

The York University Magazine

Fall 2018

Going Home

Jesse Thistle's journey out of the shadows

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THE PRESIDENT



RHONDA LENTON
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY, globalization and technology continue to have a profound impact on the Canadian workplace, with significant implications for the post-secondary education sector. Over the next number of years, we can expect to see increasing collaboration with other sectors, flexible learning formats and internationalization.

Transferable knowledge and skills will be key, as will be interdisciplinarity, digital fluency and a dedication to lifelong learning. These are areas in which York graduates already have an advantage.

Our institution has a long-standing reputation for interdisciplinary programs and research, as we have continued to further expand our comprehensiveness across the arts, liberal arts, business, environmental studies, education, health, law, science and math, technology and engineering, offering programs in both English and French.

We continue to increase and to strengthen experiential education opportunities for all students, technology-enhanced learning and unique partnerships that offer students relevant, career-related activities aimed at training students in critical thinking and complex problem-solving.

These skills allow our graduates to adapt to the uncertain career paths that lie ahead and to continue to learn in an age in which educational content is both more accessible and more rapidly changing than might have been imagined when the University was founded nearly 60 years ago.

As universities strive to match the skills we teach with the needs of the economy and the demands of a future in which post-secondary education will be necessary for more than two-thirds of all new jobs, we must prioritize accessibility and inclusive growth. Social justice, sustainability, forward-looking thinking, access, equity and inclusion are values fundamental to York's history and identity, and they continue to guide us as the Canadian and global expectations for universities change.

Societies are increasingly looking to universities as anchor institutions in communities planning for the future and responding to local and global challenges. We need to create opportunities for government, community organizations and the private sector to work with the post-secondary education sector if Canada is to be globally competitive. In order for us to identify solutions to issues such as poverty, housing, transportation and the environment, this is imperative.

As we seek to engage a variety of communities in dialogue about inclusivity, access, reconciliation and growth, we must also redouble our institutional commitment to welcoming and embedding diverse forms of knowledge and experience at York.

I have seen first-hand what education can do, not only in changing one's personal circumstances, but in advancing society. In combining our academic and research excellence with our accessibility agenda, our diversity with our inclusivity and our commitment to lifelong learning with our belief in bringing about positive social change, I believe York will emerge as the model for the connected university in the 21st-century global knowledge economy.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD

TRUE GRIT

I WORKED LIKE A MULE back in university, carrying a heavy course load and keeping my head pretty much lowered. Nights at the library, study sessions until dawn, life as experienced in a deprivation tank. Squint hard and I can see the furrowed brow and the donut dust forming a thin layer over my textbooks and notes. And I do have to squint hard. Because while my student years were sometimes hellish, they were also the best years of my life, a time when I faced new challenges and conquered them. I did it through perseverance. I had a goal firmly in mind and I went for it, pushing through the pain of sleepless nights and student poverty-induced hunger, and perhaps more importantly, the fear of failure, to get to the top of my class. I met others who were smarter, and with infinitely more talent. But I had a secret weapon. I had grit. I wasn't easily discouraged by initial failures. I was the little engine that could. Passion plus persistence is a winning formula when it comes to achieving success. I know that as much as the people you are about to encounter here, in the Fall 2018 issue of the award-winning *The York University Magazine*. What they all have in common is staying power. Each seized on a task and stubbornly stuck to it until they achieved what they wanted, a feeling of personal triumph. The obstacles in their path initially looked insurmountable. They ranged from homeless-

ness, drug addiction and incarceration in the case of Jesse Thistle, the now thriving PhD student who graces our cover, to a feeling of inadequacy when it came to accessing higher education in the case of Nancy Sullivan, a postal worker turned Bay Street success story who is also profiled within these pages. But all fell to the wayside when tackled with perseverance. The noun's obdurate essence is rooted in the Latin word *perseverus*, meaning very strict, as in slogging it out until the job is done. Perseverance also means taking a stand, a definition that easily applies to protestor Tzeporah Berman in her fight to save the environment and to Dennis Raphael, a professor in York University's School of Health Policy and Management who has spent his career asking a lot of uncomfortable questions, persevering until he finds the answers. I hope their tenaciousness inspires. — DEIRDRE KELLY



The York University Magazine



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ON THE COVER

Jesse Thistle
photographed by
Mike Ford



View

OUTLOOK & IDEAS

A New Campus Landmark

Built by students for students: York's Second Student Centre

AFTER MORE THAN five years of active collaboration between students and architects, the new four-storey Second Student Centre has opened at York University's Keele Campus in time for the start of the 2018-19 academic year.

Designed by CannonDesign in consultation with students, the 126,000-square-foot, multi-use building represents the end point of a complex process that students initiated in 2013 with a university-wide referendum seeking approval for the construction of a second student centre.

Students also took responsibility for seeking funding for the new building with support from York University and the City of Toronto.

Featuring signature cantilevered upper floors, walls of windows, steel panels and brise-soleil applied to the exterior to reduce heat buildup and glare, it houses new meeting rooms, student club offices and lounge areas in addition to expanded study spaces. It also comes with a large, state-of-the-art catering kitchen to serve the event needs of the larger York community.

Up to 80 per cent of the new building is illuminated by natural light, creating a pleasant ambience while contributing to the building's sustainable design. The predominantly glass structure allows for a seamless connection between inside and outside space, giving this social nucleus of campus life an airy and inviting feel. The addition of a green roof and permeable landscape surfaces are features qualifying the building for LEED Gold certification.

"This project is a perfect storm for the creation of design excellence, not just as a great piece of architecture, but because of the amazing collaboration from which it emerged," says Andrew King, who served as the project's lead designer. "This building puts the students first, and their identity at the centre of the University. It has been a privilege to help the students achieve this amazing vision." ●

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD

Numero Uno

A mathematics professor adds up the accolades

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

NANTEL BERGERON, a newly minted Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, one of the University's highest academic honours, counts out loud the two things calculated to bring him down. The first is when people insist math is a science and the second is when people say they hate math. Let's take that one at a time.

"When people say they hate math, that just makes me so sad," says Bergeron, frowning to make the point. "That's like saying I hate talking or I hate thinking," the 55-year-old scholar continues, warming up to his other *bête noir*. "Because while some people insist



that math is a science, it is not, at least not to me. It is a language. We use it to describe relationships and any changes that might affect relationships in such a way as to deepen our understanding of our world."

The Quebec-born mathematician has proofs to back up his claim, among them a groundbreaking Hopf algebra theorem explaining the ubiquity of quasi-symmetric functions as generating functions in combinatorics. Bergeron co-authored it in 2003 and it has since made him internationally famous in math circles as an algebraic genius.

In lay terms, the proof allows for the study of any structure to be broken down into a countable number of variables and rationally mapped out for analysis. "I see the proof as a pair of glasses," says Bergeron, helpfully. "It allows for quasi-symmetric functions to be perceived as a measurement of any kind of combinatorial theorem. People can use that to get information about the object they want to study."

And by information he means deep knowledge, the kind not easily discernible. It's what made him want to do math in the first place. "I wanted to be a physicist at first," says Bergeron, "but my instructors were always showing, they were not explaining, and I wanted to go deeper, so I went into math to understand at that level. I didn't want to assume anything."

Mind made up, Bergeron went on to obtain his master's in mathematics at the Université du Québec à Montréal in 1987, and his PhD from the University of California, San Diego, in 1990. Princeton hired him almost immediately upon graduating to teach math in its department. Bergeron moved next to Harvard where after three years York University came calling and recruited him in 1996 as an associate professor at the Keele Campus.

Bergeron quickly rose through the ranks, becoming the Canada Chair in Mathematics in 2001, a position he held for 10 years, a full professor in 2002 and, as of 2016, the York Research Chair in Applied Algebra. The author of more than 80 research papers and recipient of several awards, Bergeron has supervised 19 PhD students and 23 postdoctoral students from around the world who have come to York University specifically because of him.

"I think one of my greatest contributions is the people I have attracted to the University," Bergeron says, "people who have gone on to do good work and across Canada – out West and in the Atlantic provinces. They've gone on to reproduce the synergy we have here at York. They have spread the passion for math." ●



HEART OF A LION

The new York Lions identity is magnetic, confident, strong

AS PART OF #HEARTOFALION DAY on Aug. 22, hundreds of students, staff and faculty crowded into York Lions Stadium to celebrate a new era for the York University Lions, beginning with the official unveiling of a new logo.

A sleek and fierce-looking lion head in York's signature red, it represents a more inclusive, revamped Lions identity.

"This is an exciting time to be a part of the Lion Pride," explains Jennifer Myers, executive director of Athletics and Recreation at York. "With this new look, everyone can see themselves as part of the pride."

So what does it mean to be a Lion today? The answer, according to the York community, is to be accepting of everyone, to be courageous and to stand up for what you believe in. It means having the heart of a Lion and being

a leader. It's about more than wearing a logo.

It's about being part of a movement. ●

Don't Touch That Dial

An award-winning exhibition (and book) broadcasts the latest on Canadian community radio

A LARGE 1930S-ERA radio – the kind that looks more antique furniture than electronica – occupies what little floor space is left over from the piles of books and other scholarly paraphernalia crowding Anne MacLennan's tiny office on Keele Campus. The square wooden box sports a whiskey-coloured grill cloth and an art deco design. But it's not meant as decoration. The vintage radio is a visible reminder of the award-winning research into Canadian radio's potential for representative and inclusive broadcasting that the associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies has been pursuing since before moving to York University from her native Quebec in 2003. Her interest lies in how radio unifies and defines its listeners, a topic she is about to study in more depth with her current research project investigating production, programming and real-life practices and policies affecting Canadian community radio. "I've been looking at radio a long time," says MacLennan with a strong, clear voice made for the airwaves. "It's an indestructible type of media. It will survive the apocalypse."

Radio's longevity as a community builder formed the focus of *Seeing, Selling, and Situating Radio in Canada, 1922-1956*, an exhibition MacLennan helped organize for the Archives of Ontario and the Sound and Moving Image Library at York University last fall. Her accompanying book, co-authored



with Michael Windover, an assistant professor of art history at Carleton University, explores the visual and material culture of radio in Canada and was published by Dalhousie Architectural Press in 2017. It recently took the bronze medal in the Popular Culture category at the Independent Publisher Book Awards whose 22nd annual edition took place in New York City in May. Another exhibition related to this research project is being planned for the Musée des Ondes Emile Berliner in Montreal later this year. The interest is there, MacLennan says, "because radio is back. Podcasts have people listening again. It's not just old-timey stuff." ●

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

MISS CONCEPTIONS

A new study makes the argument that Renaissance girls rule

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

“MANY IN OUR CULTURE are just discovering girl fabulousness,” says Deanne Williams, a professor in York’s Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, and a world authority on girls in the Renaissance, “but the phenomenon has a long genealogy and history, and I am uncovering that with my research.”

That research started in earnest with her critically acclaimed 2014 book, *Shakespeare and the Performance of Girlhood*, the first scholarly study devoted to Shakespeare’s girl characters and conceptions of girlhood. It deepened after Williams won a five-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Grant in 2014 for *Girls and their Books in Early Modern England*.

In both studies, Williams, a mother of two children, a son and a daughter, looked at the history of early modern girls as performers, patrons and authors, a topic she now will explore in more depth following the receipt of a prestigious 2018 Killam Research Fellowship from the Canada Council for the Arts in May. Williams will use the \$70,000 award to undertake the first-ever study devoted to the history of the girl actor from the Middle Ages to the English Revolution, aided by research assistant and former graduate student Bernice Neal (PhD '18).

“I want to challenge long-held assumptions about girls in Elizabethan times,” Williams says of the groundbreaking study that will take two years – “and a lot of archival research” – to finish. “I also want to look for lost girls, the girls history hasn’t wanted us to look at.” ●



Turning Japanese

Ted Goossen translates Murakami's latest novel, an epic tour de force

FOR CLOSE TO 30 YEARS, Ted Goossen, a professor of Japanese contemporary film and literature in York University's Department of Humanities, has been translating into English the literary works of Japanese writer Haruki Murakami, helping to make one of the world's most popular authors even more well known.

Last year, Goossen translated Murakami's short story collection, *Men Without Women*, and before that his novel *1Q84*, the release of which, a decade ago, sold a million copies in the first month. This year, it's *Killing Commendatore*, Murakami's 2017 novel whose hotly anticipated English-language version is scheduled to come out later this fall in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada.

Goossen, an American who learned how to read and write Japanese as an exchange student in Japan in the late 1960s, has spent many months translating the two-part book in collaboration with Philip Gabriel, a professor in and former head of the University of Arizona's Department of East Asian Studies. Translation, Goossen says, is like walking a tightrope with a pole.

"On one side, you've got literal meaning," he explains over a cup of green mate tea in a Japanese café close to his home in Toronto's Kensington Market during a break from his rigorous daily work routine. "On the other, you have all the things that are felt – aesthetics, auditory rhythms, emotion and a character's voice. It's a balancing act." If there's anyone who can teach him how to maintain his equilibrium on the page it is Murakami himself, who has become a close friend, often visiting Goossen in Toronto to talk about literature and music, his other obsession, in between writing his best-selling books.

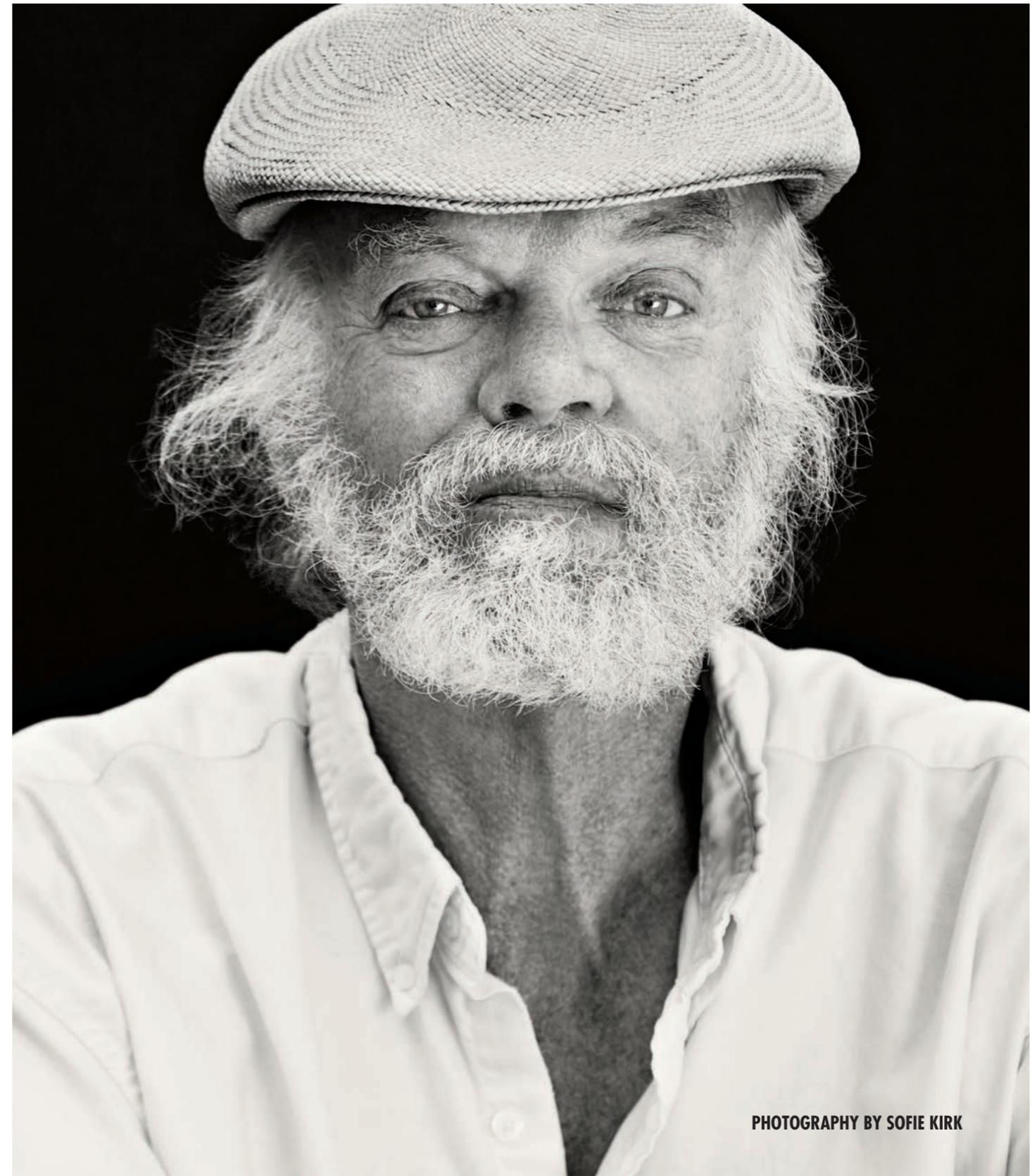
Like Goossen, Murakami is an expert translator but in reverse – converting modern English-language literature

by such authors as J. D. Salinger, Raymond Chandler and F. Scott Fitzgerald into Japanese. "When he translated *The Great Gatsby* into Japanese, sales of the novel just rose," says Goossen, who wrote the introduction to the 2013 edition which took Murakami 20 years to realize. *Killing Commendatore*, a novel about art and its creation, borrows from some of Murakami's American literary heroes.

The story involves a painter recently separated from his wife. While staying with a friend, he discovers a painting in the attic depicting the killing of the Commendatore in the Mozart opera *Don Giovanni*, but with the setting transposed to seventh-century Japan from 18th-century Spain as in the original. Contemporary cultural references abound, with Murakami spicing up his hallucinogenic prose with everything from the Beatles to jazz music. Goossen says the novel also involves a trip under the surface of the Earth, which is symbolic for a journey into the subconscious. Many marvellous and terrible creatures are encountered there, making the translation particularly challenging.

"There are many speaking characters who are not people – they are ideas, or manifestations of things – they are not realistic – so it has been difficult to get the voices right," Goossen says. "But as a translator that's what you need to do. When you are translating you are always listening to the voice. You are always trying to hear the dialogue between the narrative, and the characters speaking the lines."

It's not just a linguistic technique, in other words. What Goossen is doing, actually, is using translation to bridge cultures, providing a portal into foreign worlds for readers to explore: "I remember when I read Murakami for the first time, as a newly minted PhD student, and it changed my attitude. I remember his novel giving me so much energy. It really showed me where I would go and what it was I would do." ●



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

How obesity measures up as a global health crisis

BY ALANNA MITCHELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

WALK UP TO A DOZEN PEOPLE on the street, ask them if it's unhealthy to be fat and most of them will say yes. Will being fat kill you? Undoubtedly. Should fat people lose weight? Absolutely.

It's no surprise.

Anti-fat messages are ubiquitous. Across Canada, government policies, medical health professionals, public health campaigns and popular health articles – not to mention weight-loss businesses – are pushing the idea that fat is bad and if you've got too much, you've got to lose it.

Being fat is considered a disease all on its own.

In fact, the idea has taken hold that we are in the throes of a global obesity pandemic – sometimes referred to as “globesity” – and children are at such risk that immediate steps must be taken to save them from having shorter life spans than their parents.

One example: The Ontario government's 2012 “No Time to Wait” anti-obesity strategy for children says that if nothing is done right now, as many as 70 per cent of today's children will be overweight or obese by 2040, with severe impacts on health.

The implication? Canada is in a crisis of fat: obesity, whether among children or adults, is threatening the health of the nation.

Except, what if it's not true?

Welcome to the world of Dennis Raphael, a professor in York University's School of Health Policy and Management. He's spent his career asking a lot of uncomfortable what-ifs like this one.

What if the mainstream story is not the real story? What if the real story is hidden from view?

The answers have led Raphael to become a global expert in

the movement of analyzing the social determinants of health, or how living conditions affect your health.

“It's almost unbelievable that obesity would not really be a big health problem,” he says in an interview from his Toronto home. But is it really the health epidemic it's being called? Does being fat really harm you?

To find out, Raphael teamed up with two of his graduate students, Stella Medvedyuk and Ahmednur Ali, to examine the ideology embedded in Canada's public policy on being fat, and whether that ideology is supported by current research.

The results of their study, published in 2017 in the journal *Critical Public Health*, are scathing.

It turns out there's a mounting body of research showing that being fat does not shorten life.

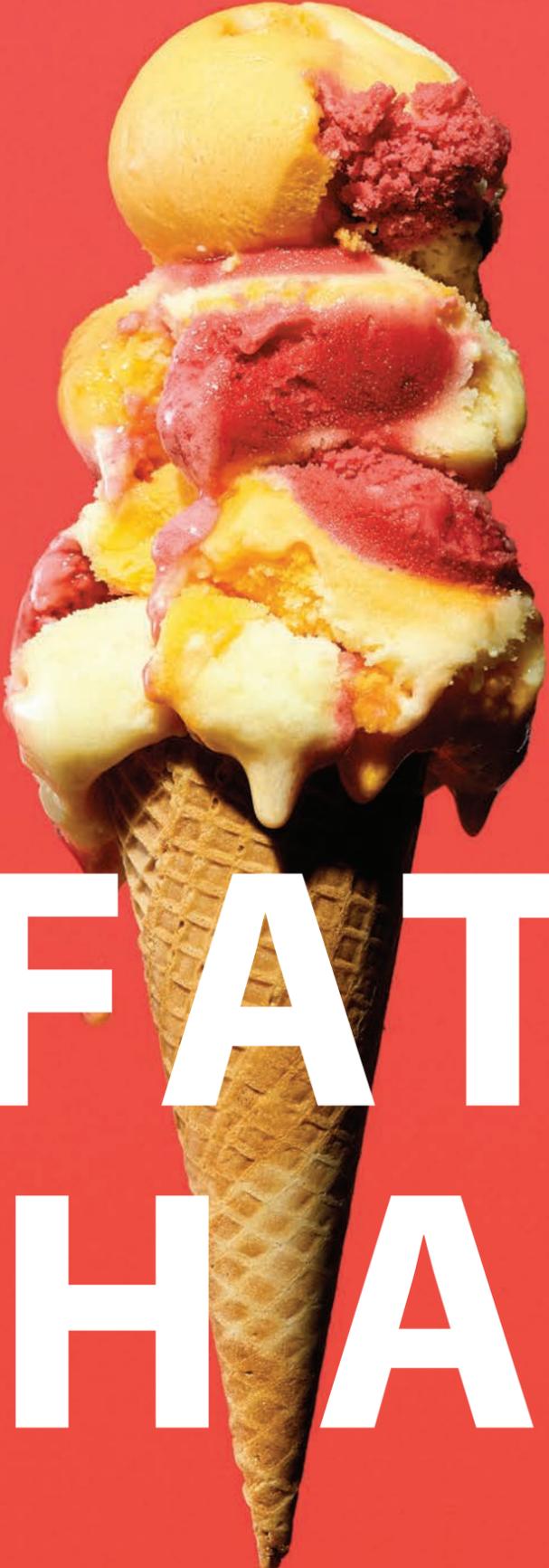
Among the literature Raphael points to is a long-term study following 1.8 million people over a decade. It found that people considered overweight – measured by body mass index (BMI) – had the highest life expectancy, followed by those considered obese. The most short-lived were those with the least fat.

Not only that, but studies from many parts of the world – the United States, Denmark, Japan, Asia – found that carrying extra fat actually protects your health, whether you exercise or not.

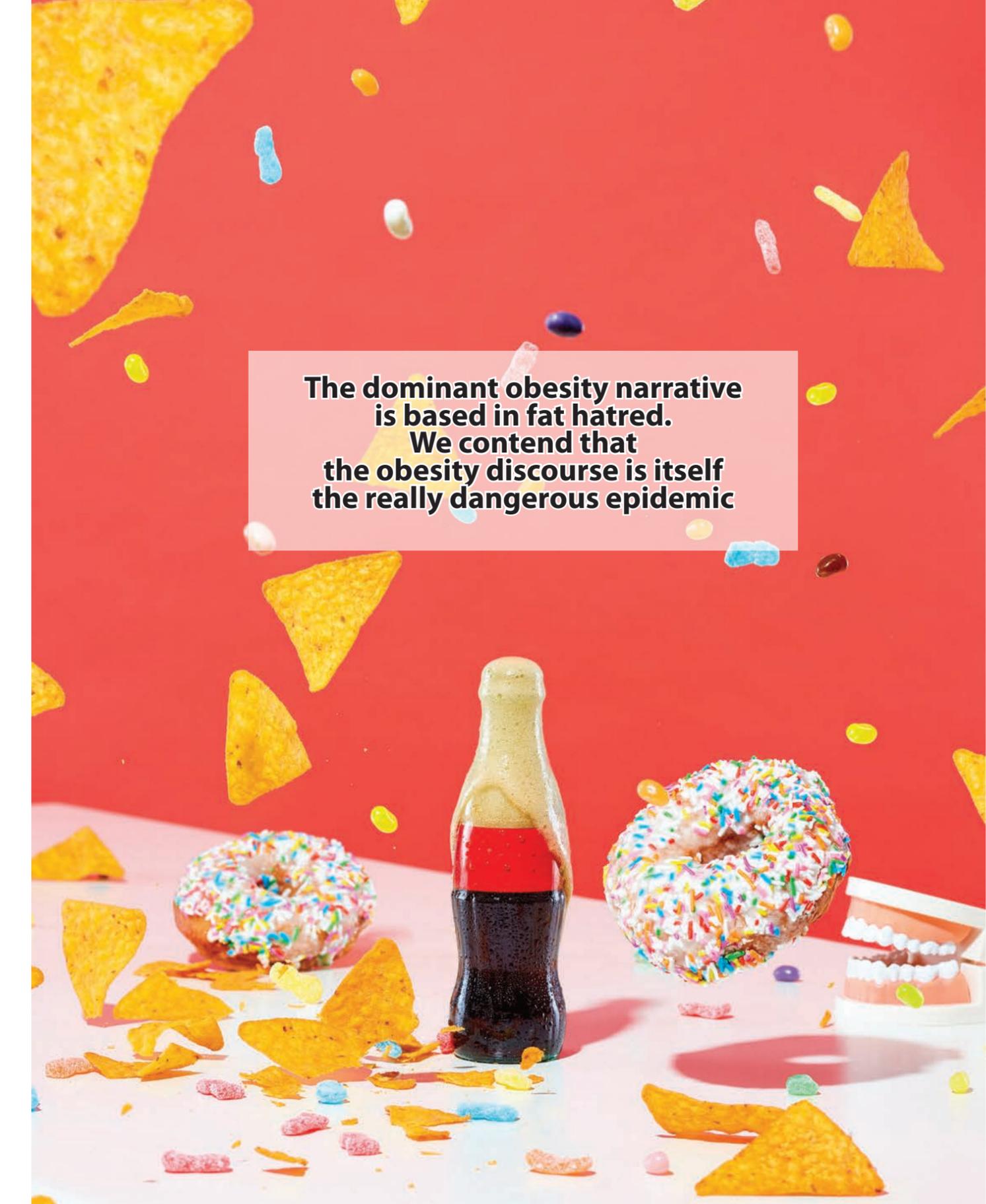
In the scientific literature, this is called the “obesity paradox” because it's so counterintuitive. Add in some physical fitness, and the links between fatness and any cause of death, including from cardiovascular disease, vanish.

“In summary, although having a body weight above the ‘healthy weight’ BMI category is said to result in poorer life expectancy, mortality, and morbidity, the evidence from the literature does not support this claim,” concludes a review paper by Lily O'Hara, a professor of public health at Abu Dhabi University, published earlier this year.

Not only that, but Raphael's work also shows that the focus



FAT CHAT



**The dominant obesity narrative
is based in fat hatred.
We contend that
the obesity discourse is itself
the really dangerous epidemic**

on eliminating obesity, while it aims to help people, can actually harm them. The shame of being fat tends to encourage fat people to cycle rapidly through weight loss and gain, a health risk. The stigma spawns fat prejudice, bad for psychological health.

Raphael points to work by Jennifer Brady of Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, and Natalie Beausoleil of Memorial University in St. John's. They explain that the anti-obesity discourse running through Canada's public health apparatus is creating a "moral panic" about being fat.

"The dominant obesity narrative is based in fat hatred," they write. "We contend that the obesity discourse is itself the really dangerous epidemic."

That distinction matters, Raphael says. Focusing on fat as a health crisis and giving people the idea that slimming down depends solely on their personal choices deflects attention away from the broader causes of ill health.

Among them: where you work, how reliable your work is, how safe your working conditions are, how much money you have, whether your housing is secure, your gender, whether you are disabled, whether you have secure access to good food, the cost of food and whether you are a member of a minority population group.

These are all the issues Raphael, who grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., has spent decades exploring, fluently explaining his findings in a dozen books and hundreds of presentations, reports, newspaper columns and journal articles.

Addressing those systemic issues and trying to foster widespread equality would go a long way toward improving the health of Canadians, he says. One proof is the high levels of health among Scandinavians, who live in a more egalitarian society.

"[In Canada,] we'll do everything to promote health except deal with the sources of ill health," he says, adding, "No real determinant of health is getting better."

In other words, governments are saying: eat your broccoli, but don't expect a fairer society.

The one comfort is that questioning the mainstream fat narrative is catching on. Raphael's surprised. While his work over time has been in high demand in Europe, here in Canada it has often been sidelined.

As former colleague David Coburn, now retired from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, says, Raphael has made a career of speaking truth to power and has taken pains to let the public know what he's found.

In fact, Raphael points out that his work is so countercultural that it took him 26 years to get a tenure-track position at a university.

"On this one – [obesity] – I'm lucky. It's not just Dennis saying this," he says. "People are a little more receptive because you can't ignore it now."

To wit: yet another critique of the mainstream fat narrative came out in July in the *Journal of Obesity*, this one taking on the 2016 Canadian Senate report on obesity. The paper by Angela Alberga of Concordia University in Montreal and others excoriates the Senate report's "aggressive framing" and "disrespectful terminology" about obesity. Alberga recommends that future reports acknowledge the diversity of healthy body shapes in society and give a nod to the risks of stigmatizing fat. She also asks that ongoing research takes into account the social determinants of health that Raphael has spent so much time explaining.

That's not to say everyone agrees with Raphael on the fat front.

Many well-meaning physicians and public-health advocates are still urging people to lose weight for the sake of their health. Raphael gives a hearty nod to their genuine wish to help people.

But the inconvenient truth is that it's not working. And it won't work. In fact, it's doing more harm than good.

Raphael's prescription? Abandon the effort. Focus instead on improving the conditions of life. That's where policy could really make things better. ●

Going Home

**Indigenous homelessness is off the charts in Canada.
York graduate student **Jesse Thistle**
is doing something about it**

**BY DEIRDRE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD**



Before Métis scholar Jesse Thistle (BA '15) became a PhD student at York University, he lived on the streets, subsisting on crack cocaine and a life of petty crime that landed him in and out of jail.

Today, the 41-year-old recovered addict is a different man.

NOT ONLY HAS the Saskatchewan native of Cree heritage managed to lift himself (with a little help from friends, family and well-intentioned faculty members) out of dead-ended destitution, he has risen to the upper echelons of academe where in a relatively short time he has become a respected authority on Indigenous homelessness.

A film about him, to be based on his forthcoming Simon & Schuster book, *My Life: a Métis Memoir*, is now in the works.

“The ripples of my healing are expanding,” says Thistle, a soft-spoken man whose words are beginning to ring loud and clear across the nation.

“All my years as a crack cocaine addict? I’m now using that for good.”

Those expected to benefit from Thistle’s own experiences are other Indigenous people and by extension the people of Canada. If that seems a lofty ambition, then know that Thistle has already demonstrated that he can deliver.

Last fall, Thistle travelled to a national conference in Winnipeg to present “Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada,” a groundbreaking academic paper proposing a new way of looking at this rapidly growing social problem.

The paper caught the attention of Janet Smylie, a researcher at Toronto’s St. Michael’s Hospital and one of Canada’s first Métis physicians, who in January invited Thistle to become a lead investigator on “Pekiwewin (Coming Home): An Indigenous Guide for Health and Social Service Providers Working with Indigenous People Experiencing Homelessness.”

This new initiative will translate the knowledge contained in Thistle’s “Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada” into concrete, on-the-ground policy and practice guidelines for medical doctors and social service providers across the country who work daily with Indigenous homeless peoples.

According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, a non-partisan research and policy initiative at York University on which Thistle serves as a representative, one in 15 Aboriginal people in Canadian cities are deemed homeless compared to one in 128 for the general population.

Furthermore, Aboriginal homelessness in major urban areas ranges from 20 to 50 per cent of the total homeless population, and as high as 96 per cent in some areas. An already dire situation could possibly get worse, if an overly narrow definition of homelessness is left unchallenged.

“The Canadian definition of homelessness focuses just on a structure of habitation, but homelessness is far more complex than not just having a place to live,” says Thistle in his home office, about a 10-minute drive south of the Keele Campus.

“Indigenous homelessness, from an Indigenous perspective, implies a disconnection from all things: your land, your culture, your identity, your traditions, stories, customs and language,” the scholar continues, drawing upon deep personal experience and years of university-led research to bolster and support his comments.

“It’s a disconnection from the circle of life, which is what all my relations believe in. And now that Indigenous knowledge has Indigenousized the entire sector,” preparing the way for significant revisions of related policies at the federal level.

Homelessness is far more complex than not just having a place to live

“We know more has to be done,” acknowledges Sabrina Williams, a spokesperson for the Office of the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. But it’s an important first step.

“Jesse Thistle’s work on the definition of Indigenous homelessness in Canada has been amazing,” says Stephen Gaetz, a professor in York’s Faculty of Education and director of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the Homeless Hub, who recently was appointed president of Raising the Roof, a leading Canadian charity focusing on long-term solutions to homelessness.

“Through a rich and diverse consultation process Jesse developed a definition that is meaningful and powerful, and helps us understand that addressing homelessness – not just Indigenous homelessness but all homelessness – means we have to pay attention to the difference between simply being housed and having a home, and the necessity of really and meaningfully coming to terms with our history of colonialism in Canada and the need to answer the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Inspiring work from a man who is going to be a great historian.”

Members of Canada’s Indigenous community also support the initiative.

“Jesse’s definition of Indigenous homelessness is well thought out and is an accurate depiction in defining the unfortunate realities of the multifaceted Indigenous experience,” says Steve Teekens, executive director of Na-Me-Res (Native Men’s Residence) in Toronto.

“It takes into account the Indigenous holistic world view of the colonial and historical contexts that have

contributed to so many Indigenous people finding themselves in a homeless situation.”

Becoming a catalyst for change has not come easily to Thistle, whose previously troubled life is rooted in a dramatic chapter of Canadian history.

A stark ink drawing of an Indigenous warrior located next to the large computer monitor on his neat-as-a-pin desk draws attention to the now decorated scholar’s origins as a descendant of Mistawasis, chief of the powerful Prairie Tribe and lead signatory on Treaty 6, the 1876 document that gave away most of what is today central Saskatchewan and Alberta to the British Crown.

In signing the treaty, Chief Mistawasis had hoped to ensure the long-term survival of his people. But peace was short-lived. Within two generations, intense frustration combined with mistrust of a long-distance government compelled one of the chief’s granddaughters to fight alongside Louis Riel in the North-West Rebellion of 1885.

The Dominion of Canada’s defeat of Indigenous and Métis forces at the Battle of Batoche resulted in Riel being hanged as a traitor and Thistle’s family banished to the fringes of society.

“We became ‘road allowance people,’ forced to live on the narrow strip of land the government had left on either side of the railroad for later expansion,” says Thistle, carefully choosing his words. “We became the ‘forgotten people.’”

That initial displacement negatively impacted several generations of Thistle’s family for close to a century, emerging as the root cause of their various struggles with addiction, the prison system and homelessness.

“For me, it’s been a straight trajectory,” says Thistle,



**I was 15
feeling the weight
of that oppression,
but not knowing
what it was**

whose name comes from a 19th-century Scottish ancestor who migrated to Cape Breton, N.S., during the Highland Clearances, another displaced society. Thistle's own father was an addict who eventually was murdered and his mother a shadowy figure who relinquished her three sons (Thistle and two older brothers) to the care of grandparents in Toronto. Life didn't improve.

"I remember when I was 15 feeling the weight of that oppression, but not knowing what it was," continues Thistle, who has since made intergenerational trauma his area of study.

"I felt resentful, almost hateful. I started to take crack cocaine to take the edge off. I do see a lot of connectivity between my story and those of others with my background."

That story reads somewhat predictably.

High on drugs and alcohol, Thistle dropped out of school and hit the streets; he stole to support his habit, was caught and incarcerated several times, and given a month of second chances that he blew every time. The years rolled on, following the same sad pattern.

But one day in 2005, while lying in jail and thinking he was about to lose one of his legs to gangrene, Thistle begged God to have mercy on him with the promise that if he could find his way out of the mess that was then his life he would become a better person. Prayer answered.

A prison course on etiquette, offered through the University of Ottawa, helped Thistle get back on his feet. He had to learn all over again how to groom and dress himself, make his bed and set a table.

Thistle passed with high marks, and the resulting certificate now hangs high, occupying a place of respect on the wall of the Downsview bungalow he shares with his wife, Lucie ("my reason for living"), and an ornery calico named Poppy Cat. "It was seeing the word 'university' beside my name that gave me hope," Thistle shares. "I started setting new goals for myself."

At the age of 33 – "the same year I got sober" – Thistle went back to school, passing his high-school equivalency so remarkably that a teacher urged him to consider pursuing higher learning. He did so, receiving a bachelor's degree in history at York in 2015, a master's at Waterloo in 2016 and 13 prestigious academic prizes, including a handful of Governor General's Awards and a \$60,000 Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholarship, along the way.

In the fall of 2016, Thistle returned to York to commence his PhD studies. He hopes to be finished by 2022. "I work fast," he says.

In anticipation, and while studying for his comprehensives, Thistle has for months shuttered himself in his basement office. There, he has surrounded himself with self-penned letters of encouragement along with photographs of his nieces – the newest members of his family he wants to save from inheriting a life of misery. These are talismanic objects meant to fortify and focus him. And keep him clean.

"I shouldn't be this smart," Thistle murmurs, sheepishly pointing to all the framed degrees jostling for wall space. They hang next to a plains bison skull crowned with sweet grass and a halo of prized marbled eagle feathers ("the highest honour you can pay someone in my community"), recently given to him as gifts. "I drank mouthwash and smoked crack," he continues. "I have no idea how I didn't lose any brain cells."

But not only has Thistle retained his sanity through all that he has suffered, he has given new hope to those living on the margins of Canadian society.

Even his own mother, lost to him for years, has derived inspiration from his example.

She recently went back to school herself in hopes of benefiting from the healing process that her son has initiated for her and other Indigenous people seeking to break free from a cycle of shame.

"My methodology is rooted in love," Thistle says. "I never meant to keep my experiences private." ●

Environmentalist Tzeporah Berman
is Canada's best-known protestor.
This time her fight is with the government

Rise Up

BY STEPHEN LEAHY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAIME KOWAL

THE MOSQUITOES WERE SO BAD in the summer of 2013 that Tzeporah Berman (MES '95) and I actually choked on them trying to have a conversation. We were camped side by side in our respective tents, on the shore of Gregoire Lake, near Fort McMurray, Alta. It was my first meeting with the woman a British Columbia premier once called an “enemy of the state” and whom some of the world's biggest corporations both fear and invite into their boardrooms. The same woman a few environmental activists labelled an “eco-Judas” for negotiating with those corporations. I liked her straight away. Berman, a York University grad and adjunct professor in the Department of Environmental Studies, is not the demon her critics would have you believe.

In her sleeping bag in the wilderness, Berman looked to be a kindly aunt taking her teenaged niece on a getting-to-know-you-better camping trip. But looks can be deceiving, especially when your vision is occluded by swarms of blood-sucking insects. In reality, Berman and her young charge were on the shores of Lake Gregoire to participate in the Tar Sands Healing Walk, a 14-kilometre trek led by Indigenous spiritual leaders through the bitumen production landscape in the Alberta oil sands.



“Welcome to the Land of Mordor,” Berman said at the time, referencing the hellish lands described in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. (She does have a sense of humour.)

The oil sands drew Berman back to Canada in 2012 after working with Greenpeace International in Amsterdam on climate change issues. But she is perhaps better known for her prominent role in the anti-logging protests in Clayoquot Sound, B.C., in the 1990s. The struggle became known as British Columbia’s “War in the Woods” and was the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history at the time.

Positioning herself at the forefront, Berman, a 49-year-old native of London, Ont., now residing on the West Coast, was arrested and jailed. But the threat of prison never has deterred her. Just this summer, Berman was back at it, organizing the protest against the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion at the Kinder Morgan facility in B.C.

“The Crown has made it clear that they’re arguing for jail time if you oppose this project, but I think many people will stand up and continue to oppose this project. I’ll be one of them,” a defiant Berman told CTV News in June of this year. As she was speaking to the media, 17 people had already been arrested. More said they were willing to serve jail time if it’s what it takes to stop construction.

But protestors were spared that fate when at the end of August the Federal Court of Appeal overturned the Trudeau government’s approval of the contentious Trans Mountain pipeline expansion for not having conducted “sincere and meaningful consultations” with Canada’s Indigenous people. The court also ordered the National Energy Board to look at the environmental effects of more tankers in the waters off B.C.’s coast, including their impact on endangered killer whales. The expansion project isn’t dead yet, and delays will be costly. Still, Berman sees it as a minor victory.

Later, when we spoke over the phone – no mozzies interrupting our conversation this time – she credited York University for teaching her to stand up for what is right. No matter what the cost. “York encouraged me to get out into

the world,” she said. “I’m continuing the journey it set me out on.”

Berman had first arrived at the Keele Campus in 1993 to pursue her master’s degree in environmental studies. But there were distractions. The following summer she went back to Clayoquot Sound to become one of the most prominent activists in the “War in the Woods.” “Along with thousands of others,” Berman told me, “I found my voice at Clayoquot Sound.”

At Clayoquot, Berman was arrested,



When Tzeporah Berman pipes up big business listens

jailed and charged with 857 criminal counts of aiding and abetting the arrested protestors. The widespread media coverage triggered a formal petition to have her kicked out of York. “Their beef was that I was bringing the department into disrepute because of the blockades and all the charges against me,” Berman explained, “but my professors, Leesa Fawcett and Cate Sandilands, both fought for me. That was in 1994. Nothing ultimately came of it. I’d realized that scientific research wouldn’t stop the logging. Blockading seemed the right thing to do.”

“Tzeporah has tremendous resolve,” says eco-activist Valerie Langer, who mentored Berman during those early years at Clayoquot Sound. “She has been the target of some of the most vile and vitriolic criticism through her career and yet she perseveres.”

Berman eventually won her court case, and after graduating

from York joined Greenpeace with a goal of ending clear-cut logging in Clayoquot Sound and other parts of the province. To help get the word out, she co-founded ForestEthics, a grassroots protest group using the power of the media and the threat of consumer boycotts to help persuade companies to become more sustainable.

In one campaign, Berman and company placed a full-page ad in the *New York Times* showing a Victoria’s Secret model holding a chainsaw. The eye-catching \$30,000 ad communicated that the paper Victoria’s Secret catalogues were printed on came from critical mountain caribou habitat. The tagline was “Victoria’s Dirty Secret” and it worked.

As widely reported at the time, after being besieged by more than 10,000 letters from across the U.S., Victoria’s Secret opted to find other suppliers. Berman wrote about this early triumph and her other acts of civil disobedience in her 2011 book, *This Crazy Time*, which tells her story from the 1993 logging blockades through to her work with ForestEthics. It earned her even more fans.

“She’s a very valuable Canadian,” says Mark Jaccard, an energy policy expert at Simon Fraser University. “Tzeporah is what I think of as an academic-style advocate, which is rare.”

Entering corporate boardrooms armed with scientific data and backstopped by the threat of boycotts, Berman and colleagues have worked with some of the largest companies to ensure their paper and wood product purchases are sustainable. These efforts have helped change the way forestry is done, not only in B.C. but also across Canada, resulting in the protection of millions of hectares of old-growth forest.

For her steadfast dedication to protecting the environment, in 2013 Berman was awarded an honorary doctorate of law from the University of British Columbia. UBC’s Sally Thorne said at the time that Berman was being honoured for her leadership “in shifting activism into an active and constructive engagement with leaders in industry.”

Since then, Berman has worked as a “consultant activist” for environmental groups and First Nations, advising on climate and energy issues. In 2015, the B.C. government asked for her help on creating a new climate policy, 20 years

after another B.C. government had publicly called her an enemy of the state. Then, in 2016, the Alberta government appointed her co-chair of the Oil Sands Advisory Group to design a climate plan for the oil sands.

That controversial appointment made her the target of violent threats. She had experienced such hostility and more as a young anti-logging protestor 25 years earlier. Once again, she would not be deterred. After leaving the Oil Sands Advisory Group in 2017, Berman has been concentrating all her energies on opposing the Trans Mountain pipeline. Again, not without controversy.

For those who have not been following the news, earlier this year the federal government bought the pipeline from its Texas-based owner, Kinder Morgan, spending \$4.5

billion to buy it and other related infrastructure to ensure the pipeline expansion is completed. The original Trans Mountain pipeline had been built in 1953. Its current capacity is 300,000 barrels a day. The expansion would allow the system to send 890,000 barrels of different types of oil products from Edmonton to Burnaby, B.C., a day. The government thinks this is a good thing. Speaking to the CBC in

June, Finance Minister Bill Morneau called the purchase an investment in Canada’s future, saying the pipeline will preserve jobs, reassure investors and get Canada’s resources to world markets.

But Berman doesn’t think so. She claims that the proposed pipeline tramples on Indigenous land rights and poses a concern to the environment. It also represents a betrayal by government, she says. The proposed pipeline would pump oil sands bitumen to ocean-going tankers on the B.C. coast, risking possibly irreparable damage. Berman is not willing to let that happen without a fight. It’s not mosquitoes she is swatting away this time. It’s the politicians.

“The system is broken,” she said as we concluded our catch-up call. “This is the decisive decade to really take action on climate change to keep our kids and grandchildren from living in world where they might have to scramble to survive.” ●

(With reporting and contributions from Deirdre Kelly)

York encouraged me to get out into the world

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEFT, COURTESY OF TZEPORAH BERMAN; RIGHT, BY KRIS KRUG

Giving

FRIENDS & PHILANTHROPY

Building for Success

Philanthropists Rob and Cheryl McEwen
endow a new research centre at Schulich

BY SHARON ASCHAIK

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH, education and thought leadership at York University will take a major step forward with the opening this fall of the Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building at the Schulich School of Business.

Designed by Baird Sampson Neuert Architects as one of the most environmentally sustainable academic buildings in North America, the new 67,000-square-foot structure will serve as a dedicated learning space for graduate education, administrative operations and research projects conducted between faculty members, students and industry partners.

The cornerstone of Schulich's Leading Change fundraising and alumni engagement campaign, the \$50-million building received considerable

support from Rob and Cheryl McEwen, accomplished entrepreneurs and philanthropists who provided an \$8-million donation – one of the largest gifts ever received by the school. To date, close to \$25 million has been donated by alumni and friends towards the building. The project is also benefiting from a \$15-million investment by the federal government through its Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund.

“We are delighted to support what Schulich Dean Dezső J. Horváth sees as the next transformative area for growth and leadership in business,” says Rob McEwen, Chair and chief owner of McEwen Mining Inc., and a former Schulich Graduate Business Council president who graduated with an MBA in 1978. He serves as one of seven co-chairs of Schulich's Leading Change campaign and sits on the Dean's Advisory Council.

“We're aiming,” McEwen emphasizes, “to make the building a centre for innovative thinking and equip graduates with the necessary skills to compete and build in the global economy.”

Adds Cheryl McEwen, founder of Make My Day Foods and vice-chair of the Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation's Board of Directors, “We want to demonstrate that in Canada really great things are happening in education. Schulich is already an international leader in business education, and this project builds on that strength.”

LOCATED NEXT to the Seymour Schulich Building on York's Keele Campus, the Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building will house four interconnecting research and academic facilities.

Among them is the future Centre of Excellence in Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence, designed to become a hotbed of industry outreach, industry and academic collaboration, research and practical teaching in business analytics and artificial intelligence. Part of the centre's footprint on the second floor includes the 800-square-foot Deloitte Cognitive Analytics and Visualization Lab, offering a leading-edge and purpose-built space for exploring predictive analytics, natural language processing, machine learning, analytics design and visualization, and data-based storytelling.

“Schulich was the first school to develop a master's degree in business analytics, and the visualization lab will build on it by allowing for presenting complex data sets in graphic form,” says Dean Horváth. “This will make it easier for businesses to use the resulting insights to gain a competitive advantage.”

Also to be located on the building's second floor is the Centre for Global Enterprise, mandated to help small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) expand their operations into international markets and develop the next generation of global entrepreneurs and SMEs. Up one level, visitors will find the Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business, a globally eminent leader

in creating and disseminating new knowledge about the social, ethical, environmental and political responsibilities of business. Sharing the third floor is the Brookfield Centre in Real Estate and Infrastructure, the world's first centre dedicated to real estate and infrastructure education and teaching, experiential learning, research and industry outreach.

In addition to research labs, breakout rooms and other academic spaces, the Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building will promote community and well-being with a wellness centre, multiple lounges, a café, a landscaped courtyard, thoughtfully chosen artwork and ample natural light.

It will also feature extensive green roofs, a rainwater recapturing system, radiant floor heating and cooling, low-energy LED lighting, water-efficient fixtures and a solar chimney that will support natural ventilation. These sustainability minded details will help push the building towards obtaining LEED Gold certification, one of the highest green building ratings worldwide.

“This is not going to be just a building, it will symbolize what's possible,” says Schulich Professor James McKellar, an architect who oversaw the building's design and construction.

“The new space will help foster a culture that will allow Schulich to undertake pioneering research that can make a difference to industry and government. I think it will be an inspiring space to study and work.” ●

Alumni



I Can Do That

How a postie delivered on the promise of higher education

BY DEIRDRE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

NANCY SULLIVAN WENT FROM WORKING as a letter carrier for Canada Post to overseeing the regulatory compliance of an international bank – and all because York University gave her a chance at a post-secondary school education.

“I am the first person in my family to go to university,” says this *fiftysomething* Cinderella of Bay Street who comes from a blue-collar family. “It wasn’t something I was knowledgeable about,” she continues, “and, for a long time, I didn’t even know if I could go.”

But not only did Sullivan go to university – snagging three degrees (and having a baby in between) as a mature student – she eventually rose to the top of her combined legal/banking profession to become chief compliance officer and head of regulatory compliance at HSBC Bank Canada. “I do consider the function I built at HSBC to have been one of my biggest accomplishments,” Sullivan says, patting herself on the back. “I was able to hire across a broad range because of the breadth and diversity of experience I personally had been exposed to.”

What she had early on been exposed to forms the focus of a conversation that takes place at Toronto’s sprawling Yorkdale Shopping Centre, nestled alongside Highway 401 and Allen Road, and located near the working-class neighbourhood where Sullivan grew up. Sullivan has returned to her old stomping grounds on a recent afternoon for a visit, and while sipping on a \$3 coffee at the swishly renovated mall’s new open-concept Starbucks, modernist lighting dangling overhead, she marvels at how upscale the place has become. The aisles are lined with designer boutiques. The floors glisten with marble. It’s a far cry from the discount Kresge’s store that occupied Yorkdale when she was a girl.

“It’s completely transformed,” Sullivan says, her low-key voice barely heard above the din of the shopping crowd. “It’s not at all as I knew it.” Then again, everything from her past has changed, including the person she once was.

The suburban mall had once served Sullivan as a shortcut to Downsview Secondary School from where she had graduated in the 1980s after completing Grade 12, clutching only the vaguest of ambitions. “I didn’t know then what I would do,” she says, “I just knew I wanted to do something.”

Initially, that something involved taking a job with Canada Post, where, as a bit of a homebody, Sullivan delivered the mail to residences on her own turf. She also

worked part-time in a local real estate sales office, her passion for property likely stemming from delivering the mail to a great many local houses. “Real estate,” she readily reveals, “was always my first love.”

Certainly, the realtor’s office where she worked gave her a boost. She liked the people, the milieu, the excitement of closing a deal. She was a fast learner, absorbing like a sponge the backroom secrets of the trade. Encouraged, she decided to go back to school to get a professional certificate in real estate. Not wanting to jeopardize the job security she had earned at Canada Post, Sullivan applied as a mature part-time student at Atkinson College, York University’s late, great experiment in adult education whose doors closed in 2009. It continues today as the Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students, an advocacy body on behalf of mature students.

“I felt Atkinson was well-suited to my real estate interests at the time,” says Sullivan, who pursued courses for the certificate over a three-year period. “It really taught me a lot about how business is structured, particularly where finance comes in. I really didn’t know anything about how business worked before that. It was a whole different world.”

Sullivan grew increasingly comfortable in it, and when a friend from the University one day told her she could make extra cash on the side while working at Canada Post by serving as a proctor at exams, she didn’t

I didn’t know then what I would do. I just knew I wanted to do something



hesitate. It was the hourly wage job that helped her get that prestigious career. One day, while monitoring the exams, Sullivan turned one over to glance at the questions. They were about the law, a subject for which Sullivan at that time had no prior training. But that didn’t faze her. “I am looking at them and I thought to myself, ‘I could do this,’” she says. And she was right.

Motivated, Sullivan wrote the next two sets of LSATs, applied to law school and was accepted. In 1998, she quit the post office and enrolled at York’s Osgoode Hall Law School where she remained three years until graduating with a doctor of jurisprudence degree in 2001. Sullivan articulated at DelZotto, Zorzi LLP, a commercial real estate firm in Toronto, where she quickly rediscovered her love for the business. It’s at that point she decided to return to York once again to get an MBA from the Schulich School of Business, which she obtained in 2005.

After graduating, she took a job with a Florida-based mortgage finance company in the years immediately preceding the subprime mortgage crisis that plunged the U.S. banking system into turmoil from 2007-09.

It wasn’t her best move. “All that education,” Sullivan comments dryly, “didn’t teach me how to read the writing on the wall.”

But it did teach her resilience.

From subprime mortgage financing, Sullivan moved next to GMAC, the financial arm of General Motors, where she helped launch an online bank after being hired to do compliance, which involves putting processes and systems in place to ensure a bank complies with the law. A job with JPMorgan Chase & Co., first as a compliance officer and then as a legal counsel heading up the legal department for the New York bank’s Toronto branch, followed next.

HSBC recruited her from there in 2015, giving her a staff of 100 and a \$24-million budget with which to oversee fraud risk management for the 20 countries in which the global bank is located. Sullivan remained with the company until January of this year when a restructuring prompted her departure. Today, she works for QuadReal Property Group, a Canadian real estate investment, development and management company based in Vancouver, as head of risk and compliance management, a job she says she wouldn’t have if not for York pushing her forward, towards the career of her dreams.

“I got so much out of my time at the University. It made me reflect differently on things,” Sullivan beams. “It made me realize that you should never underestimate what you can accomplish.” ●

Where are you going next?

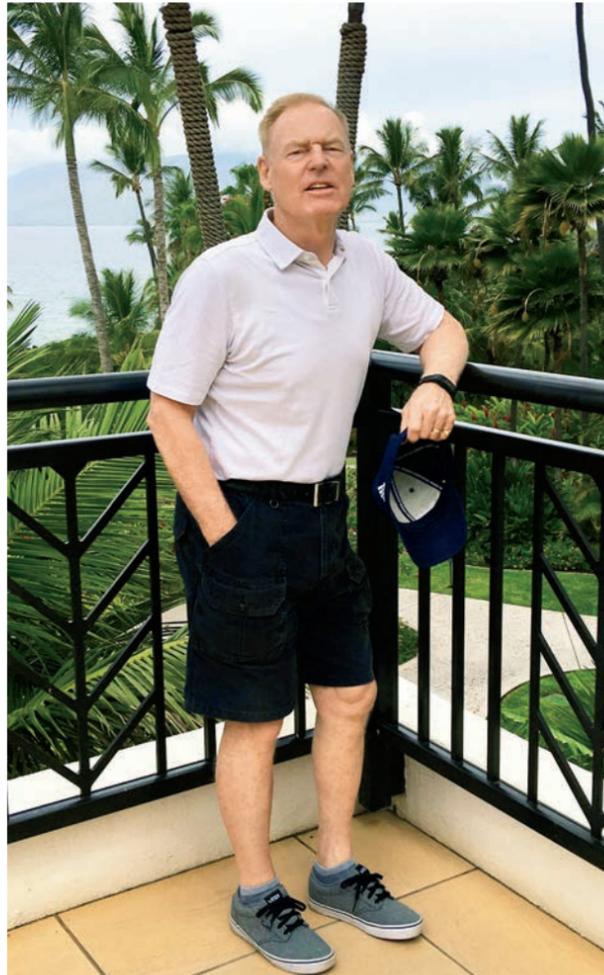
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Coastal Iberia: a voyage from Barcelona to Lisbon
Fall 2019

Classes

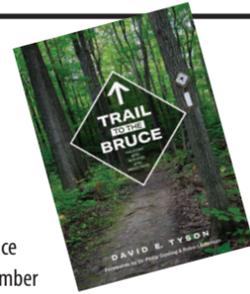


MITCHELL, JAMES (BA '72, BEd '91)

Before retiring, James was an elementary school principal and a vice-principal of adult and continuing education with the York Catholic District School Board. In 2009, he co-authored the CARS Education Beginner Driver Education Curriculum, a Ministry of Transportation-approved driver's education course used in over 110 driving schools across Ontario. Married to **ARLENE MABLY** (BA '75), James is a father of three successful, hard-working daughters and a proud grandfather to three grandchildren. Hawaii is a favourite travel destination.

1967

TYSON, DAVID
(BA Glendon, BA Hons. '80)
Actively involved with the Bruce Trail for over 25 years, in December 2017 David published *Trail to the Bruce: The Story of the Building of the Bruce Trail*, which follows the history of the trail from its inception in the 1960s through to its 50th anniversary. The book is available on brucetrail.org, the trail's official website.



1975

ROUSSEAU, ANDRÉ
(BA Glendon)
André is currently a senior partner at Lapointe Rosenstein Marchand Melançon in Montreal – one of the leading independent law firms in Quebec, specializing in banking, construction law and commercial litigation. André practices in civil litigation, collection matters, bankruptcy/insolvency and restructuring, real estate law and construction law.

1982

BOWAL, PETER
(LLB)
A law professor at the University of Calgary since 1991, Peter took his sabbatical leave in 2018 at Bond University in Gold Coast, Australia. He and his wife, Irene, have five children.

SALMON, BLAISE
(BA, BA Hons. '83 Glendon)
Since graduating, Blaise relocated to

Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, where he is married with four children – two boys and two girls. In 2017, his spouse, Sonia Furstenau, was elected to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia as the first female Green Party member.

ZENDEL, LILIE
(BFA)
Lilie is the newly minted (and first) executive director of the Shoe Project, a unique national initiative incubated at the Bata Shoe Museum by Canadian author Katherine Govier in 2011. Since its founding seven years ago, the Shoe Project has organized writing and performance workshops where immigrant women tell the stories of their arrival in Canada – through a pair of shoes. They are coached by veteran Canadian writers and theatre professionals. Says Lilie, "Shoes accompany us on all our journeys. They say who we are, where we came from and where we are going. Writing shoe memoirs gives participants a voice and helps them to be heard in the Canadian mainstream."



ERIC ALPER (BA '95)

1983

SHOOM, PERRY
(BBA, MBA '85 Schulich)
After nearly 15 years in Boston, Perry returned to Toronto in 2011 and shortly after created *Toronto Condo News*, where he continues to serve as publisher. *Toronto Condo News* is now a widely read magazine on condo living and management in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area, reaching an estimated 1,000 buildings.

1995

ALPER, ERIC
(BA)
Eric recently started his own PR firm

after being the director of media relations and label relations for eOne Music Canada for the past 18 years. He is the host of "That Eric Alper's Show," heard several times a week on SiriusXM. He is the go-to guy for music news with all the networks, and has been named to *Billboard Magazine*, *Paste Magazine* and the *National Post's* "best on social media" lists. He has over a million followers on social media, a place his wife is so thankful for. Past and current clients include Bob Geldof, Judy Collins, Sue Foley, Randy Bachman, the Cult, Merle Haggard, John Prine, Ringo Starr, Slash, the Wiggles, Bush, Steve Earle, Snoop Dogg, the Smashing Pumpkins, Ray Charles, Little Steven, Sinéad O'Connor and Sesame Street, among hundreds of others over his 20 years in the music industry.

1997

CIANCIULLI, FRANK
(BA)
Frank is a self-described serial entrepreneur and founder of the Wish Group, a multi-award-winning Canadian business incubator headquartered in Mississauga, Ont. The recipient of numerous awards, including Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year, Canada's Top 40 Under 40 and York University's prestigious Bryden Alumni

Award, Frank has been on the Dean's Advisory Board of York University since 2007 and is active in promoting business education at the university level through workshops and seminars.

1999

LONGCHAMPS, DENIS
(BA Hons.)
After almost 20 years working in the floral industry, Denis earned a PhD in

RIVIETZ, DANYAH (BA '00, BA '17)

Danyah currently works at York University, assisting students, staff and faculty as the client service and program support representative in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. When not on the job at York, she is also a competitive masters CrossFit athlete and coach at All In One CrossFit in Toronto and is currently ranked in the 95th percentile worldwide. She coaches others and trains herself for the CrossFit Open – a worldwide competition – as well as for several local competitions.



Classes

art history from Concordia in 2009 and soon after moved to St. John's to work at The Rooms art gallery as manager of exhibitions and publications. He returned to Ontario to become artistic director and chief curator at the Art Gallery of Burlington in 2013. He has since curated over 45 exhibitions, including *Naked Craft*, which toured in Canada and Scotland from 2016-17. This summer, Denis began his new role as executive director at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, Ont.

2005

LU, WENDY
(BFA)

Since graduating from York University, Wendy has continued to pursue a career in the arts using various mediums: large-scale oil and acrylic paintings, drawings, mixed media, watercolour, gouache, collage, sculpture, printmaking, illustration and multimedia. In 2017, she exhibited her

acrylic paintings at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto's Canada 150 Art and Heritage Connection Exhibition and the Peoples Church Mully Children's Family Canada Fund-raiser. A hard-of-hearing artist with an Advanced Bionics cochlear implant in her right ear, Wendy had her nine framed artworks recently displayed at the Workman Arts 17th Annual Being Scene Exhibition at the Gladstone Hotel.

2009

MCLEOD, PHILESTENA
(BA)

Philestena is the owner and operations manager at Family and Youth Mental Health Resource Centre located in North York, Ont. The centre provides access to resources for individuals dealing with mental health challenges and living in emerging and developing communities.

2010

DAMJI, ALYSHA
(BA)

As part of the Days for Girls Canada campaign, a global non-profit with a goal of destigmatizing menstruation and equipping every woman and girl with ready access to feminine hygiene products within the next five years, Alysha and her team recently created and distributed 150 reusable feminine hygiene packages to rescue homes,

slums and schools in India for girls aged 11 to 18. Their efforts were featured on CBC as well as in the *Waterloo Chronicle* and the *Waterloo Region Record*. Alysha is also a teacher and a board member on a program called Peace by PEACE, which is a conflict resolution and community-building program for students in and around the Greater Toronto Area.

FOURNIER-RUGGLES, LYNN
(MPPAL)

Lynn recently published the fourth edition of *Canadian Immigration and Refugee Law for Legal Professionals* (Edmond Publishing, 2018), which presents the complexities of the principles and processes of immigration, refugee and citizenship law in an approachable, user-friendly format. Lynn completed the first edition of the textbook while enrolled at York University. The book is now widely used throughout Canadian colleges and universities, and by students preparing to write the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council Full Skills Exam. In 2016, the textbook served as the foundation for a professional edition – *Canadian Immigration and Refugee Law: A Practitioner's Handbook*.

2011

JEGANATHAN, JEYRAMESH
(BA)

After graduating from York University with a degree in human rights and equity studies and thinking to pursue a career as a criminal defence Crown attorney, Jeyramesh took a different direction when he discovered a passion for real estate and construction.

Jeyramesh is now a full-time real estate and mortgage agent and is actively pursuing a career as a small-size residential and commercial builder. He hopes to one day get back into the legal field, but in the meantime would like to start a charity that brings awareness to mental health issues and provides financial literacy training for poverty-stricken youth and seniors living on their own.

KHARLAMOVA, ARINA
(BA Hons.)

Arina used her love of English and her communications experience to launch Wild Geese Creative Co. in 2018 – a conversion copywriting company that works with women's businesses and cannabis brands. A published poet and spoken word artist, in 2015 Arina fulfilled a lifelong dream of merging poetry with music when she performed at a TEDx event.

2013

AJETUNMOBI, TAIWO
(BA Hons. McLaughlin)

Three years after graduation, Taiwo landed a job in his field working for the federal government at Correctional Service Canada (CSC). Hired in 2016 as a federal correctional officer, six months later Taiwo moved into the role of federal parole officer. In his role, he assesses an offender's behaviour, accountability, motivation and potential risk to society, and makes recommendations to the Parole Board of Canada and/or the CSC Review Board in regards to early conditional release.

2014

BHATIA, VIKRAM
(MBA Schulich)

A technologist by profession, Vikram has been working in the social media space for over 10 years, building products that aim to enhance online interactive experiences. In 2018, he launched the social networking application PB&J, which connects people through common food choices. Since its release, the app has been featured in many leading Toronto dailies and media outlets. The app continues to grow globally, helping users and restaurants to facilitate experiences that start by bringing people and the food they love together.



RAWANA, MICHELLE (BA '08)

After graduating, Michelle pursued a graduate certificate in alternative dispute resolution, mediation and negotiation from York. She worked at a boutique law firm for a number of years before moving to Florida to attend law school with the long-term objective of owning her own firm. Michelle has since appeared in an episode of a popular financial reality television show on Slice and has worked as a freelance writer for many media outlets, including the *Toronto Star* and the *Markham and Stouffville Review* newspapers.

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Flashback

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CANADIAN FLYING ACE WILF CURTIS set a new target for himself when in 1957 he, and a handful of YMCA associates committed to the fostering of adult education, came up with the idea of creating a new university in his adopted city of Toronto. Having proven his mettle by shooting down 13 enemy aircraft during the First World War and running the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as chief of staff in the years immediately following the Second World War, Curtis encountered little resistance in getting his lofty project off the ground. His first line of attack lay in persuading Ontario premier Les Frost and fellow RCAF commander Eric Phillips, then Chair of the University of Toronto's Board of Directors, to let him take over Glendon Campus as the new non-denominational institution's primary location. Once he secured the property, Curtis then recruited Murray Ross, also at U of T at the time, to be its inaugural president. York University got lift-off when Ontario's lieutenant-governor, John Keiller MacKay, bestowed royal assent on its founding on March 26, 1959. Some 18 months later, Curtis was sworn in as the University's first chancellor at a jubilant installation ceremony held under blue skies on the grounds of the original Glendon College location on Bayview Avenue. The Canadian Aviation Hall of Famer, Order of Canada recipient and commander of the Order of the British Empire held that position until 1968, the year York conferred on him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his pioneering efforts to expand the reach of higher education in his native land. Curtis, who died in 1977, was there at takeoff. He glided the University towards early success. On the eve of what in 2019 will be York's 60th anniversary, we salute him. A hero to all who pass through York's doors. ●



A LEGACY OF GOODWILL

"Receiving a bursary at York continually inspires me to support other people. As an educator, I want to instill that philosophy into my students and my son."

As a student at York University, Shawnette Bankasingh (BA '14, BEd '15, BA '17) received the George Tatham Bursary from a bequest. Now as a teacher in the Toronto District School Board, she gives back by providing her students in Jane-Finch with extra resources. This is the impact of legacy giving.

To learn more about leaving a gift to York University in your will, contact Marisa Barlas at 416-650-8221 or legacy@yorku.ca.

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