

# The Ubyyssey Collection

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SCOTT DOUGLAS JACOBSEN

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## Contents

I	Acknowledgements.....	4
i	AMS Primer: VP External Bahareh Jokar .....	5
ii	AMS to release mobile app in place of student handbook.....	7
iii	UBC student uses satellite technology in elephant conservation effort.....	9
iv	RCMP Wreck Beach patrols more friendly than expected.....	11
v	Construction setbacks delay opening of The Pit and The Perch in the new SUB .	13
vi	UBC Theatre and Opera merger promises a triumphant 2014/2015 season.....	16
vii	UBC Law student Braden Lauer competing to be Canada’s smartest person .....	19
viii	Examining the psychology behind Black Friday and Boxing Day.....	21
ix	Cardiovascular disease researchers developing anti-aging skin treatment .....	24
x	Province commissions book commemorating history of Chinese Canadians .....	27
xi	Longterm effects of low oil prices uncertain, says Sauder prof .....	29
xii	Researchers launch SPIDER telescope to study universe expansion .....	32
xiii	Astronomy professors look to rare stars for answers on space-time warp .....	34
xiv	Philosophy professor awarded international research grant to study responsibility and morality .....	37
xv	Vancouver groups trying to create transition program for sex workers .....	39
xvi	Researchers looking into the reality of ‘chemo brain’ .....	42
xvii	F-Word Conference aims to increase dialogue on feminism.....	44
xviii	Survey examines how to expand campus mental health services.....	46
II	License and Copyright .....	48

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Scott

## **AMS Primer: VP External Bahareh Jokar**

**September 17, 1960, 1:57pm PDT**

Bahareh Jokar is working to make transportation easier and more accessible to students.

As the current VP External, Jokar's job includes dealing with the political aspects and outreach of the AMS.

When asked about her new duties and responsibilities, Jokar said the the majority of her work will focus on thematic issues that the AMS will continue to focus on throughout the year.

“Those issues include addressing student needs on a provincial level, public transportation, and the U-Pass program,” said Jokar.

Jokar also manages aspects of government relations to post-secondary students. Some of these services include childcare, education, immigration, financial aid and transportation.

Other initiatives include the OutreachAMS, the Alliance of B.C. Students and the Financial Aid/Student Debt Advocacy.

But in what is perhaps her biggest project of the year, Jokar will continue working towards making the transition from the U-Pass to the Compass Card.

“For me, specifically this term, I am focusing on the upcoming municipal election, the potential public transit referendum,” said Jokar.

Jokar said that she will be looking at the Broadway corridor and the mayor's council proposal to have a Broadway line that extends beyond Arbutus and out to UBC.

According to Jokar, this will include “working with UBC administration and the City of Vancouver to push to have the line extend out to UBC.”

During her time as VP External, Jokar hopes to divide her time efficiently between all these different commitments. A few of these commitments include chairing Get-On-Board B.C., a coalition of stakeholders advocating for greater funding for public transit, and the Alliance of B.C. Students.

Through her participation in many different projects and initiatives, Jokar hopes to address some of the overarching concerns of UBC students.

“I see large trends, which seep into various issues that we are trying to address like public transportation, like student issue reform around accessibility and affordability,” said Jokar. At the same time, Jokar feels that addressing these concerns comes down to learning more about the core issues of civic process and student engagement.

“If we put in more today, future AMS members will be able to reap the benefits of uniting and engaging in the process to push for student issues, and making our communities a better place,” said Jokar.

## **AMS to release mobile app in place of student handbook**

**July 8, 2014, 6:45pm PDT**

The AMS will be releasing a mobile app for the fall 2014 semester.

The app will replace the AMS student handbook, including features intended to connect UBC students to their campus community and student society.

The AMS has been working in coordination with the app production company OohLaLa to manufacture the application. AMS Council approved the app with a budget of about \$1,800 per month over the course of two years.

Core features of the application will include AMS club, service and business listings and a calendar of AMS events.

According to AMS communications manager, Abby Blinch, “all [AMS] clubs are getting access to put all of their information on the background of their club, who their executives are and any events they are having.”

Like the paper handbook, the app will also feature deals and coupons for AMS businesses. Virtual tours of campus hotspots for various activities will also be featured in the app, intended to help students find the best places to study, hang out and exercise, among other things.

According to Blinch, students will also be able to tour the new AMS Student Nest, and navigate major sections of the building with the app.

To help new students through their first week, the app will also include a to-do list for settling in, including information such as how to navigate campus.

Because of this, the AMS hopes to have the app ready to use in time for orientations.

According to Blinch, it is planned to be available for download by mid-August.

## **UBC student uses satellite technology in elephant conservation effort**

**August 19, 2014, 12:41pm PDT**

UBC PhD candidate Jake Wall is tracking elephants with the hopes of improving conservation

UBC PhD candidate Jake Wall has adapted satellite tracking technology to help protect endangered African elephants.

Wall's research looks into elephant needs of food, space, connectivity with the environment, security and water.

According to Wall, his research, and that of the Save the Elephants organization which he works with in Kenya “focuses on the movement ecology of elephants — their spatial distribution, range and habitat.”

The researchers attach satellite tracking collars around the necks of the elephants. Wall's tracking system monitors the animals through live data feeds that detect changes in their behavioural patterns.

The data funnels through Google Earth into a network of Kenyan and South African conservation and management partners.

“We hope this technology will help deter poachers because they know we are monitoring these elephants closely,” Wall said.

The data feeds can quickly alert rangers of animals in danger through changes in their daily patterns of movement.

According to Wall, upgrading to lighter and more efficient tracking equipment could improve coordination with rangers for conservation efforts.

For example, the use of heart monitors could provide more detailed information on tracked animals' health.

According to a study by the Wildlife Conservation Society, 65 per cent of Central Africa's forest elephants died between 2002 and 2013.

"It's really important for the world to know what's happening to elephants right now," said Wall. "It's tragic that many people in this world don't see the inherent value of keeping a wild elephant alive versus killing it for its tusks."

Wall hopes to continue his animal conservation efforts outside of Africa.

"I'm hoping we can start to work with other researchers and adapt [the tracking technology] to monitor blue whales swimming in shipping lanes, or polar bears walking into Churchill, Manitoba," he said. "Or we could know right away when migrating birds break a virtual 'geofence' boundary and fly near wind turbines."

## **RCMP Wreck Beach patrols more friendly than expected**

**August 25, 2014, 11:13pm PDT**

The RCMP has developed a somewhat friendlier relationship than many anticipated with the frequenters of Wreck Beach.

Judy Williams Chairperson of the Wreck Beach Preservation Society, wasn't pleased when she heard about plans for a police tent on the beach, which she says is the safest beach in B.C.

"I have spent the last 45 years advocating for Wreck Beach as accepting, tolerant and loving," said Williams. "We did not need that kind of negative publicity from an officer new to the beach intent on cleaning it up."

Sgt. Drew Grainger of the UBC RCMP said the police tent was put in place mainly to have officers on hand in case they were needed on the beach.

"UBC is a small detachment," said Grainger. "We only have two or three members patrolling at any given time of the day."

"The tent was essentially a thing of shade for our officers," said Grainger. "Our strategy down here was to enhance public safety, mitigate the need for call service for some of our officers up top."

According to Grainger, this was a strategy to foster mutual understanding about what is responsible and respectful behaviour.

Williams, however, compared the frequent visitors of Wreck Beach to a family that can get by without the additional police presence.

“Like all families, we have our squabbles, but when push comes to shove, we are there for one another,” said Williams.

Williams further described the more relaxed stance of the police, even joining in some of the beach activities activities such as the Bare Buns Run on Aug. 10.

“At some point, I would imagine we will have a more tolerant attitude,” said Williams.

Still, Grainger said that the RCMP will continue to focus on preventing the overconsumption of alcohol and selling of illegal drugs on the beach.

## **Construction setbacks delay opening of The Pit and The Perch in the new SUB**

**September 1, 2014, 12:44pm PDT**

Delays in the construction of The Pit and The Perch are not expected to affect the general opening of the new SUB.

Several setbacks in the construction of The Pit and The Perch may cause the businesses to open later than expected.

“It is a little bit different for each of the outlets,” said Ava Nasiri, AMS VP admin. “The reason The Perch is lagging behind a bit is because we had some foundational changes that occurred in February.”

Nasiri said the construction workers needed to raise the ground of the spaces to become level, which caused the delays in the building process. Both the Perch and The Pit are expected to open within a few weeks of the opening of the new SUB in January 2015. The Perch will open sooner as construction of The Pit must stop for a week if the space is to be used for the opening ceremonies celebrations.

“As a student, it is unfortunate and disappointing, obviously, that The Pit and The Perch are delayed, but on large student projects like the Student Nest ... it is something that can be foreseen,” said Jenna Omassi, a fourth-year international relations and religious studies student and Arts Undergraduate Society president.

Still, Omassi feels satisfied by the efforts of the AMS to make sure the new SUB opens on schedule.

“The fact that the AMS is planning for a way to use the SUB for the first week back will be important from a student perspective,” said Omassi.

Nasiri considered the construction’s long-term benefits in addition to the short-term costs.

“It was in the best interest of students to make that decision now rather than four years from now,” said Nasiri.

According to Nasiri, the decision to open these spaces later comes from balancing the provision of a quality space for the entire lifespan of the building.

“We are really well-aware and understand this is student money,” said Nasiri.

As such, Nasiri notes the acute awareness of cautious, informed spending of student money while balancing the need for keeping student excitement about the new space.

According to Nasiri, they have looked into a conditional operating license for the first week of second term for The Pit but the exact details regarding the license are still unclear.

The Perch and The Pit construction delays will not affect the rest of the building, which is scheduled to open January 5.

UPDATE: An earlier version of this article said that The Perch was expected to open within a few weeks of the opening of the new SUB while The Pit had no set opening date. In fact,

both student spaces are scheduled to be open within a few weeks of the opening of the new SUB. The article has been updated to reflect this fact.

## UBC Theatre and Opera merger promises a triumphant 2014/2015 season

September 1, 2014, 5:24pm PDT

Last year's production of *Ubu Roi* was a hit. A new fall season, a merger of UBC Theatre and Opera productions and a suite of new pieces for the upcoming 2014/2015 season. Does this sound exciting? It better. UBC Theatre and Opera productions have a fantastic lineup in a first-ever union.

For 2014/2015 season, productions begin with Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and work through *Bartered Bride*, *Naked Cinema*, *The Bacchae 2.1*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Triumph of Love*, *Choir Practice*, ending with *La Traviata*. With themes of freedom, triumphant women and love, the common threads tie the pieces together into a beautiful web. Nancy Hermiston is directing four pieces: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Bartered Bride*, *Choir Practice* and *La Traviata*. Two of the productions are directed by UBC MFA candidates: *The Bacchae 2.1*, directed by Denis Gupa, and *The Triumph of Love*, directed by Barbara Tomas.

Deb Pickman, communications and marketing manager for the UBC theatre and film department, and Hermiston feel thrilled with the upcoming productions.

In *Twelfth Night*, escapades ensue of unrequited love and sexual confusions. "It's been set to take place in modern day in New Orleans during Mardi Gras," said Pickman. "It's a romantic comedy."

*Bartered Bride* sets itself in the springtime of a Bohemian village. Much of the story revolves around arranged and unarranged love. Pickman recommends this for opera first-timers.

*Naked Cinema* features a work of art inspired by *DOGMA 95 Manifesto* by Lars von Trier. In this original feature length film, alumni and award winning filmmakers Tom Scholte and Bruce Sweeney provide something “raw, naked, and uncompromising,” according to critics.

The next piece of the season, *The Bacchae 2.1*, relates to the Euripidean celebration of the Greek god, Dionysus, with works by Klaus Theweleit’s *Male Fantasies*, *Lesbian Herstory Archives* by Joan Nestle, and *The S.C.U.M. Manifesto* of Valerie Solanas. Amidst this, it is “injecting this ritualistic Philipino dance,” said Pickman.

“[*The Marriage of Figaro* is] a scheming, romantic intrigue. It is considered one of Mozart’s greatest operas ever written,” said Pickman. Servants Suzanna and Figaro find themselves in an imbroglio involving everyone attempting to save two marriages.

Next in the season, *The Triumph of Love*, originally written by Pierre Marivaux in the 18th century. This romantic comedy deals with the love of Leonide, a brilliant princess, for Agis, the rightful heir to the kingdom.

*Choir Practice* is a comic opera in one act. It is an hour of slapstick comedy and innuendos following a conductor failing to conduct with ensuing vocal duels. “It takes people back to an opera ensemble in 1985,” said Pickman.

The season’s finale, *La Traviata*, presents a doomed love tale between Violetta, the courtesan, and a handsome man, Alfredo. It contains love, deceit, heartbreak and flourishing parties.

“All of these operas are first-timer friendly because they are very engaging popular operas, comedies, and tragedy in one case,” said Pickman.

Pickman said the merger will benefit both the UBC Theatre and Opera.

“There is this area of the campus that is a hotbed for art and creativity,” said Pickman. “It’s also a place where some of the world’s most treasured artists come to exhibit.”

*The first show of the 2014/2015 season, Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night, premieres on September 24 and runs from September 25 to October 11 in the Frederic Wood Theatre*

## UBC Law student Braden Lauer competing to be Canada's smartest person

October 1, 2014, 5:27pm PDT

Braden Lauer is competing to be *Canada's Smartest Person*

UBC Law student Braden Lauer is vying for the title of the smartest person in Canada.

Hosted by Jessi Cruickshank and Jeff Douglas, *Canada's Smartest Person* is a CBC show that aims to get rid of the idea that you need a high IQ to be smart and has contestants compete against each other in a series of musical, physical, social, logical, visual and linguistic intelligence categories.

These six categorizations of intelligence derive from the Multiple Intelligences Theory of Professor Howard Gardner of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.

Lauer, who went to University of Alberta for his commerce degree and is now going into his second year at UBC Law, applied for *Canada's Smartest Person* on a whim in the middle of a downturn in studying for law examinations.

"I was in the middle of exams last semester," said Lauer. "The middle of first-year exams, which are considered the hell, so to speak, of Law school, is terrible. I saw a commercial on TV and was feeling down on myself."

As a result, Lauer decided it would be interesting to apply to the show and see if he would be selected.

“In a very sassy way, I filled out an application,” said Lauer. “From there forward, I went through a pretty long process until they called me to be 1 of 32.”

According to Lauer, the turning point of his audition came from his big smile.

The show has a total of 32 participants, with four of them going head-to-head each week. At the end of nine weeks, there will be a competition among the finalists, with the winner being announced in November.

While the show was filmed over the course of the summer, contestants are not allowed to comment on the results until the final episode is released.

Still, Lauer is confident that the show will prove to be both interesting and surprising in the weeks to come.

“Winning is in the cards for me,” said Lauer.

*CORRECTION: An earlier version of this article stated that the show has been filmed over the course of two days in August. It has actually been filmed over the course of the whole summer. The article has been updated to reflect this fact.*

## **Examining the psychology behind Black Friday and Boxing Day**

**November 30, 2014, 5:45pm PDT**

Sauder professor JoAndrea Hoegg studies the presence of mob mentality in shoppers.

A Sauder professor says that mob mentality is behind much of the pushing and shoving we see during shopping days such as Black Friday and Boxing Day.

JoAndrea Hoegg, UBC associate professor and Canada Research Chair in consumer behaviour, studies the science behind consumer shopping behaviours.

Hoegg's current research centres around prominent shopping days such as Black Friday, which has recently started gaining in popularity in Canada, and Boxing Day.

According to Hoegg, many shoppers get so caught up in finding the best deals that they do not think of what they are doing as mob psychology.

“When you have a large group of people together engaging in some behavior, you have something called deindividuation, which means they have a feeling of anonymity,” said Hoegg. “They feel less responsible for their own actions.”

Deindividuation creates a sense of energy in the crowd en masse. Individuals become more carefree about the consequences of their actions and can start engaging in aggressive behaviours.

“[The shoppers] start engaging in behaviours that they would not otherwise do,” said Hoegg.

“Of course, that can lead, in a shopping environment, to what you sometimes see on the news.”

At the same time, Hoegg said that popular media sources tend to show the more extreme cases of such behaviour. Still, the presence of large crowds also contributes to creating an environment where people feel like they have to push aside others for the best deal.

“If it was just a regular shopping day and not this large crowd, a normal human would not do this in such a large crowd,” said Hoegg. “That’s mob psychology.”

According to Hoegg, stores will often use such techniques to give off the appearance of the scarcity of their products. That way, people will be more likely to think that they need to rush off and buy a particular item before everyone else.

“Stores make it seem like the products that people may want to buy is scarce,” said Hoegg.

“There is a chance the product will run out. There is a sense of urgency.”

Hoegg said that while such shopping days can be fun for most people, they also create an environment where people’s competitiveness can come out in ways that are harmful.

“People want to be the one to get the product, get the deal and beat everyone else out,” said Hoegg. That, combined with so many people, can lead to this sort of more aggressive behaviour.”

*Correction: A previous version of this article said JoAndrea Hoegg studies mob psychology.*

*In fact, she studies consumer shopping behaviours. The Ubysey regrets the error.*

## **Cardiovascular disease researchers developing anti-aging skin treatment**

**January 4, 2015, 5:30pm PDT**

A UBC pathology researcher is using research from mice to create a potential anti-aging skin product.

UBC Pathology and Laboratory Medicine professor David Granville made a chance discovery that may lead to the creation of a drug to defy skin aging.

Granville researched the effects of Granzyme-B (GzmB) on atherosclerosis, an artery disease, and heart attacks. His research coincidentally found resistance to skin aging.

“Essentially, my research is focused on aging and blood vessel health in the context of atherosclerosis, which causes heart attacks and strokes,” said Granville. “As we aged mice, when this gene was knocked out, we were finding an unusually good benefit to the skin.”

According to Granville, skin with more GzmB looked older in the experimented upon mice, while skin with less of the enzyme looked younger.

“It is one of those exciting times as a basic scientist. Sometimes, this is ignored,” said Granville. “In research these days, there are these sort of serendipitous discoveries in different areas that were unexpected.”

Granville said that sunlight causes 80 to 90 per cent of aging in the skin.

“We wanted to study this in more detail because a study had come out showing that Granzyme-B could be induced by ultraviolet light in skin cells.”

Granville’s research team worked with experts in the biological application of engineering principles to develop a solar-simulated light box, using bulbs that mimic the ratios of ultraviolet radiation in sunlight.

“We exposed the mice for 20 weeks, just three times a week, to very low levels of sunlight,” Granville said. “They were exposed to three minutes of light. Temperature is all regulated, so [it] did not go up.”

“We looked at the skin. There was a marked difference in wrinkling that was evident on the mice with Granzyme-B compared to those without Granzyme-B,” Granville said.

He explained skin aging in further detail, pointing out that the skin’s collagen becomes “lost and disorganized,” and its quality becomes reduced.

According to Granville, many cosmetics simply throw collagen at the skin in hopes of restoration of the aged skin. He said this is ultimately ineffective.

“The body produces collagen and assembles it in a sort of basket-woven form, very similar to looking at a blanket. That requires other proteins as well. Obviously, things that would hold it together like the nails and brackets that would hold together a wall,” he said.

Granville's research may allow for the creation of a drug that could block the aging enzyme. He formed viDA Therapeutics, Inc. in 2008 to research and make such a product.

"We're excited about the fact that if we inhibit the Granzyme-B, we could inhibit this degradation and loss of organization of the collagen that holds the skin intact."

Granville said there are also important health implications of GzmB.

"With respect to people in long-term care facilities, I've been working with the wound-healing clinic at St. Paul's Hospital," Granville said. "We're hoping that by inhibiting this, and allowing, we might be able to increase the tensile strength of skin and prevent this skin tearing that occurs, plagues these patients in long-term care facilities."

Granville hopes his research will be used for benefits beyond better-looking skin.

"We're not hoping to become cosmetic experts," he said.

## Province commissions book commemorating history of Chinese Canadians

January 4, 2015, 5:37pm PDT

The province has commissioned a book that celebrates the achievements and contributions of Chinese Canadians to B.C.'s history.

The province of B.C. has set aside \$100,000 for a book that celebrates the achievements of eminent Chinese Canadians.

The book, which follows an official apology to the Chinese Canadian community from the province in May 2014, is meant to highlight underrepresented aspects of B.C.'s history and make amends for a number of racist policies that were implemented against Chinese Canadians in the past.

UBC history professor Henry Yu said that the publication of such a book is meant to provide a more comprehensive history of Chinese Canadians in B.C.

“The focus should obviously be, in the legacy, addressing a lot of the anti-Chinese legislation, and a lot of things were done to the Chinese in terms of racist legislation, exclusion, head tax,” said Yu.

Still, Yu said that the book is meant to also celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of Chinese Canadians to B.C.'s history rather than solely focus on the discrimination that they faced.

“There’s a long history of anti-Chinese legislation, discrimination, and racism, but there’s also this long, enduring, and very under-told story of what the Asian Canadians were doing in British Columbia,” said Yu.

As an example, Yu explained that from the time the British first came to B.C. in 1788 with the John Meares expedition, there were also many Chinese on the ship who helped build the fur trading fort in Nuuchahnulth territory and establish the B.C. that we know today — a fact that is commonly overlooked in history books.

According to Yu, the book and the project are highly important, as the history of B.C. that most people know today does not often focus on the broad spectrum of communities who lived here.

“We need a much more rounded common history,” said Yu. “For instance, the long history of relationships between Chinese Canadians and First Nations was often ignored because ‘pioneer histories’ of British Columbia usually focused on European migrants.”

The book will be approximately 150 pages long and bring to light interesting stories, photos and documents related to the history of notable British Columbians of Chinese descent. While the exact details of what the book will look like are still being established, Yu looks forward to seeing how it will present stories about Chinese Canadians as part of the larger history of B.C.

“We can create a ‘usable past,’ that we can help us live together moving forward,” said Yu.

“It’s not about just looking backward. It’s also about looking forward.

## **Longterm effects of low oil prices uncertain, says Sauder prof**

**January 4, 2015, 5:48pm PDT**

The price of oil in Canada is the lowest it's been in years.

The recent drop in oil and gas prices in Canada is shaping up to be part of a larger, worldwide trend.

Anming Zhang, a Sauder professor who focuses on transport economics and policy and industrial organization, said the major factors in the drop in oil prices have to do with global supply and demand.

According to Zhang, the recently decreased prices for oil in Canada come from the nose dive in the crude oil prices worldwide since 2014.

“In July 2014, the crude oil price reached around \$108 USD per barrel,” said Zhang. “If you look at today's price, it's \$53 per barrel. It is half of what he had a half-year ago. Canada will just follow that.”

Zhang also said that the world economic crises, including the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the 2011 European Debt Crisis, and the reduction in growth of the Chinese economy, could also all be attributed to the low oil prices.

“On the demand side, there's some slowing down in the world economy and trade, international trade, and the world GDP over the last few years,” said Zhang.

Zhang said that the drop of China's GDP from 10 per cent in the early 2000s to seven per cent now had its effect on the price of oil and gas.

“The demand side has been dropping,” said Zhang. “Naturally, economic activity is slowing down, and demand for oil has been going down as well.”

According to Zhang, there are a number of theories that try to predict the future economic consequences of the drop in oil prices. As another example, Zhang said that the price decrease could create problems for the Russian economy, which is heavily dependent on its oil and gas sector.

“60 per cent of the [Russian] government revenue is from the oil and natural gas activities,” said Zhang. “So this will put a lot of pressure on Russian economy.”

As the big drop in oil prices came quite unexpectedly for many Canadian customers and companies alike, the effects that the drop will have on longterm prices, including the fuel surcharges that plane companies currently charge passengers, are still uncertain.

“Essentially, the price of oil dropped too quickly,” said Zhang. “It's been a shock to the airlines, and they're wondering if the price might go up again soon. Things are still uncertain, so they're being cautious in case it's only a temporary drop.”

Still, Zhang also said that it is unlikely that plane companies will get rid of the fuel surcharges altogether, as the global demand for oil and gas is still disproportionate to the supply.

“The airlines will most likely decrease the surcharges – but not get rid of them altogether,” said Zhang. “That would only be if the price of oil stayed this low for a long time – which I doubt.

## **Researchers launch SPIDER telescope to study universe expansion**

**January 7, 2015, 5:06pm PDT**

UBC researchers have launched a telescope into space to study the origins of the Big Bang Theory.

Mark Halpern, a UBC professor of physics and astronomy, along with a team of researchers, is studying patterns of the early universe with a specialized airborne telescope.

Their SPIDER telescope will be searching for Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation (CMBR).

According to Halpern, “this is radiation from the early thermal glow of the plasma that filled the universe for the first few thousand years.”

The team’s primary goal is to study the primordial process known as inflation.

According to Halpern, the early universe expanded extraordinarily rapidly. Halpern says the math describing these phenomena would not produce a stable universe over billions of years, even the age of our universe at about 13.77 billion years. A variable is missing.

“What you would expect is, essentially instantly, the universe would fly apart and be empty, or re-collapse and vanish. By instantly, I mean a tiny, tiny fraction of a second,” said Halpern. “We’re missing part of the physics that makes the thing be stable for a really long time.”

To explain, Halpern suggested an analogy. If you were to roll a marble down the top of a downward sloped cylindrical surface such as a pipe, you would assume that it would veer to the side and fall off after a few centimetres.

“I push a marble down the top of the pipe, and a quarter of a mile later it’s still on top of the pipe, you’re going to say I’m missing something,” said Halpern, who said the research team draws this analogy with respect to the origin and growth of the universe and the missing variable.

SPIDER was launched to search for this variable.

“We’ve built, what we think, are the most sensitive telescopes in wavelength regime anyone has ever made. They can be so sensitive because they are up out of the atmosphere.” Halpern said.

The balloon-borne SPIDER telescope took 10 years to construct and will operate for 20 days over Antarctica. It operates with two distinguishing characteristics: extraordinary sensitivity and high vertical range above the atmosphere, 40km above the Antarctic, in the stratosphere. According to Halpern, the researchers do not have explicit predictions as to what SPIDER will find.

“There is one concrete story for what happened early on, which is that in the first 10-34 seconds, the universe expanded,” said Halpern. “The thing we’re trying to measure is, essentially, how long that lasted and just when it stopped.”

## **Astronomy professors look to rare stars for answers on space-time warp**

**February 3, 2015, 4:51pm PDT**

Astronomy prof Ingrid Stairs looked at the space-time curvatures of a binary star.

UBC astronomers were able to look at the space-time curvature warp inside a binary star before it slipped out of view.

Ingrid Stairs, professor of astronomy and astrophysics, studied the binary pulsar system J1906 along with a team of other researchers in the hopes of measuring the mass of the two neutron stars, which are the most dense and small stars in the universe, and the degree of the space-time curvature warp to determine how they interact with each other. J1906 is located 25,000 light years from Earth and will not come into view for observation for the next 160 years.

The research team also wanted to figure out the nature of the companion star, which serves as the centre of orbit for the two neutron stars.

“We were interested in measuring the masses of the two stars, in part hoping to figure out what the companion star is. The result is still a little ambiguous as the object could be either a white dwarf or another neutron star,” said Stairs.

White dwarf stars are very small, very dense stars that emit thermal energy and have low luminosity.

According to Stairs, the research team measured this binary pulsar system to clear up ambiguities about J1906, which is a largely unexplored area of our solar system, and determined the mass of astronomical objects within it.

The team found that the mass of the binary pulsar (a neutron star that rotates at high velocity and emits radiation) was  $1.291 \pm 0.011$  solar masses and the mass of the companion star to be  $1.322 \pm 0.011$  solar masses.

Astronomers usually use this unit of measurement to determine the mass of stars, but it can also extend to measurement of the mass of nebulae and galaxies.

Stairs also said that while the research team did not measure the spin axis or change in orientation of the stars, they did look at how their shapes changed based on the theory of general relativity. According to the research team's predictions, the pulsar disappeared from view after they were able to calculate the mass of the two stars.

“We didn't derive a measurement of the rate of precession of the neutron star's spin axis, but the profile shape changes and near-disappearance of the pulsar are qualitatively in agreement with the predictions of warped spacetime due to general relativity,” said Stairs.

In the future, Stairs hopes to use the knowledge gained about the pulsar star to get a clearer understanding of the types of stars that exist within J1906.

“In the medium term, we should be able to make a map of the radio emission beam of the pulsar, because we’ve been seeing different slices of that region as the spin axis precesses,” said Stairs.

## **Philosophy professor awarded international research grant to study responsibility and morality**

**April 15, 2015, 3:39pm PDT**

Philosophy professor Paul Russell will be spending the next decade studying questions of morality and free will thanks to a \$12 million large grant from a Swedish research group.

The grant, which is worth 80 million Swedish kronor, or approximately \$12 million, and has been awarded by the Swedish Research Council, will go towards Russell's research on moral responsibility and global issues.

Russell will now be dividing the next 10 years of his life between UBC and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, where he will be examining how free will influences human responsibility in both local and global issues.

In Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) receives significantly less funding than its counterparts in science, engineering and health research. In the past eight years, SHHRC's budget has also shrunk by 10.5 per cent.

According to Russell, the Swedish government is more geared towards promoting support and research opportunities to academics in humanities. He also said that this is the first program of its kind in Sweden, which attracts researchers in all fields to the country.

"[The Council] started a new program to attract what they call 'leading researchers' to Sweden," said Russell. "This is, I believe, the first one in the humanities area, so quite a few of them are in other areas like medical research, engineering, things of that sort."

According to Russell, the University of Gothenburg established a research project with a group led by Gunnar Björnsson. Björnsson, once he heard of the project, began talking to Russell about the possibility of his coming on as an international researcher for the project.

Most of the funding will go towards hiring and establishing a team of researchers to collaborate and assist in the initiative. Russell said that even \$12 million can go away quickly when hiring postdoctoral researchers and other project assistants.

Russell's research considers ethical issues, including traditional philosophical questions regarding the moral responsibility of human beings and the relation of this responsibility to law.

According to Russell, such an issue splits into questions of moral psychology, personal values and people's feelings of responsibility to other human beings.

“What is it about human beings and human agents that makes it intelligible to regard ourselves and other human beings as responsible agents?” said Russell.

Russell's team will also be looking into how moral questions regarding law, criminal and legal responsibility interact with people's feelings of accountability for their actions.

“What makes them valid and makes us think they are not fully responsible and not liable to punishment?” said Russell.

## **Vancouver groups trying to create transition program for sex workers**

**May 17, 2015, 6:23pm PDT**

Vancouver organizations like the WISH Drop-In Society are working together to create a transitional program for sex workers.

Several organizations in Vancouver are working together to create a means for sex workers to leave the profession if they want to.

“Because most sex workers don’t have pensions or robust savings plans, and some carry the burden of a damning criminal record, exiting for many is not straightforward,” said Becki Ross, a UBC professor in gender, race, social justice and sexuality.

The WISH Drop-in Society and Battered Women’s Support Services are among the organizations collaborating on a transition program. The groups took part in a consortium for sex workers who want to exit the sex industry. According to Kate Gibson, executive director of the WISH Drop-in Society, the various organizations provide some tools for individuals wishing to transition out of the sex economy.

“There isn’t anything dedicated specifically to that at the moment. That is why we got together to see if we could make something happen in a new way,” said Kate Gibson.

According to Angela Marie MacDougall, executive director of Battered Women’s Support Services, the groups provide assistance for migrant and immigrant workers as well as those with their own adult entertainment businesses.

“What we’ve wanted to do is to bring our knowledge, our skills, our understanding of this population and prepare and fill gaps in services that would provide options for those within sex work,” MacDougall said.

According to Gibson, there has not been an organization to take on the particular work since the closing of Prostitutes Empowerment Education and Resource Society (PEERS) in 2012.

Historically, sex workers have had to do a lot of their own advocacy, according to Ross.

“For four decades across Canada and elsewhere, sex workers have organized their own support, service provisions, and advocacy groups,” said Ross. “Some have made a priority of service delivery concerning sex workers’ health and safety while others have emphasized support for sex workers who seek to transition out of the industry.”

The more the sex workers are pushed underground in society the less safe they become, according to Gibson.

“There are new laws in place that very much affect those that engage in sex work.... All kind of people criminalized because of the work they do,” Gibson said.

According to Ross, a federal mandate that seeks to abolish prostitution does not honour the diverse and complex needs of a diverse community of sex workers.

“Sex work activists argue that only broad-based ongoing consultation among those who live this experience will expose the limits of anti-prostitution legislation,” said Ross. “Any

attention to transitioning programs must be accompanied by initiatives to enhance sex workers' safety and well-being, on the terms that sex work professionals devise for themselves.”

## **Researchers looking into the reality of ‘chemo brain’**

**May 6, 2015, 9:33am PDT**

UBC researchers examine the effects of chemotherapy on the brain.

A team of UBC researchers are looking into the reality of ‘chemo brain’ by studying chemo patients who reported the symptoms.

The researchers studied chemo patients who reported the symptoms of chemo brain, which include mind wandering and impaired concentration. However, the results of this study are in line with the kind of subjective complaints often found in chemo brain patients.

“We actually don’t show [that] chemotherapy can cause chemo brain,” said UBC psychology professor Todd Handy, one of the researchers. “Rather, we show that chemo patients who report symptoms of chemo brain have brains that seem to be chronically mind wandering, even when they say they are paying attention to what they’re currently doing.”

According to Handy, other symptoms of “chemo brain” include bad memory, clouded thinking and other problems associated with cognitive impairment.

“One parallel might be how some people feel after a hard night of partying,” said Handy.

“You wake up the next morning, and you just feel like your brain’s in a fog.”

According to Handy, there are no tests that can directly measure chemo brain, which becomes a problem when patients have complaints but no standardized diagnostic assessment exists to assess their mental state.

“In some cases, chemo brain can last for multiple years post-chemo treatment, again highlighting the challenges it poses,” Handy said.

Handy said he is unsure whether this research would change chemotherapy treatment but said it does give promise for addressing chemo brain symptoms, post-treatment.

“Our findings suggest that treatments targeting the brain’s default mode network, which is involved in mind wandering, may be promising to pursue,” Handy said.

According to Handy, an EEG can perform an easy test that would be the first measure to track improvements.

The researchers’ work provides a glimpse into possible ways to treat the condition and into observing the outcomes.

In reflection on the possibility of the keeping track of improvements in a “chemo brain,” Handy said, “In the end, that’s what makes this particularly exciting.”

## **F-Word Conference aims to increase dialogue on feminism**

**May 7, 2015, 8:29pm PDT**

The 6th annual “F-Word” conference was held May 2 to create a forum for open dialogue and discussion.

The sixth annual F-word conference took place on May 2 in an effort to increase UBC’s dialogue on feminism and activism.

The event featured presenters, workshops and keynote speakers, including UBC’s own Lau Mehes and Phaniel Antwi.

Fourth year GRSJ students and conference co-chairs Emma Kuntz and Zoe David-Delves scheduled various activities to examine issues relating not only to gender and sexuality but also to racism, colonialism and activism.

“Feminism, activism and community, and a way to bridge the gap between the academic work that we do in class and the community work and activism that happens through organizations to create a space of dialogue,” said Kuntz.

David-Delves also said that the conference could assist with “the sort of general undermining of feminist thought and discourse in the university.... I think UBC students are sometimes not encouraged to critically analyze the world around them.”

“[Attendees] can come together and discuss and share ideas,” Kuntz said, speaking to the purpose of the conference. “We can work together to think through these issues and to build a bridge between academia and activism.”

According to David-Delves, feminism takes a stance against the oppression of marginalized group but is necessarily about more than one group.

“What the conference does is raise awareness to the intersectional approach of feminism,” she said. “I think UBC sometimes does not take feminism seriously, and I think there are a lot of misconceptions around feminism.”

An intersectional approach to feminism means considering multiple points of oppression. In other words, intersectional theory examines how various social prejudices are interrelated.

“[The conference is] also a place to bring together these ideas and discuss what we’re going to do to create a better world that is fighting oppression...sexism, racism, and colonialism,” Kuntz said.

According to David-Delves, a common misconception about feminism is that it relates the complete liberation of all women. She argues that that the reality is that different women have different problems and must be addressed differently.

“As people who are fortunate enough to have post-secondary education, we should be engaging with ideas and critically thinking about how we want the future to look.” Kuntz said.

## Survey examines how to expand campus mental health services

May 25, 2015, 9:31am PDT

For May's mental health awareness week, a UBC-founded mental health organization, Walkalong, surveyed students to find out what they wanted from the university's mental health services.

Walkalong, which describes itself as dedicated to young Canadians' wellness through empowerment, posted a call for UBC students to take part in a research survey asking what they wanted from possible expansion of mental health services.

There is a pressing need for greater access to mental health experts given the demand for them, according to psychiatry professor and the survey's principle director Michael Krausz.

The survey considered how best to expand resources given that current services aren't meeting the demand.

"[With] long waiting times and very limited resources we see an urgent need to build capacity," said Krausz.

According to the most recent AMS academic experience survey, only 36 per cent of UBC students were satisfied with their experience at UBC counselling services while 35 per cent said they weren't.

John Ward, project manager for the online survey, would not comment on the findings, saying that releasing preliminary results may contaminate them.

However, mental health services may expand to include a virtual clinic, according to Krausz.

A virtual clinic would be a web-based platform that gives students the chance to connect with mental health experts via video conference, email or chatrooms.

“The idea is to provide access to any kind of mental health services and to add to the existing services,” said Krausz. “We hope that a virtual clinic component, and other components can help to build capacity to make it easier for students to access expertise.”

Web-based mental health services already exist elsewhere, both in Canada and internationally. Krausz calls the online services “much appreciated” by users and says there is a lot of positive feedback for the platform.

According to Krausz, users enjoy the virtual clinic because it offers an easy means of access to mental health experts while also giving users a sense of being in charge of their experience, as well as offering more opportunities for information on mental health and treatment options.

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