waters, pushing life away or killing it.

Increasing acidity, or sourness, is making it hard for marine life to use calcium in the water to make shells, bones, teeth, reefs. It makes fish stupid. They swim toward predators instead of away. It's particularly tough on young marine life; baby oysters and scallops are dying by the billions in the acid seas.

Together, these three chemical changes are a toxic cocktail. And they form a parallel to what happened during the biggest mass extinction in the planet's history: the Permian extinction of 252 million years ago when about 95 per cent of species were erased from the book of life.

Except today, we're putting carbon into the atmosphere about 100 times faster than the volcanoes that caused the Permian extinction, faster than at any other time in the planet's history.

It adds up to an assault on the world's life support systems. Even though we think of our planet as Earth, it could more properly be called Water. One scientist put it to me this way: if everything on land were to die tomorrow, everything in the ocean would be fine. But if everything in the ocean were to die, everything on land would die too. The ocean contains the switch of life.

The killing mechanism is carbon. Therefore, the saving grace is cutting carbon. As it turns out, I'm preparing to perform my play in Glasgow at the international climate talks on this tour, too. This is the annual Conference of the Parties (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), during which more than 100 nations haggle over how to cut carbon. They've been haggling for 26 years. Yet carbon concentrations in the atmosphere – and therefore changes to ocean chemistry – continue to rise to ever more dangerous levels. We're already seeing the effects around the world in storms, droughts, hurricanes and floods. During those 26 years of negotiations, carbon has become a mass murderer.



Photo by iStock

**The carbon dioxide we put into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels is changing the chemistry of the ocean. The ocean has become warm, breathless and sour from all that carbon.**

My musings here in this Belfast hotel room are leading me to think about how COVID and carbon connect. First, we learned some valuable lessons from COVID. As citizens, we can collectively suspend our wants and needs if we have a good enough reason. We can work together as a single species against a common foe. Governments can make new rules when the old ones don't work. This is the three-point blueprint for tackling carbon.

But the pandemic also showed us that, even when billions of us stayed home for months on end last year, carbon emissions only fell seven per cent. That means 93 per cent of emissions are tied to large systems our personal daily choices have little control over.

Even if we stripped all carbon out of our personal lives, the effect would only be symbolic, not numeric. The conundrum is that while we're all implicated in the tragedy of carbon, governments alone have the power to fix the systems that control it, such as shifting to non-carbon forms of electric generation and then electrifying more of the economy. How to move forward?

Which brings me back to the play. In 2013, a few years after the book *Sea Sick* came out, I gave a talk about it to a group of artists. One of them, Franco Boni, who was then the artistic director of the Theatre Centre in Toronto, called me later and asked me to turn the tales of my adventures into a play and to perform it. I agreed.

I had no idea what I was getting into.

I'm not an actor. I have no aspirations to be one. I'm a journalist. My one condition to Franco was that I wouldn't have to memorize a whole script. Not at all, he said. You'll just be on stage telling your stories.

Franco asked Ravi Jain, artistic director of Why Not Theatre in Toronto, to help. We taped a raft of public talks I gave over the next several months and then parsed them, trying to figure out which of the stories would work best in a play. And we talked. Franco and Ravi asked me questions. Why are you a journalist? What are journalists supposed to do? What's their code of conduct? How do you report on science? How does carbon affect the ocean? How do you know for sure? I consider it some of the finest psychotherapy I've ever had.

As I talked, I would often leap up from the table and draw diagrams or write numbers on a blackboard that happened to be stored in our rehearsal room. You can't understand THIS part until you understand THIS, I would say, clouds of chalk dust covering my fingers and clothes. A chalkboard became the centrepiece of the play's set.

Eventually, we realized that the play needed an overture, by which we meant an opening section that would introduce the themes of the play: The history of scientific thought. Darwin's ideas of evolution and extinction. Why I tell stories that few others are telling. Where I come from. What art is for and why we need it.

It's that last part that keeps me going back to the stage to perform. I grew up in Regina. My father, George Mitchell, was a biologist who spent much of his career at the University



Mitchell is all smiles in the submersible that took her to the bottom of the sea.

of Regina. My mother, Constance Mitchell, was a painter who often painted prairie landscapes.

Growing up in that family taught me that science is how we find things out, but that art is how we find meaning. And it's meaning we respond to; science can only take us so far.

I believe that meaning matters. We have all sorts of information now from scientists about how the carbon overload affects the planet. We can see the effects of carbon destabilization with our own eyes, in our own backyards. It's not just the disasters, it's the blooms that come earlier, the birds that leave later for the south, the pronghorn spotted so much further north now than before.

The urgency to cut carbon is clear. The techniques are obvious. Why aren't we making more progress?

I think it's art that will carry the day. Sure, I honour the climate summits and all the policy work that goes into orchestrating systemic change. I know all that has to happen.

At the same time, we need to cling tight to narratives that convince us this is possible. I'm not talking about hope so much as love – love of the planet, but also love of our species and of the messiness we've wrought. We can own that and still focus on what it will feel like when the planet is over its carbon addiction.

That's where performing my play comes in, for me. I'm not going to be the one to write new policies or convert energy systems to renewables or run for a seat in the House

of Commons. But what I can do is tell stories about what I've found out in an extremely intimate setting. I can reveal the secrets of the deeps and the mysteries of our tiny part of the universe. I can tell you that means something. I can use art to remind you that I matter and so do you. It's why I keep doing the play. It's why I'll be reading it in March as part of the 29th season of the Playwrights Reading Series, organized by the University's Centre for the Study of Script Development.

Because of the pandemic, I've had to take up my pen again to figure out a new way to finish the play. I'm sitting here, 24 hours away from being on stage for the first time in all these long months, trying to memorize this new writing, along with the script's 10,000 other words, Franco!

Part of it goes like this: The great task of our generation is to be heroes, to find redemption, to bring us back from the brink, to do what we can, whatever it is. You'll know what to do. Adapt and survive. Write a new ending. Live to tell another tale.

*Alanna Mitchell is a Canadian author and journalist who writes about global science issues. She specializes in investigating changes to the earth's life-support systems and travels the world in search of scientists at the centre of what's going on. Her second book, Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis, has become an international bestseller and won America's Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment.*



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