

# KPU Alumni Magazine

Issue 1 | 2018

## Ankit Sharma

“The quest for something  
challenging in my life is  
what drives me now.” Page 14

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# Welcome to the first edition of KPU's Alumni Magazine



We are very proud to be able to share stories of the remarkable achievements a number of our alumni have made in their professions and in the wider community.

We know there are many more compelling stories out there, and we look forward to telling them in future editions of this magazine.

As KPU Chancellor George Melville says at every Convocation ceremony:

“Our alumni are everywhere, doing amazing things.”

The stories on these pages are proof of that.

Thanks to those who agreed to share their stories in this inaugural edition. Your accomplishments are inspiring, and I know your stories will resonate with your fellow alumni.

KPU is a young university – not yet 40 years old. We’ve had a diverse history: beginning as a community college in 1981, becoming a university college (and a degree-granting institution) in 1995 and then – 10 years ago – evolving once again to become Canada’s only polytechnic university.

We now have over 52,000 alumni. In fact, our alumni are Kwantlen’s single largest stakeholder group. You are Kwantlen ambassadors – in business, industry, our communities, across the country and around the world.

Many of you employ other KPU alumni. And some of you have stayed intimately connected with your alma mater, serving on boards and program advisory committees, speaking to classes and at various university and alumni events, and finding other ways to give back and to pay it forward to our next generation of alumni.

Your continued involvement makes us a better institution.

If you haven’t had a chance to visit KPU lately, check out the KPU Alumni Association (KPUAA) web page ([kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni)) for events and activities throughout the year. We’d love to see you at an event. You will be amazed at the wonderful connections (and re-connections) you will make.

I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge the remarkable alumni who have dedicated so much time, passion, expertise and energy to the KPU Alumni Association by serving on its board of directors. The commitment of these volunteers has a tremendous impact on the KPUAA and on KPU. Thank you for your leadership and your vision.

“Our alumni are everywhere, doing amazing things.”

And to Nancy Armitage, KPU’s Manager, Alumni Affairs and Executive Director of the KPUAA, and Shina Boparai, KPU’s Advancement Officer, Alumni Affairs – thank you for your tremendous work in supporting the association and leading alumni activities for the university. Your dedication and expertise are second to none.

Sincerely,

Marlyn Graziano  
Vice President, External Affairs

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# Opportunities Abound for KPU

Two words spring to mind when KPU President Dr. Alan Davis is asked about the institution he has led since 2012. The first is “opportunity.” The second is “complexity.”

One of the hallmarks of his tenure as president has been to encourage KPU students and employees to seize the opportunities that come with being one of the largest teaching universities in Western Canada, being the only university that directly serves the majority of the South Fraser region, and being the only polytechnic university in Canada.

Recently re-appointed for a second term as president of KPU, Davis remains convinced that opportunities still abound for the university. Indeed, there may even be more opportunity in front of KPU now than back in 2012. But the complexity is also increasing.

Much of that complexity arises from geography. With campuses in Surrey (Newton and Cloverdale), Richmond and Langley, KPU has multiple identities, and in some ways is still grappling with what those should be. Each community wants KPU to be “its university.”

“Take KPU Richmond, for example,” says Davis. “It has a high-profile location right next to Lansdowne Centre, which is about to undergo significant redevelopment. And we are there – in the heart of it.”

What will that mean for KPU?

“That is something we will actively explore with Lansdowne, and with the City of Richmond,” says Davis. “We don’t know what the future holds, but we do know there will be opportunities for KPU in the next few years. We need to be attuned to what those might be so we can do what’s best for our students, the university itself, and the community we serve.”

KPU Richmond has already undergone a significant change recently, with the opening on Jan 3, 2018 of the new Wilson School of Design building.

The architecturally stunning building is the new home to KPU’s Chip and Shannon Wilson School of Design. (See page 26 for more details).

Now that the Wilson School of Design has vacated the third floor of the original building at KPU Richmond (now known as “Richmond Main”), another opportunity presents itself: What academic programs should fill that vacated space?

That question has given rise to consultations within the university, and with partners throughout the City of Richmond.

“What does the School District think? What about business? What does KPU need to do to better support the community? What are the programs of choice for students in Richmond? These are the kinds of questions we have to ask ourselves,” says Davis. “And, for KPU, that process never stops.”

One of the ongoing challenges for Davis – and for the entire university, for that matter – is that this very same process also continually unfolds in the other communities that KPU serves.

Surrey, Delta, White Rock, both the City and the Township of Langley, and even the North Fraser communities of Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Mission: KPU is in constant communication with elected officials, city governments, school districts, businesses, industry and community groups in all these communities. The challenge is to be as responsive as possible.

And with that, notes Davis, comes opportunity.

One such opportunity presented itself in Surrey’s City Centre, where KPU will open its fifth campus in fall 2018. KPU Civic Plaza – located in the 3 Civic Plaza building at 10300 City Parkway – places KPU immediately adjacent to Surrey City Hall, directly opposite the Surrey Centre Library, and on the SkyTrain route.

KPU will have five floors in the building, which includes a 52-storey residential tower and a hotel.

That bold move gives KPU a significant presence in the heart of one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada.

Davis is proud of the decision to create a KPU presence in Surrey’s downtown core, and he is certain that the opening of KPU Civic Plaza will be a turning point for the university.

“Having a location in Surrey that is adjacent SkyTrain’s Expo Line will allow KPU to offer advanced and professional programs and testing services to working people from across Metro Vancouver,” says Davis.

“KPU Civic Plaza will be a hub for community engagement of all sorts. Being in the same location as a premier hotel will allow us to work together to host events and conferences.”

The decision to make working professionals one of the key target markets for the downtown Surrey campus, is in response to another complexity as KPU looks ahead to the next few years and decades: the changes needed for education that supports a continually evolving and increasingly complex workplace. Who is the student of the

future? What will their needs be? And how can KPU be a leader in responding to those needs?

Davis sees these as exciting times for higher education in general and for KPU in particular. And he is sure of one thing: KPU will have to evolve with the times. Micro-credentials, digital badges, just-in-time training, open learning – these and other areas will have to be explored and developed to keep pace with rapid societal change, especially in the increasingly complex global context.

But, as Davis points out, KPU is no stranger to change.

He is proud of how the institution has developed since its community college days over 35 years ago, as it broke away from Douglas College in 1981 to provide post-secondary opportunities for the people of the South Fraser Region.

“I have watched as it has developed its outstanding reputation for its teaching and learning and for its focus on the communities it serves,” he told the crowd at his installation ceremony on Oct. 12, 2012.

**“KPU’s alumni can be found in all fields of endeavour, all over B.C., Canada and the world. They are leaders in their professions and in their communities.”**

From community college, to university college and finally to polytechnic university, Davis has always kept an eye on what has unfolded at Kwantlen.

As he told the South Asian Business Association during his first year as president, his personal path is one of similar twists and turns: “I had a traditional research track in Chemistry, but was drawn to teaching – my father was a teacher.”

That attraction to teaching led him to work at various institutions: Fraser Valley College, the Open Learning Agency, Athabasca University, Niagara College, Vancouver Community College and then to Empire State College, one of the 64 institutions that comprise the State University of New York.

What brought Davis back to British Columbia, and to KPU, was that combination of challenge and opportunity, along with that outstanding reputation for and commitment to teaching and learning.

Davis acknowledges that the term “polytechnic” has confounded many at the university since April 22, 2008 when then-Premier Gordon Campbell made the announcement. When Davis arrived in 2012, it was still a source of pre-occupation within the institution. What was a polytechnic university anyway?

Davis was determined to move the institution forward, and quickly urged faculty and staff not to allow themselves to be sidelined any longer by trying to define the polytechnic piece of the university’s name.

Instead, he urged everyone to embrace it.

“KPU is a unique institution, and although the polytechnic moniker was a surprise, it gives us a huge advantage,” he said in a speech soon after his installation.

That led to what has now become a familiar quip from Davis: “We are the only polytechnic university in Canada, therefore, we are the best polytechnic university in Canada.”

Quip aside, Davis is determined that KPU will be the best. After all, there is a strong foundation on which to build the future.

“We have deep roots, because of our community college and university-college heritage, in access, trades training, professional career programs, and in undergraduate degrees that are largely designed for the 85 per cent of degree completers in Canada who have an immediate careers in mind, and want the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for rewarding employment in the 21st century.”

He is pleased that KPU recently adopted what he considers to be an authentic and compelling tag line for the university: “KPU – where thought meets action.”

KPU’s alumni community, which now numbers over 52,000, is the embodiment of that tag line, says Davis, who has been a strong advocate of increasing the university’s focus on stronger engagement with its graduates. After all, he points out: KPU’s alumni are the institution’s best ambassadors.

“KPU’s alumni can be found in all fields of endeavour, all over B.C., Canada and the world. They are leaders in their professions and in their communities, and KPU’s reputation will be increasingly shaped by their successes.”



Opposite: KPU President Dr. Alan Davis has recently been re-appointed to a second term.

L: President Davis speaks at the ribbon-cutting of the new Wilson School of Design building at KPU Richmond.

R: President Davis with KPU Chancellor George Melville and Henrik and Daniel Sedin of the Vancouver Canucks. The Sedins were presented with honorary doctorates in recognition of their stellar service leadership.



# Kim Baird

Kim Baird was the first person in her community to graduate from high school in over 20 years.

A self-described apathetic high school student, she was unsure of what to do or take, so she enrolled in general arts studies at Kwantlen College (as it was known in the 1980s) because it offered a wide breadth of subjects: philosophy, psychology, criminology, history and political science.

Immediately, her studies tapped into a subject Kim cared deeply about: her home, the Tsawwassen First Nation.

“My political consciousness awoke while I was in college,” says Kim. “I was working on papers on my community of Tsawwassen. I learned about colonization, land claims processes and why there are such poor economic conditions for Aboriginal peoples.”

Kim graduated from Kwantlen in 1992 with an Arts Diploma and the knowledge and determination to improve the lives of her people.

She had already started along a path of leadership, vision and change by the time she graduated.

She started working for her community in 1990 and by 1999, Kim was elected Chief of the Tsawwassen First Nation. At just 28 years old, she was the youngest woman to hold that position. She remained chief for over 13 years and in that time laid the groundwork for an economic boom worth hundreds of millions of dollars by negotiating and implementing British Columbia’s first urban modern treaty.

Less than two decades ago, the Tsawwassen First Nation community lacked adequate water supply, sidewalks and even streetlights. Development had stagnated because local utilities and municipalities wouldn’t negotiate with the Tsawwassen First Nation.

Like most First Nations, the Tsawwassen were governed by the Canada Indian Act of 1876, which is a poor form of governance, says Kim. Real estate investors shied away from brokering deals because there was too much uncertainty surrounding land titles, development and approval processes.

Kim realized the only way forward was to spell out in legal documents the rights of the Tsawwassen people. Utilizing skills

she gained from her studies at Kwantlen, Kim successfully negotiated the first urban Aboriginal treaty in Canada, which many experts consider pivotal to the future of native land claims in B.C.

Kim’s time at her alma mater spent poring over political academic texts, reasoning out logical arguments in philosophy and political science courses and putting them to paper were transferable skills that helped her navigate the technical jargon of the Tsawwassen treaty.

Her course load provided her with foundational skills that include reading, research, analysis, writing and most importantly critical thinking.

“Negotiating the treaty gave us land rights, cash, jurisdiction and crown title”, explains Kim. “Our rights are quite defined so you can identify and enforce them.”

The results are staggering. Since the treaty was signed in 2007, full-time employment has increased from 39 per cent to almost full employment. The Tsawwassen Mills shopping centre, a project Kim initiated, is currently estimated to be a \$780-million project. There’s a master-planned residential development well underway with luxury homes starting at \$600,000. The Tsawwassen First Nation is also expanding a logistics centre serving Canada’s busiest commercial port.

Recognized with KPU’s Distinguished Alumni award in 2012, Kim continues to be an ambassador for KPU. She personalizes the KPU experience for others who are considering post-secondary education: “I tell people that KPU is a less intimidating experience than a large university. The smaller campuses, closer to home, are more accessible.”

Today, Kim runs her own consulting firm, advising government bodies and other First Nations groups, while raising three young daughters on the Tsawwassen reserve she worked tirelessly to raise out of poverty and into prosperity. For her efforts she was named to the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia.

And it all started with a young woman who wanted to provide basic infrastructure for her community.



Kim Baird was 28 when she was elected Chief of the Tsawwassen First Nation.

# Chris McCue

When Chris McCue was a teenager and first thought about conservation, he imagined “some guy counting caribou up north, sitting by a stream collecting water samples.”

Kwantlen’s Environmental Protection Technology (EPT) program appealed to him. That was in 1992, when the program was offered at the brand-new Richmond campus of what was then Kwantlen College.

“My dad was a counsellor at Richmond High School. This was pre-Internet so he had pamphlets and he brought me this Kwantlen College brochure,” says Chris.

“I was already interested in conservation so I decided to go for it.”

He enrolled in the EPT program, and while he didn’t end up counting caribou, Chris did learn a lot about water treatment and contaminated site remediation, and made life-long friends and colleagues.

“We had wonderfully small classes. There was 20 of us that went into the program. The 20 of us would work together; we’d do group projects together. With a group of 20 you always end up getting to know everybody very well so we ended up being a very good team.”

After graduation, Chris worked for an environmental consulting firm cleaning up contaminated sites where he noticed a gap—no one was locally building remediation systems. So he started his own company to fill that market niche. His career path in many ways anticipated where Kwantlen Polytechnic University was going, an institution driven by industry needs and engaged with the community.

Today, Chris is founder and president of the award-winning McCue Engineering Contractors. In operation for over 17 years, the company cleans contaminated water and land, restoring them to healthy ecosystems.

Chris’s team consists of engineers and technicians who bridge the gap between engineering design and construction know-how.

“I know what the capability of the graduates of the program are.”

And one of the first places he looks to hire from is KPU.

“I have a standing offer with KPU’s co-op program,” says Chris. “If anybody in the program has trades experience, that’s the person I want to hire. Somebody who has the education in environment and the background in trades because that’s what we need in our company.”

Chris’s commitment to KPU and looking to his alma mater first for recruiting talent goes back years. His health and safety manager, Russell Thompson, is a fellow alumnus and graduate of KPU’s EPT program in 2010. A year out of the program, Russell found Chris on the alumni webpage and saw that he was looking to hire an EPT grad with construction experience.

Russell has been with McCue Engineering Contractors for six years now, and just this past fall was a guest speaker for the EPT program’s health and safety course on how to foster a culture of safety in the workplace.

“Two KPU students are working for us currently,” says Chris. “I think the program is even better now than when I took it. I know what the capability of the graduates of the program are. They have hands-on skills from the school itself and they have the co-op experience.”

A KPU Distinguished Alumnus, Chris remains connected to the university as a member of the EPT program’s advisory committee, and continues to lend advice and mentor future leaders in environmental protection.

His company also funds a scholarship for students in the EPT program.

He may not be sitting by a stream collecting water samples, but Chris is instrumental in saving the environment and helping the KPU community, one contaminated site and one student at a time.

**X**



Chris McCue, founder and president of McCue Engineering Contractors, knows first-hand how highly qualified KPU’s graduates are.



Twin sisters Shmyla and Suveen Thandi still keep in touch with their instructors in KPU's welding program.

# Shmyla & Suveen Thandi

It's not surprising that identical twin sisters Shmyla and Suveen Thandi share many of the same interests. Both women are competitive, play basketball, and hang out with the same group of friends.

What is remarkable is that they have followed nearly identical career paths, finding success at a young age in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Since graduating from Kwantlen Polytechnic University's welding program, the Thandi sisters have travelled the country together to work on some of Canada's largest and most exciting energy projects.

"We both wanted a career where we could challenge ourselves and be able to use our physical strength," says Shmyla. "With welding, you're always learning."

For Shmyla, the challenge began early on in her journey to get her welding ticket. She started at KPU the year before Suveen, on a scholarship to play for the Eagles women's basketball team.

At the time, she was 19 years old, had never picked up a welding tool, and was the only woman in the program. Completely overwhelmed on a task in one of her first classes, she remembers breaking down in tears in front of instructor Rob Nelson in the welding shop.

"I had a moment realizing I don't think I'm going to get through this," she says. "But the teachers are like coaches—they kept telling me not to give up, to keep working hard on it."

Shmyla says her instructors' positivity and willingness to assist her made her feel more comfortable and eventually she grew to see her own potential. When Suveen entered the program the following year, she had the support of those same faculty members, as well as her sister to go to for advice.

Since then, the twins have been pretty much unstoppable. Both were able to earn their apprenticeship hours while at KPU, received scholarships and awards to help with their education costs, and went on to become Red Seal Certified Welders.

The job opportunities haven't stopped either. Suveen and Shmyla are currently working together on the largest clean energy project in Canada: the Darlington Nuclear Refurbishment Project in Ontario.

Working in nuclear has the highest standards for safety, and the experience has been demanding but fulfilling. The high level of expectations in that environment and the natural competition between the twins pushes them to become better welders, they say.



“We’re at the highest point in our careers,” says Shmyla. “And it’s because of the experience and knowledge we got at Kwantlen.”

Suveen and Shmyla still keep in touch with the friends they made on their KPU Eagles basketball team.

“We’re completely different people because of the program – it made us stronger.” – Shmyla Thandi

They have also found a community of people who, like them, have built successful careers in the trades because it works for their lifestyle.

“We’ve met people in the trades who started out in completely different fields, couples who are in it together and ladies who started at 35,” says Suveen. “It’s something you can always fall back on.”

They don’t hesitate to encourage other women who are considering entering a trade.

“I would tell any girl that anyone can do it,” says Shmyla. “We all struggle, but there’s a reward. You’ll never regret it.”

Today she laughs thinking about the time she cried in class.

“How successful I’ve ended up being,” she says. “And I always look back at that one day I broke down and had Al Sumal and Rob Nelson telling me to keep practising,” she says.

“If I didn’t get that extra attention from the teachers, I don’t think I would be where I am today. We’re completely different people because of the program – it made us stronger.”

Shmyla and Suveen still keep in touch with their instructors, to get advice on a job or to rely on their experience.

“When I got my first job, I called Al Sumal and said, ‘What do I do?’” says Suveen. “They are my mentors. They actually care.”

Just five years since they completed the KPU welding program, they say they’ve found a career that they’re excited about, that offers them financial comfort and the opportunity to travel.

“It’s exciting,” says Suveen. “I love it everyday still.”

X



The Thandi sisters have made their mark in the world of welding.

## Q&A

**KPU:** What was your favourite KPU moment?

**Suveen:** The last day of school, that sense of achievement.

**Shmyla:** Mine was playing basketball ... and when I got my first job.

**KPU:** If you went back to school at KPU, what would you take?

**Suveen & Shmyla:** Probably another trade.

**KPU:** What do you tell people about KPU?

**Shmyla:** KPU has the nicest shop; they have state-of-the-art machines.

**Suveen:** You can apply for scholarships and you can work during the day and go to school at night. It’s flexible.

**KPU:** Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?

**Shmyla:** Mike Lloyd and Al Sumal. From day one they helped us. They worked around my travel for basketball, gave us extra attention and helped us study.

**Suveen:** We still keep in contact with them. If I have a question, I can still count on their experience. They never said ‘no’.

**KPU:** What was the biggest benefit of your KPU education?

**Suveen:** The experience and the knowledge to be ready and comfortable and prepared to go out into the field. After the program, we didn’t leave as students, we left as tradespeople.

**KPU:** Why should employers hire KPU alumni?

**Shmyla:** Because of the experience they gain throughout their whole apprenticeship. You’re coming out confident and ready.

# Geoff Woolley



Geoff Woolley is President of EcoSafe Zero Waste.

After an 11-year career in the private security industry, Geoff Woolley decided he needed a change.

He had gone as far as he could, rising through the ranks to a director position, but wanted more.

“My ultimate goal was running my own business. So, I took a deep breath, put in my notice, hired my replacement and enrolled at Kwantlen.”

Family ties had already exposed him to programs at Kwantlen, which was still a college back in the ‘90s. His father, David Woolley, was Kwantlen’s Registrar at the time. David encouraged his son to look into the business program, but Geoff was focused on football at the time and ignored his dad’s advice.

“He kept telling me about this great business program, but I didn’t listen,” admits Geoff. “I didn’t pay much attention to school at the time.”

More than a decade later, Geoff decided to get serious about furthering his education.

And Kwantlen had just what he was looking for.

Geoff parlayed credits he’d earned earlier at various other post-secondary institutions in the Lower Mainland, along with a few bridging courses, to enter Kwantlen’s Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in the third year of the Entrepreneurial Leadership program.

He thought given his work experience he would breeze through his studies.

“Boy, was I mistaken,” admits Geoff. “The two years I spent completing my degree at Kwantlen were some of the most challenging and rewarding years of my life. They fundamentally changed me as a person and as a businessman.”

One of Geoff’s favourite courses was business communications with instructor Bob Basil. “Bob’s focus on the message recipient and a simple, clear message changed how I communicate every day.” The workload in every course was heavy, and there was lots of hands-on experiential learning.

“I very quickly found even at the third-year level, instructors put students

in a realistic, high-pressure learning environment. Many students complained that this was unfair or expectations were unrealistic, all I could think was, ‘Wow, this is so much like real life.’”

The program pushed Geoff out of his comfort zone, and the results were transformative. He is now President of EcoSafe Zero Waste, a compostable bag manufacturer and organics diversion company. Geoff credits his success directly back to his education at KPU.

“In the capstone project in the program, my team gave a consult to EcoSafe. One aspect of the report was succession planning. We slipped our resumés into the report, pretty subtle,” laughs Geoff.

Subtle or not, EcoSafe’s management team and Board Chair were so impressed, they came out for the students’ presentation. After Geoff’s graduation, he asked for a reference from the Chairperson, who suggested instead they go for lunch. Geoff was hired on as the company’s Director of Sales and quickly promoted to General Manager and then President, all within the span of four years.

Today, Geoff is overseeing his company’s transition from a manufacturer of organic bags to a turnkey program provider, helping clients shooting for zero waste. His company was instrumental in helping the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, a sports stadium, go from zero recycling to zero waste in just two years.

Geoff is still active in the KPU community as a member of the School of Business Program Advisory Committee, and as an employer of fellow alumni.

“We hired two team members from Kwantlen and it quickly became clear to me that we made the right decision,” says Geoff. “These team members continue to amaze me with their ability to find and deal with issues as they arise. When they bring things to me it is to say, ‘Hey, I noticed this issue and did this to fix it.’ Kwantlen produces problem solvers.

“I had a blast at Kwantlen: great student body, great program. I’m happy to give back in any way that I can.”



# Tania Dick

Tania Dick is a nurse, President of the Association of Registered Nurses of BC and a tireless advocate for Aboriginal health care.

Tania Dick originally wanted to become a doctor. But when her grandmother fell ill, she moved to Surrey, B.C. to take care of her and entered Kwantlen Polytechnic University's nursing post-baccalaureate program. Today, Tania, a nurse and tireless advocate for Indigenous health care, is grateful for how things fell into place.

"As I went through the program, I just fell in love with nursing," says Tania. "Nurses are the backbone of the system—you have a better opportunity to influence the care of individuals."

Moving from her First Nations community in remote Kingcome Inlet, B.C. to the Lower Mainland was not an easy transition, though, and Tania faced significant challenges to completing her education. When her grandmother passed away during her first year at KPU, Tania wasn't sure she could go on.

Devastated and far from the support of her community, Tania remembers the kindness of nursing faculty Judy Lee, who took her to the First Nations Friendship Centre, and others who gave her time to go back to her village to help her re-connect with her culture.

"They really instilled hope in me that there are people who will lift you up," she says.

"I don't think I would have made it without those experiences I had at Kwantlen."

Her teachers were there for Tania again in her fourth year when she lost her grandfather, and adapted her studies so that she could make it on stage for convocation. Tania remembers that moment in 2003 like it was yesterday.

"It was such a sense of accomplishment, pride, relief," she says. "There were so many people around me, and we did it all together."

Tania continued her education and was the first Aboriginal graduate to attain a Master of Nursing degree in the Nurse Practitioner program at the University of British Columbia.

She's spent the last 12 years working in rural and remote nursing, specializing in emergency and Aboriginal health.

**"It was the faculty at the nursing program at Kwantlen who changed my heart and my thought process."**

The prejudice she has experienced as an Indigenous woman in health care, and the disparities she's seen working as a nurse in remote areas of B.C., pushed her to become an advocate for quality health care for Aboriginal communities and for Indigenous nurses.

"I see it all the time," says Tania. "It's a societal issue and people are dying because of it. And that's why I do what I do."

Tania is two years into a six-year term as president-elect of the Association of Registered Nurses of B.C. She aims to empower nurses to use their voices, and work in a united way to benefit not only the profession, but also the health of all British Columbians.

As the largest body of health care professionals, nurses have the capacity

to influence change in the system Tania explains.

"The most exciting part, for me, is having a seat at the national level," says Tania. "To be able to chip away at the disparities for Indigenous health."

Working in a one-nurse hospital in Northern Vancouver Island, Tania never loses sight of the nurses and patients she is fighting for.

"That is so rewarding, to see families benefit from policy changes," she says. "It's really important to me to maintain that connection to the community."

The KPU Alumni Association recognized Dick's achievements and her leadership in the health care sector by naming her a Distinguished Alumna in 2015. That honour also recognized her continued involvement with her alma mater.

Since graduating from the nursing program, Tania has stayed connected to the KPU community and serves as a nurse mentor to nursing students.

"I always remember my experiences and how difficult it was," she says. "It feels good to lift other people up. And hopefully give those people the same experience I had."

She says the emotional skills, the ability to find support and build resilience, that she learned during the program were just as important as what she learned from a textbook.

"It was the faculty at the nursing program at Kwantlen who changed my heart and my thought process," she says. "They were so passionate and so supportive, it was incredible."





Maria Hilario combines her love of hip hop with her passion for design.

# Maria Hilario

It is a date Maria Hilario will always remember.

On April 5, 2017, she unveiled MUVMINT, her graduate collection for the Fashion Design and Technology program at KPU's Chip and Shannon Wilson School of Design.

The debut was staged on the runway in front of industry professionals, friends, family and classmates.

"It definitely was an unreal experience, those 30 seconds on the runway," says Maria. "You're the only one who knows how much you put into it, and it's really rewarding to see your work."

Inspired by Maria's experience as a hip-hop dancer, MUVMINT, is a technical streetwear brand. All garments are made with fabrics that have moisture-wicking, breathable, and anti-sweat properties to provide comfort for dancers.

"As a female hip-hop dancer, there's really nothing in the market that moves and breathes easily that also has the look we want," she explains.

Through the Fashion Design and Technology program, Maria learned all aspects of the design and production processes and, ultimately, how to take her vision to market.

KPU's proximity to a dynamic hub of apparel giants in Greater Vancouver offered her exciting opportunities to gain experience in the industry. Maria landed an internship at lululemon athletica, where she learned the ropes of the active wear industry, and was hired as a design assistant after graduating.

"It's the most amazing program. All the skills I learned got me comfortable working in the industry."

The Fashion Show 2017 was the culmination of four years of hard work for Maria and 27 of her classmates. Front and centre in the audience of 1,400 was Maria's biggest influence for getting into fashion—her mom.

Maria had an early education in the industry, watching her mother run a business making custom dresses from their home and later working for Canadian apparel brands Aritzia and Kit and Ace.



Maria credits KPU's Fashion Design and Technology program with giving her the strong foundation from which to launch her career.

"I saw what she was doing and knew I wanted to do that," says Maria. "Design was the number one thing I wanted to do."

Maria is about to launch her third collection, expanding into menswear and offering made-to-order garments. She hopes to expand to new markets and is excited about the demand she's seeing for MUVMINT, even from people who aren't dancers, but enjoy streetwear and like how it looks.

"I want hip hop to be the main inspiration, but I also want people to feel like they don't need to be a dancer to wear it."

Maria credits the Fashion Design and Technology program with giving her a strong understanding of all aspects of the industry so that she could turn her passion for design into a successful career.

"It's incredible how you can go from not knowing how to do anything, to coming out in your fourth year a lot more analytical," says Maria. "Now I'm confident in the industry and ready for the rest of my life."



# Q&A

**KPU:** *What was your favourite KPU moment?*

**Maria:** *The people I met—the classmates and teachers. It's like a family going through it together. It's the people and relationships that make the experience.*

**KPU:** *If you went back to school at KPU, what would you take?*

**Maria:** *Marketing... that would be something I'd want to know more about.*

**KPU:** *What was your best KPU day?*

**Maria:** *The Fashion Show. All the hard work you put into it for four years and seeing where you ended up is amazing. You're feeling proud and inspired to see what everyone created.*

**KPU:** *What do you tell people about KPU?*

**Maria:** *That you will literally learn so much. In terms of the skill level, and how much you'll grow. The amount of knowledge they give you really prepares you for your career and your future. You're always learning something to get you where you need to be.*

**KPU:** *Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?*

**Maria:** *Alex Diaz gave me honest feedback that I needed to hear. It wasn't always what I wanted to hear, but it was what I needed to hear to get me to move forward.*

**KPU:** *What was the biggest benefit of your KPU education?*

**Maria:** *All of the skills that I've learned, the knowledge. How I've grown as a person and a designer. Going through the program helped me know what I wanted to do in the future, what aspect of the industry I was most passionate about.*

**KPU:** *Why should employers hire KPU alumni?*

**Maria:** *Because of the skill level and how much you know going into the industry. From the design process, to Illustrator, there are so many aspects of the industry and elements all at once that you're trained on.*



Kelly Boxma and Shane King have both volunteered with their alma mater after graduation.

# Kelly Boxma & Shane King

When Shane King offered Kelly Boxma a job straight out of university, she turned him down.

“It wasn’t personal,” laughs Kelly. “I had another offer from a larger accounting firm so I went with the one I thought had more potential for opportunity.”

A couple of years later, the two firms merged and Kelly and Shane ended up working together anyway.

“It was a bit of joke between us once we merged,” says Shane. “I ended up getting Kelly as an employee after all. I knew she’d make a great employee and I thought I could help her with her career.”

After more than 25 years in accounting, Shane would know. He made partner at his previous accounting firm KNV in 2005, is currently the national leader of succession services for MNP, and has mentored countless men and women

not only through his firms, but also in his former capacity as chair of both the KPU Board of Governors and the KPU Alumni Association board. In 2012, he was honoured as one of KPU’s Distinguished Alumni.

Shane graduated from Kwantlen in 1992 with a diploma in Financial Management. He says he was lucky to have had many mentors in school and throughout his career to help guide him along the way.

“Dave Sale was one,” says Shane of the late accounting instructor who taught at KPU for 28 years, and was highly regarded by both faculty and students. “I really connected with him. He knew one of the partners at my previous firm, so Dave ultimately got me the job. I often phoned him to talk and he really helped my career.”

That bond with his instructors was instrumental in keeping Shane connected with his alma mater. So, when KPU Foundation board member Peter Podovnikoff contacted a friend and colleague, Tom Kirstein (the K in KNV Chartered Accountants) to ask if there was anyone at his firm who wanted to give back to KPU, Tom knew exactly who would jump at the chance.

**“Alumni, after all, is a kind of family too.”**  
– Shane King

“I didn’t hesitate,” says Shane. “Growing up, my family lived on a ranch and it was an all hands-on-deck kind of experience, everyone in the family had to pitch in. I have the same mentality when it comes to work and to my school. Alumni, after all, is a kind of family too.”

After joining the KPU Foundation board, Shane was present for KPU’s metamorphosis from a university college to a polytechnic university. When KPU’s Alumni Association – then in its infancy – was looking to fill seats on its board of directors, Shane answered the call. He devoted many years to working with other alumni to build the foundation for the KPUAA.

“It was an amazing experience,” says Shane. “I got to give back, make some great contacts, and really got to know the institution.”

Shane then went on to take one of two alumni seats on KPU’s Board of Governors, and eventually became chair.

“Being a governor of a university takes the concept of volunteering to a whole new level,” says Shane. “It is serious work, and taught me so much about governance, higher education and the responsibilities of operating in the public sector.

“But it was fulfilling, as I felt I was helping to continue to build my alma mater. I was able to give back to the institution that helped launch my career.”

Now Shane is more focused on paying it forward to KPU students, taking the opportunity whenever he can to speak

and meet with accounting students who are looking ahead to the first stages of building their careers. That was how he first met Kelly, and initially the two of them connected about her career path.

“It’s important to have career coaches in your life because everyone is learning as they go and it’s easier to learn from people looking in. I really try to help the people in our organization and Kelly is one of those people. I see great opportunities for her.”

He also saw great opportunities for KPU to benefit from her knowledge and experience, where she is now the treasurer of the KPU Alumni Association.

Kelly graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting in 2013. After a successful co-op position with MNP through KPU’s accounting program, Kelly was offered an articling position.

A trailblazer in the industry, Kelly was part of a KPU vanguard of students to first write the newly designated Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) exam and receive the professional accreditation.

Just three years ago, Canada’s three accounting bodies finalized a merger, agreeing to combine chartered accountants (CAs), certified management accountants (CMAs) and certified general accountants (CGAs) into one designation – a CPA.

While accountants, such as Shane, who were certified under the previous three designations were automatically grandfathered in, accounting students, such as Kelly, were thrust into a new accreditation landscape while still in the midst of their studies.

Now a senior accountant at MNP, Kelly has become a mentor to a new crop of accountants eager to learn from her experience.

“It was quite a whirlwind, but it taught me a lot and now I’m a CPA mentor,” says Kelly. “Students ask me all the time ‘what would you do?’”

Kelly has benefited from numerous mentors as well, in addition to Shane; she’s still in touch with several of her former instructors at KPU, including Valerie Warren and Carol Stuart.

“I think it’s pretty cool that the instructors at Kwantlen practice what they preach. Even after graduation, I’m still emailing them,” says Kelly.

Kelly has also stayed connected to the KPU community through her role as treasurer on the alumni association board, a position she took after Shane recognized what a valuable asset she would be in the role and encouraged her to join.

“I pushed her to join the association; gave her the ins and outs of giving back on that board,” says Shane. “I’ve always been impressed with Kelly. She’s a bright light.”

**“I think it’s pretty cool that the instructors at Kwantlen practise what they preach. Even after graduation, I am still emailing them.”**  
– Kelly Boxma

Kelly and her fellow alumni on the board are now continuing the work that Shane and his colleagues began back in 2002. They are forging connections with KPU’s more than 52,000 alumni, reminding them that their university still has something to offer them.

She and Shane continue to wave the KPU flag.

Kelly stays connected to the university by sitting on various panels with the Accounting Society. Shane chairs the accounting advisory committee to the dean of the school of business and both Kelly and Shane can be found at numerous institution events in addition to mentoring KPU students.

“Kwantlen has been instrumental in my career from day one,” says Shane. “I want to continue to pay that forward. It’s so important to build that next generation and set them up for success.”



# Ankit Sharma

Ankit Sharma isn't your typical tradesperson. "I'm the opposite of handy. I don't remember the last time I changed a light bulb. My 7-year-old son is more handy than I am," laughs Ankit. "I was a behind-the-computer sort of guy, building websites."

The self-deprecating owner of the multi-million-dollar building supply company Kitply Industries may not be a handyman, but he has a nose for business and a stomach for start-ups.

He is founder, owner and CEO of Kitply, a BC Business 40 Under 40 award winner and a visionary entrepreneur, driven by dual ambitions: to make a difference in the world and to ensure his family's security. The path he chose? To run his own business.

Emigrating from Bareilly, India at 16 with his family to the Lower Mainland, Ankit grew up relatively poor.

"What drove me initially was my family's security," he says. "Coming from an immigrant family, we lived in basement suites growing up. I knew to have financial stability I had to run my own business."

Based on his uncle's advice that computers were "where it's at" Ankit enrolled in the IT program at KPU.

*Continued* >>>





Ankit Sharma is founder and CEO of Kitply, a Business in Vancouver 40 Under 40 award winner and a visionary entrepreneur.

## Ankit Sharma, KPU Alumnus

Continued >>>

Ankit graduated with a diploma in Computer Information Systems in 2005. But his true calling was elsewhere and he returned to KPU's School of Business and enrolled in the Bachelor of Business Administration in Entrepreneurial Leadership.

"I was very introverted growing up. I didn't have a ton of friends at university," says Ankit. "But in my entrepreneurial marketing class, there were participation marks so I forced myself to put up my hand.

"Even though there were a lot of people that said way more than me, my teacher always latched on to my ideas. It dawned on me then that I was inherently able to take a step back and take a larger view of business."

**"With smaller class sizes run by teachers that care about their students, Kwantlen prepared me well for a successful entrepreneurial journey."**

He counts Wayne Tebb, Dean of KPU's School of Business and instructor Chamkaur Cheema among those who had a significant impact on him during his studies.

After graduating with his BBA in 2007 Ankit launched Kitply. He was 24 years old, and ran the fledgling startup out of his parents' basement.

Since then the cabinet hardware distributor has grown to earn more than \$5 million in revenue annually and employ twelve full-time staff. Ankit is now considering expansion opportunities.

He has some advice for those who want to strike out on their own to start a venture. It begins with making sure you have no distractions.

"Burn all bridges (to potential distractions)," advises Ankit to anyone fully committed to starting their own business. "I quit my day job so I had no fall back. The more bridges you've burnt the more fire you have in your belly."

But he also stresses that there should be no illusions about what it means to own and operate your own business.

"You've got customers that are your boss. You've got suppliers and staff that you've got to take care of. You're never the boss. That's an illusion."

Hard work, dedication and focus on family are major components of Ankit's success. So is the understanding that the learning never stops.

"The quest for experience, for learning, for something challenging in my life is what drives me now."

KPU gave him a strong foundation on which to build his achievements.

"With smaller class sizes run by teachers that care about their students, Kwantlen prepared me well for a successful entrepreneurial journey."



Ankit hires KPU alumni such as Alex Wong, Sales and Sourcing Manager for Kitply.

# ‘Generosity of Spirit’ Has A Huge Impact On Today’s Students

Ankit Sharma’s passion for KPU earned him huge applause at last year’s General Awards and Scholarships dinner, where he spoke to the crowd of over 400 on behalf of donors.

“I love KPU!” he said, noting that he holds two credentials from Kwantlen’s School of Business.

He recounted attending the dinner 11 years ago – that time as a scholarship recipient. So he knows full well the impact a donor can have on the lives of students.

“As a young immigrant student needing financial assistance, those scholarships and bursaries went a long way in supporting my education,” he said in his speech.

As the owner and CEO of Kitply Industries, he has been able to weave that personal understanding together with corporate social responsibility.

“At Kitply, giving back to the community is one of our five core

values and that is why we have always looked for ways to give back to my alma mater,” he explained.

“In 2016, we decided to donate \$20,000 to establish an Endowed Award at KPU for students enrolled in the Access Programs for People with Disabilities needing financial assistance.”

The award holds meaning for Ankit on two levels. First, it is named after his grandparents. But it was designed “to highlight my brother Amit Sharma’s life that changed after a serious motorcycle crash left him a quadriplegic five years ago.”

KPU’s Access Programs for People with Disabilities Department (APPD) offers 10-month employment programs for adults with a permanent disability or a combination of learning difficulties that hinder scholastic success. These programs prepare students for employment, volunteer work or further education.

And through his deep connection to this program, Ankit’s impact on KPU students goes even further.

Aimee Begalka, Associate Dean of KPU’s Faculty of Academic and Career Advancement was impressed by Ankit and his commitment to the APPD program.

“I was impressed not only by his ambition and energy, but also by his passion and enthusiasm for having APPD students do work experience placements with his company,” she said.

“I was struck by his suggestion that his favorite students to work with are those from APPD and by the fact that he encouraged other employers who might have placements available to consider hosting APPD students.

“He seems to be a young man with great generosity of spirit, which is so rare and which will probably be the key to his success.”

X



Ankit and his wife Amrit at the KPU 29th Annual Scholarships and Awards dinner



Aurelia Au and Wayne Poon own and operate Snackshot, a Hong Kong-inspired sweet shop.

# Aurelia Au & Wayne Poon

When Aurelia Au and Wayne Poon registered for KPU's Entrepreneurial Leadership Program together, little did they know they were beginning a journey that would lead to a romantic relationship and a wildly successful business in the break-neck paced restaurant industry.

Part of the program's practicum project requires students to develop a business plan. This led the pair to explore opportunities in the restaurant industry.

"We saw the potential," says Aurelia. "We're both food enthusiasts so I just looked at him [Wayne] and said, 'I love food, you love food, let's do something that's related to food.'"

Wayne was in and the pair set themselves to the task of launching a Hong Kong-inspired sweet shop reminiscent of the Cantonese food scene in the 1960s and '70s.

Located in the busy Vancouver neighbourhood of Marpole, Snackshot opened in the summer of 2017 mere months after Aurelia and Wayne graduated.

With zero advertising budget and primarily word-of-mouth buzz, Snackshot has line-ups out the door most nights thanks to its picture-worthy desserts and the Instagram-friendly décor inside the café.

Online reviews are overwhelmingly positive and an affirmation of the couple's concept: Hong Kong cuisine the way it used to be.

Aurelia and Wayne, who met at KPU in their third year of business, are now serving up traditional Cantonese sweet

soups "tong sui" for the social media age. Their menu includes a vitasoy red bean bulldog drink and a 9-dessert soup tasting platter with designs swirled on top.

It hasn't been all fun and selfies for the two KPU alumni. They ran into obstacles with city permits, equipment and human resources, but thanks to the challenges KPU business instructors Carlos Calao and Chamkaur Cheema and others had already put them through during their studies, the young entrepreneurs were able to adapt and persevere.

"Carlos is really experienced. He gave us a lot of real-life examples to understand the theories. Even in the practicum, I would go back to Carlos for advice outside his office hours," says Aurelia.

Wayne adds, "The instructors are very helpful at KPU. Whenever we needed advice, they would make time to answer our questions and guide us to solve our problems."

"The legendary Cheema," Aurelia laughs as she reminisces about their other instructor. "Back then we thought Cheema was too harsh, but now that we're out in the real world, we realized he was right."

"He warned us from day one that we would need more time to open our business. We didn't believe him, but he was right! He was like a fortune teller. Whatever he said happened."

The couple worked hard to get to where they are and they did it by keeping it in the KPU family with the help of not only their instructors' ongoing guidance, but also

relying on fellow KPU grads and friends who pitched in to assist on the front-of-house service when customer demand threatened to overwhelm Aurelia and Wayne entirely.

Almost all the staff who work at Snackshot are fellow KPU alumni.

KPU has proven instrumental for this young couple, from being the place where they met, to fostering their entrepreneurial spirit, to serving as their jumping-off point into running their own business.

"If it wasn't for the program, I don't think we would have started Snackshot."

- Aurelia Au

"The program got us really prepared for the work world," says Aurelia. "It isn't only about theories and exams, it's practical and about the real world. It was really trying to push us and prepare us for running a business. If it wasn't for the practicum, I don't think we would have started Snackshot."

"As a business owner, I'm dealing with accounting and HR every day. Everything that I'm calculating right now is from my operations class. HR is a huge issue I'm running into now so I'm digging out my HR textbooks. The program is very, very helpful. I'm telling everyone."

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Aurelia and Wayne preparing a 9-dessert soup tasting platter.

# Events & Activities



## 25th Music Anniversary Celebration – March 24, 2018

The KPU Music department is celebrating its 25th anniversary on Saturday, March 24. Join us for an evening of celebration and performance featuring KPU's Top 25 Music Alumni Recognition. Congratulations Top 25 Music Alumni!

- Michael Berger (Dip '01 Music) – Director of Music, Smule Inc.
- Lindsay Sutherland Boal (Dip '97, Music GS) – Actor/Performer
- Justin Christensen (Dip '95, Music GS) – Music Faculty, Aalborg University Denmark
- Kevin Davey (Cert '96, Music) – Canada's Beatles Tribute band – The Fab Fourever
- Taz Eddy (Dip '09, Music GS) – Professional Trumpet Player
- Megan Evans (Dip '03, Music) – Edmonton Symphony Orchestra
- Vashti Fairbairn (Dip '04, Music GS) – Owner/Founder, Music Box
- Janice Fehlauer (Associate Alumna) – Pianist
- Adam Fisher (Cert '03, Music) – Professional Opera Singer
- Jonathan Fisher (Associate Alumnus) – New Brunswick Youth Orchestra Sistema
- Emily Margot Gale (Dip '01, Music GS) – University of California, Music Scholar
- Jef Gibbons (Associate Alumnus) – Founder, Gibbons Creative
- Christina Kent (Cert '06, Music) – Opera Singer
- Melanie Krueger (Dip '95, Music GS) – Opera Singer
- Julia Russ (Dip '99, Music GS) – Piano Faculty, Cleveland Institute of Music
- Stephen Lochbaum (Associate Alumnus) – Guitarist
- Jeremy Ludwig (Associate Alumnus) – Opera Singer
- Tiana Malone (Dip '07, Music) – Music Faculty, Concordia University
- Stuart Martin (Dip '10, Music GS) – Music Director, Surrey City Orchestra
- Katie Miller (Dip '10, Music GS) – Opera Singer
- Rose-Ellen Nichols (Associate Alumna) – Opera Singer
- Jinhee Park (Associate Alumna) – Founder, Jinhee Park Productions
- Chelsea Rus (Dip '11, Music GS) – Opera Singer
- Tina Tate (Dip '01, Music GS) – Artistic Director, Music for Life School of Music
- Anna Vavilova (Associate Alumna) – Founder, World of Music and Arts

## KPU Foundation Golf Tournament – May 17, 2018

The 8th Annual KPU Foundation Golf Tournament will be held on Thursday, May 17 at Morgan Creek Golf Course – South Surrey. For details visit [kpu.ca/golf](http://kpu.ca/golf)

## KDocs Film Festival

KDocs Film Festival was held February 15-18, 2018, at the Vancouver International Film Centre/Vancity Theatre showcasing 14 award-winning documentaries, along with guest speakers, filmmakers, panel discussions, Q&As, and exhibitors. This annual event was sponsored by the KPU Alumni Association. Be sure to mark your calendars and join us next year! More details at [kdocsff.com/kdocs-2018/](http://kdocsff.com/kdocs-2018/)

## KPU Student Leadership Awards – April 26, 2018

Each year KPU recognizes students who while maintaining a good academic standard also make impactful contributions to KPU and the external community through the student leadership awards program. Students selected for their excellence are celebrated at an annual awards event. The KPU Alumni Association is a proud sponsor of this event to support the growth of these future alumni. KPUAA's 'Future Alumni Award' will also be presented at this event.



# KPU Alumni Association Chair Message

Dear KPU Alumni,

I'm thrilled to be addressing you via the inaugural KPU Alumni Magazine! These are exciting times indeed for KPU and the KPU Alumni Association (KPUAA).

This past year we have seen many firsts for our young association. KPU created the opportunity for a permanent Executive Director position and we were pleased to welcome Nancy Armitage into the position. With additional staff in the Alumni Affairs office to support our activities we successfully moved the KPUAA board of directors to a governance board model and developed a two-year strategic plan. This plan will help guide our efforts to increase our engagement with KPU alumni and continue to build on the many benefits and privileges we offer. You'll find more details on offerings exclusive to KPU alumni in the following pages.

The KPUAA is led by a young and growing board of dedicated alumni. As alumni we have a unique opportunity to help build on KPU's excellent reputation. We invite you to explore these opportunities to get involved either through KPUAA governance as a director on the board, as a volunteer, or to connect with fellow alumni through our events and chapters.

We look forward to future issues of the alumni magazine and hope you will stay connected with us.

All my best,

Ryan Keigher,  
Chair, KPU Alumni  
Association



## KPUAA Annual General Meeting and Networking event – September 17, 2018

Mark your calendars now to be sure to join us for another exciting evening of networking at the KPUAA Annual General Meeting.

## Brew Night! Coming soon!

The KPU Alumni Association hosted two exciting Brew Night events and we look forward to offering alumni more opportunities to network, sample the latest brew, while learning about KPU's brewing program.

## Financial Literacy event hosted by Coast Capital Savings – April 24, 2018

On Tues, April 24th, 2018, Coast Capital Savings will host a financial literacy workshop exclusive to KPU alumni. Join us and learn about such topics as paying down student loans, investing, smart money management, or starting a business. The event will include food, prizes and much more!

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**Stay posted for details of all our events and activities: [kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni)**

## Taryn Angus (Dip '17, EPT)

Graduating from KPU with an Environmental Protection Technology (EPT) diploma with a co-op designation was an exciting personal achievement of Taryn's. The EPT program broadened her knowledge about environmental protection, and inspired her to educate others on how to create a more sustainable environment. Since graduating from KPU, Taryn transferred to Royal Roads University to complete her degree in Environmental Science. With her experiences at KPU, she feels confident that she will succeed in her



new program. Taryn is excited about the future and is sincerely thankful to her KPU instructors who helped her in her journey. *Photo credit: Kyla Teljeur from Little Wolf Media*

## Stephanie Cadieux (Dip '94)

After graduating with her Marketing Management diploma, Stephanie did a few more years of study, then started a home-based business. Her next job opportunity was with a not-for-profit organization where she worked her way up to Director of Marketing, giving her the opportunity to participate in international development projects where she discovered a passion for

giving. Advocacy work led Stephanie to jump into provincial politics. Stephanie has been an MLA in Surrey for 8.5 years, served 6.5 years as a Cabinet Minister with the previous government and now holds the role of Critic for Advanced Education. This new role gives her the opportunity to advocate for the future of post-secondary education in B.C. and tour all the institutions talking with students, faculty and administration



on shaping our collective vision for advanced education policy that will shape BC's future. Stephanie thanks KPU for giving her the foundation on which to build her career.

## Daniel Chai (BBA '06 Journalism)

Daniel's journey since graduating from Kwantlen has been an exciting and varied one. He has worked as a reporter for the Surrey Now-Leader and Daily Hive Vancouver. He helped bring the 2010 Winter Games to the world as a communications coordinator with Bell, and has worked on numerous film projects with Imagine Create and Pacific NorthWest Pictures. He has also used his love of storytelling onstage with the award-winning improv troupe, The Fictionals Comedy Co. Daniel returned to Kwantlen to teach the weekly Kwantlen Improv drop-in workshops.



A proud KPU graduate, Daniel looks forward to what comes next. Learn more about him and The Fictionals at [thefictionals.com](http://thefictionals.com).

## Christine Dibble (Dip '04)

After completing her studies in General Music in 2004, Christine continued to study contemporary music history and piano performance at the University of Western Ontario. After traveling back to B.C., she completed a Bachelor of Music Therapy in 2009 from Capilano University, and became an Accredited Music Therapist with the Canadian Association of Music Therapy. After seven years of post-secondary studies,





Christine proceeded to move cross country once again to Wilfried Laurier University to complete a Master of Music Therapy in 2010. Now back in B.C. she currently owns and operates her own music therapy and music education practice, Music for Life. Christine credits her pursuit of academic endeavours beyond KPU to the late Dr. Elizabeth Lamberton, a former instructor of music history at KPU, who encouraged her to seek beyond her own goals and aspirations. She guided Christine to strive further than she ever thought possible. Christine thanks Dr. Lamberton, and Jane Hayes, and all the wonderful KPU Music Faculty for laying the ground work for students to build true long-lasting and impactful careers in the vast field of music.

### Randeep Dosanjh (Cert '07 CIS)

Randeep started his career in Computer Information Systems, before attending KPU. He was a factory worker in a manufacturing division of Cargill, when he developed an enterprise application on his own time. At the end of his shift that day, Cargill asked him to leave his overalls at the door and come to work in "slacks and a collared shirt" and work in the IT Department. They also sent him to Kwantlen for the Computer Information Systems program.

Randeep says he was not a great student, programming did not come easy and he repeated courses many times. He worked on contract for many companies, including Fortune 500 businesses, sometimes successfully and sometimes not so successfully. His perseverance paid off when he went on to be a Microsoft business partner first, then to partner with eight Fortune 500 firms.

Today, Randeep's operating name is Clickstream Consulting Inc., which is listed in the Microsoft Partner directory and is directly related to his education at Kwantlen.

### Thomas Antony Falcone (BA '12)

After graduating with a double minor in political science and philosophy, Thomas went on to earn an MA in political science from the University of Victoria. Grad school was followed by relocating to Asia where Thomas worked for an international law firm in Singapore and Malaysia. He returned to Vancouver in 2016 and now works as a consultant for Ernst & Young. Most recently, he completed his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of London with First Class Honours and was awarded a prize for one of the highest marks among 2017 graduates. Next Thomas is looking to pursue an LLM in either the U.K. or the U.S.

### Leanne Hall (Cert '15, APPD)

When Leanne graduated from Access with Disabilities the Vocational Skills Training and ECE Assistance program, she received the Lieutenant Governor's Award. The faculty helped her get a job at a group daycare centre when she was there for her work placement. To this day Leanne still works full time at the same daycare. She is grateful to all the faculty for their help and support throughout her time at KPU.

### Arafat Kalam (BA '13)

Arafat had his mind set on becoming a police officer but after completing his BA in Criminology at KPU, he started considering the required shift work and the toll the profession could have on him and his family. So he opted to embark on a Master's program at SFU which he completed in 2017. Arafat became one of the nearly 400 Notaries in B.C. and started working for an established firm in Langley. Looking back, he definitely appreciates his experiences at KPU. It was a KPU instructor who gave him the character reference he needed to



get into the Master's program. Arafat says that KPU is not only in his resume, it runs through his memories as one of the best educational institutions he has attended.

### Ameet Khabra (Dip '11)

Since graduating from Marketing Management, Ameet has lived in Surrey, Calgary and Edmonton, working for Auto Canada Inc. and Top Draw then ultimately starting her own online marketing agency, Ameet Khabra Marketing Inc. She has had the pleasure of working with all types of businesses and budgets as low as \$250 a month to \$250,000! Her clientele are agencies spread across the world from the UK



Continued >>>

to Australia to the Bahamas and across North America. Between 2016 and 2017, she has tripled the company revenue and now hopes to double it in 2018!

### Ayesha Khan (BA '17)

After graduating with her BA sociology and certificate in NGO & nonprofit studies, Ayesha landed an amazing job overseas at the International Events &



Conference Centre in Ghana and began working as the company's Managing Director. She has been coordinating conferences for the African Union and other UN bodies, and even met with the Presidents of Ghana and Equatorial Guinea. Ayesha thanks KPU and KPIRG for providing opportunities for students to get involved in conference planning and social justice. Catch her on Instagram @\_ayeshasultana

### Lisa MacCarthy (BFD '04)

After graduating from the Fashion Design and Technology Program, Lisa had the opportunity to move to New York to start her career in the fashion industry doing Cost Engineering. Thirteen years later, she has held roles in product development, sourcing, design operations and merchandising at amazing organizations such as Gap Inc.



and lululemon. Lisa attributes KPU's well-rounded apparel education and experience to her success in setting up her own business, supporting new and growing apparel brands and building profitable sustainable businesses. Check out her website for resources and tools for new designers, and more information about her consulting services [youratic.com](http://youratic.com)

### Mitchel Mahler (Cert '88, Business)

Obtaining his certificate in 1988 became Mitchel's foundation when he entered into the business world. He was hired as an Operations Manager for a large western distribution company and quickly ended up as the VP of Sales and General Manager. Several years later, Mitchel is now Director of Training and Education for Hyland's Homeopathic. In his role, he manages education for all of North America, including online education programs and international accounts. Although achieving multiple designations since, Mitchel attributes his Kwantlen experience as the key to his success.

### Mirek Marounek (BA '07)

Upon completing his BA in psychology, Mirek was immediately hired by

Wilson and Banwell for their Employees Assistance Program. He attended UBC's professional teaching program and completed a BA in Education. He worked in Korea for 2 months and was hired at School District 36 as an elementary school teacher. Mirek loves his job, and he is grateful to Kwantlen for his start. He fondly remembers his professors who gave him the foundation to succeed.

### Chad Nehring (Dip '12, GBS)

After graduating with a diploma in General Business Studies, Chad decided to jump right back into KPU's BBA program in Entrepreneurial Leadership. He worked full time throughout his studies, starting as an order picker in a warehouse. These skills were developed with an education from KPU and he is now a Business Systems Analyst at one of Canada's largest electrical cable suppliers.

Most recently, Chad was a founding partner for a start-up called 'In-Need No-More', which helped close to 500 underprivileged elementary school students by providing them with school supplies.

According to Chad going back to school was the best decision, ever! He can confidently say "I wouldn't be where I am today without my experience at Kwantlen". Excited for the future, Chad will graduate in the spring of 2018.

### Janna Rudetsky (BBA '12, Accounting)

After graduating Janna worked at PwC for three years while completing her CA, CPA. After receiving her designation, she made a move to Los Angeles, where she works at The Siegfried Group CPA firm. There she works with Fortune 1000 companies, across all industries, on their most important projects. In her spare time Janna enjoys the many things LA has to offer, one of which is hiking



**Kritika Sohi (BBA '12 Accounting)**

After graduating, Kritika went on to pursue her Chartered Accountant designation while articling and advancing her career with Grant Thornton LLP. Her career took many interesting turns, providing her with opportunities beyond her imagination. With a dream to be a successful entrepreneur, with two other partners Kritika launched an accounting practice called Abstract Financial Consulting. The company's mission is to maximize the value of accountants to small businesses and other entrepreneurs. Kritika also teaches in the business

behind the iconic Hollywood sign. Janna thanks KPU for opening the doors to her career and encouraging her to pursue all her globe-trotting dreams.

**Jordan Scott (BBA '15)**

Jordan graduated from the BBA Entrepreneurial Leadership program along with friend Jordan Howard (BBA '15). They both worked in finance after university and last year they got their real estate licenses and started their own company – HowardScott Real Estate. They exceeded expectations and quickly



became two of the top performers in their office. Check them out at [howardscott.ca](http://howardscott.ca)



program at Stenberg College. Learn more about Kritika's career path at [abstractfinancial.ca](http://abstractfinancial.ca)

**Sam Stringer (BDF '16)**

KPU and the Wilson School of Design not only prepared Sam for a career in Fashion Design, but launched her into one immediately. The day after her graduation show, she was sponsored by Vancouver Fashion Week (VFW) to showcase her first collection on the runway. Since then, Sam has shown at VFW again, at Amazon Fashion Week Tokyo and at Eco Fashion Week Australia. Her second collection featured

on British Vogue online. When she is not working on her own brand of custom evening gowns, she works at KPU as the Program Assistant for the Fashion Design and Technology program. Sam says that coming back to work at KPU felt like coming home to her family and the



connections she has made as a student and as staff have helped her immensely in her personal business. Sam is grateful to KPU for the continued support and guidance!

**Krystin Tysire (Dip '15 Fashion Marketing)**

After graduating, Krystin landed an internship at a well-known lifestyle publication in Vancouver, which gave her the opportunity to travel, contribute to the print publication and manage their social media channels. In the past few months, she has honed her skills and taken the leap to working fulltime as a blogger and influencer. Krystin thanks KPU for giving her the stepping stones towards a bright, independent and passionate future. Check out her blog at [girlinbetsey.com](http://girlinbetsey.com)



**KPU Alumni submit a brief write-up to [alumni@kpu.ca](mailto:alumni@kpu.ca) telling us what you've been up to since graduation and we may write about you in the next issue of the KPU ALUMNI MAGAZINE**

# New Home for KPU's Wilson School of Design

A long-held dream became reality on Jan 3, 2018 when students, faculty and staff of the Chip and Shannon Wilson School of Design walked through the doors of the beautiful and innovative purpose-built building that is their new home at the KPU Richmond campus.

Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, was joined by KPU President Dr. Alan Davis and project donors Chip and Shannon Wilson at a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the building.

The new building will provide a space for a range of existing design programs at KPU, such as the bachelor of design in fashion and technology, bachelor of interior design, and continuing and professional education. It will also house KPU's product design and technical apparel design programs, which educate students in the

development of performance, technical, medical, and protective apparel and gear.

Encouraging collaboration was at the heart of the design of the building, which features stunning glass walls throughout. It is bright, transparent and interactive – the perfect setting for innovation in design.

"B.C.'s environment creates a demand for technical apparel that is unparalleled in the world," said Chip Wilson. "The province is home to world-class technical apparel companies, and we now have a state-of-the-art facility and training programs to supply the technical demand."

"Our vision is for B.C. to continue as a globally recognized leader in athletic performance apparel," said Shannon Wilson. "Chip and I share a passion for nurturing creative talent, and we are thrilled to partner with KPU to help develop the next generation of designers and innovators."

The \$36-million building was funded through a \$12-million contribution from the B.C. government, \$12 million from KPU and \$12 million in donations that include \$8 million from Chip and Shannon Wilson.

"The KPU community is very appreciative of the support we have received from the Wilsons and the Province and their recognition of our history of excellence in design education," said President Davis at the ceremony. "The new school of design building gives us the opportunity to expand our programming, research and innovation activities, so our students can continue to innovate and drive a burgeoning B.C. economy."

The original building at Kwantlen's Richmond campus opened its doors in August 1992.



The new Wilson School of Design building at KPU Richmond.



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:**

Ready to cut the ribbon: (L-R) Ken Hahn, past chair of the KPU Foundation, Hanne Madsen, chair of KPU's Board of Governors, KPU President Dr. Alan Davis, Shannon Wilson, the Honourable Melanie Mark, Chip Wilson, KPU Product Design student Leah Katz, Dean Carolyn Robertson, Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie and KPU Elder-in-Residence, Lekeyten.

Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Technology spoke at the ribbon cutting.

Kwantlen First Nation Elder Lekeyten, who is KPU's First Elder-in-Residence, provided a blessing and words of inspiration at the event.

# Meet your Alumni Affairs team!

The Alumni Affairs office at KPU is your go to for all things alumni.

Shina Boparai, Advancement Officer, Alumni Affairs, has been with KPU since 2010. Her hard work and dedication has been instrumental in building the foundation for alumni engagement programs at KPU.

Nancy Armitage, Manager of Alumni Affairs and Executive Director to the KPU Alumni Association has been with KPU since October 2016 and works to support the strategic vision of the KPU Alumni Association.

Visit us online at [kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni)



Alumni Affairs Office staff Nancy Armitage and Shina Boparai.



Top and bottom: KPU Alumni Association 2017 AGM and networking event.

# Being KPU Alumni has its benefits!

Get your alumni benefits card now and start taking advantage of these great opportunities:

- Networking events and opportunities hosted by the KPU Alumni Association
- Access to KPU Career Services and online job postings
- Lifelong privileges at the KPU Coast Capital Savings Libraries
- Free access to KPU's Fitness Centres

Discounts on:

- KPU bookstore (excluding text books)
- KPU conference facilities and meeting room services
- Commercial printing through KPU Print Services
- KPU recreation's fitness programs
- KPU's Cloverdale Campus Automotive Shop. To book an appointment, call 604.598.6113

Affinity Partnerships give you prime discounts and advantages while supporting the KPU Alumni Association:

- Coast Capital Savings Financial Services and Life Insurance – Coast Visa Desjardins credit card opened by KPU students or alumni.
- TD Insurance – provides savings through lower preferred insurance rates on your home or tenant insurance.



For more information on alumni benefits, privileges and services contact the Alumni Affairs office at [alumni@kpu.ca](mailto:alumni@kpu.ca)

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\*Conditions and transaction fees may apply. Must be 17 years or older and a BC resident. Offer subject to change without notice.

# Alumni Stay Connected & Get Involved!

## KPU Alumni Association Board of Directors

The KPUAA welcomes applications to fill vacancies on the board throughout the year. This is a great opportunity for you to stay connected, contribute to KPU's outstanding reputation, build your network with other service oriented alumni, and add to your professional portfolio. See details and download an application at [kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni)

## Alumni Chapters

Alumni Chapters are a way to stay connected with your special group of former classmates, meet new people and be involved with KPU in a way that is meaningful to you. Chapters can organize events and activities that promote the interests of your particular group of alumni. Both the KPU Alumni Association and the Alumni Affairs office are pleased to provide funding and support for new alumni chapters. If this interests you be sure to check out the Chapter Handbook at [kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni) or contact the Alumni Affairs office at [alumni@kpu.ca](mailto:alumni@kpu.ca) or call 604.599.3158.

## Distinguished Alumni Awards

KPU Alumni are everywhere, doing amazing things. Since 2007, KPU has been recognizing these exceptional individuals. If you know of someone who has either enhanced the reputation of the university, or made contributions through their outstanding career, public or community service, athletic, arts and culture, or academic achievements, you are encouraged to nominate them now.



**Keep in touch with what's happening at KPU and with our active alumni:**

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Contact the Future Students' Office for details.**

604.599.3030 or [study@kpu.ca](mailto:study@kpu.ca)

