

# KPU Alumni Magazine

Issue 2 | 2019

THE  
FEDERAL  
STORE

LUNCHEONETTE & GARDEN

## Colette Griffiths

“My BBA prepared me  
incredibly well for owning  
The Federal Store.” Page 10

DISCOVER ALUMNI  
BENEFITS Page 42

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# KPU alumni stories continue to inspire

When you think of KPU, what comes to mind? A proverbial “all-nighter” as you prepared for a final exam? An awe-inspiring opportunity to dig into a hands-on learning experience that continues to resonate with you today? Or the immense pride you felt when you finally put your hands on your parchment, and you were able to say officially, “I did it!” Your very next thought may well have been, “Look out world, here I come!”

Well look out world, indeed. In this second issue of our KPU Alumni Magazine, we bring you an amazing selection of stories about people who have made a difference – in their business or industry, or in their community. Some are KPU’s version of pioneers.

In this edition you will meet one of the first graduates of KPU’s acupuncture diploma – the first offered by a public post-secondary in British Columbia. You will also meet the first winner of the Coast Capital Savings Youth Entrepreneurship Award – a business alumna who received seed money from Coast Capital for her fledgling business in Vancouver. Then there is the brewmaster who was part of the first cohort in KPU’s Brewing and Brewery Operations Diploma.

These are just some of the stories you will find in this issue. Each is unique, but with a common thread: the positive impact that KPU had not just on their experience as a student, but on their personal and professional development since graduating.

When I think of KPU, I think of all the alumni success stories I have heard over the last six years. We have told only a few of them in the first two editions of this magazine. Each and every one of them is inspiring. I know there are a lot more stories out there, and we

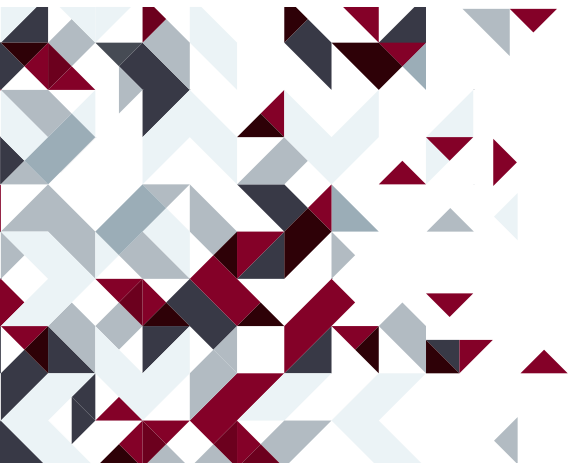
**“An amazing selection of stories about people who have made a difference – in their business or industry, or in their community”**

look forward to connecting with you more frequently so you can share those stories not just with the Alumni Affairs team, but with others in the community who will be amazed by where our alumni have gone and the wonderful things they are doing.

We are very proud of our alumni. Your success is KPU’s success.

Sincerely,

Marlyn Graziano  
Vice President, External Affairs



# KPU ALUMNI MAGAZINE Issue 2 | 2019

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# LOOKING AHEAD to 2023

Welcome to the second edition of the KPU Alumni Magazine. I am sure you will be inspired by this edition's stories of KPU alumni who are making their mark in the world. We are very proud to profile and share the accomplishments of our alumni. I am amazed each and every day by the great work being

**“Wherever you are,  
and whatever you do,  
you take a bit  
of KPU with you”**

done by our graduates in business, industry, university research and graduate studies, the not-for-profit sector, our communities, and beyond. Seeing a collection of these stories in the pages of a magazine is indeed remarkable.

Our alumni are KPU's greatest ambassadors. You shine in the workplace and as community leaders. Some of you are philanthropists, giving back to your alma mater by paying it forward to future alumni, supporting our current students with awards, scholarships and bursaries. Others of you give us the gift of time, serving on KPU boards, our program advisory committees and volunteering as mentors. Still others of you have ventured into the world of community leadership, supporting and leading community groups, and even standing for election at the local, provincial and national levels. Wherever you are, and whatever you do, you take a bit of KPU with you.

The KPU Alumni Association just celebrated its 10th anniversary. We have come a long way in that first decade. This magazine is proof of that. Our Alumni Affairs office has grown, and we look forward to being more connected with you than ever before.

KPU's new strategic plan – affectionately referred to as VISION 2023 – has three main areas of focus: to enhance the student experience, to enrich the experience of our employees, and to delight our friends in their KPU experience.

Our alumni infuse each of these areas. All of you were once students at KPU, and many of you have returned to pursue further studies. A number of you have joined us as employees – something I am very proud of. And all of you are included in the “friends of KPU” group. We want you to continue to be proud of KPU as it evolves and matures to embrace our polytechnic university mandate. I see that mandate as a key differentiator for KPU, as we educate the leaders of the future in the South Fraser region and beyond.

So we look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress as we embark on VISION 2023. By embracing its goals and objectives, I know that KPU truly will transform lives and empower positive change. That is our mission – one that I am sure will make our alumni proud.

Alan Davis  
President and Vice-Chancellor



# KPU EXPANDS INTO THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN SURREY

Kwantlen Polytechnic University has a brand new presence right next to Surrey City Hall.

KPU's fifth campus is located in the Civic Hotel, in the heart of downtown Surrey.

Located at 13485 Central Avenue, this new campus is conveniently located directly on SkyTrain and adjacent to the Surrey Central Station and bus loop.

Situated on the Surrey Centre Plaza across from the iconic Surrey Centre Library, the campus is within walking distance of local restaurants, coffee shops and shopping.

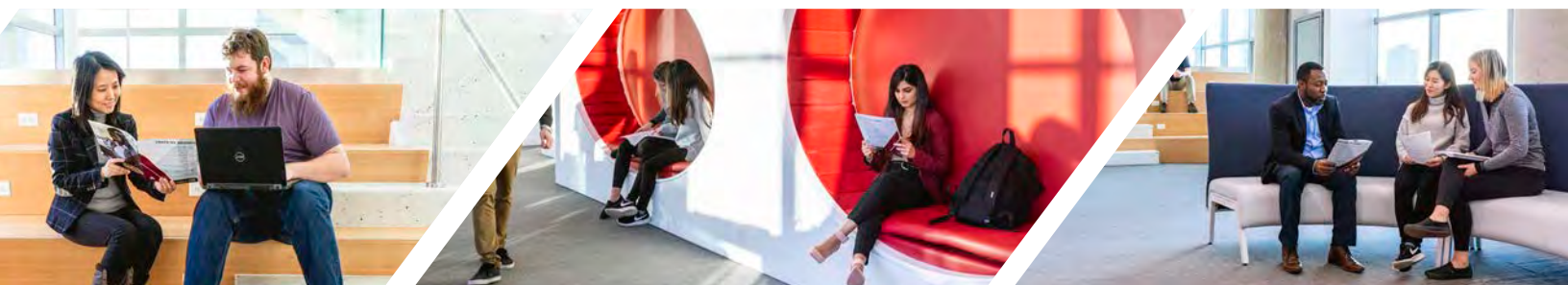
The campus itself, which opened in January 2019, is accessed via an elevator from the Surrey City Hall parkade, or from an elevator in the ground-floor lobby of the newly opened Civic Hotel, currently Surrey's tallest building.

KPU's renowned School of Business anchors the academic programming at KPU Civic Plaza with post-baccalaureate and graduate diploma options that will allow working professionals to enhance their undergraduate degree with new credentials in high-demand career sectors: Green Business Management and Sustainability, Global Business Management, Operations and Supply Chain Management, Technical Management and Operations, and Accounting, with a path to gaining a CPA designation.

Flexible scheduling and innovative teaching options will allow working professionals to balance their current careers with their future aspirations. Evening and weekend classes are a vital component of the learning eco-system at KPU Civic Plaza, where a wide range of responsive, community- and industry-oriented non-credit courses will be offered for those seeking ongoing professional development and vocational growth.

KPU Civic Plaza also features an Assessment and Testing Centre designed to meet the requirements for providing third-party language testing, invigilation, professional and preparatory services.

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## “When I saw t would bring

Whether it’s a Clover Indian Pale Ale or a Lemon Drop Kettle Sour, Ashley Brooks brews good beer.

An award-winning Brewmaster, Ashley is already making waves in the B.C. craft beer industry after graduating from Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Brewing and Brewery Operations diploma program just a couple of years ago.

She won silver at the 2016 Vancouver International Craft Beer Awards in the light standard category for Big Ridge Brewing Co.’s 152 Lager. She had been hired as Head Brewmaster at Big Ridge shortly after graduating from KPU. In the same year, she also placed first at the B.C. Beer Awards for her brewery’s Clover IPA in the British pale ale category, beating 16 other entries.

Part of KPU’s first cohort of brewing students, Ashley was one of only two women in the program at the time. She broke into an industry traditionally dominated by men, but was fortunate to learn from a trailblazer; KPU brew instructor Nancy More is North America’s first woman Brewmaster.

“I really liked Nancy not just because she’s a woman, but because she’s big in the industry and very smart. To me she’s a rock star,” says Ashley.

In the last couple of years Ashley has seen a noticeable increase in the number of women in the industry. “There’s a lot more females now even from when I started, which is great.”

Ashley and Nancy are working together to pave the way for more women technical

# Ashley Brooks

## “The KPU program, I thought it brought everything together.”

brewers at the Siris Cask Festival, which features over 40 beers made exclusively by women. Ashley is the festival's Associate Director, and Nancy acts as MC. The annual event showcases the skill of women brewers in B.C. and across Canada and proceeds fund a bursary for a female student in KPU's brewing program.

Ashley headed back to KPU Langley's brew lab herself this summer to participate in the first alumni collaboration beer series. Brew alumni partner with their former teachers to create a limited batch of specialty beers available to the public for purchase and free tastings. Ashley and instructor Martina Solano Bielen joined forces to brew a Lemon Drop Kettle Sour.

“Martina and I came up with the recipe together,” says Ashley. “(We) made a good little batch and dry hopped it as well. I heard it was pretty well received. It's a unique style.”

Ashley brought a growler back to share with her appreciative colleagues at Four Winds Brewing, where she now works as Quality Control Manager.

Ashley splits her time at Four Winds between the lab and the brewery's tanks in a somewhat similar fashion to her post-secondary experience at KPU. While much of the hands-on program is spent brewing beer, time is also spent on microbiology and brewing chemistry, as well as on production and packaging, sales and promotion, and management and supervisory skills.

“The whole course is definitely geared towards anything you'd find in a brewery,

from working with the yeast, propagation and contaminants,” says Ashley.

Ashley's background is in microbiology; she had a science degree and 10 years of service industry experience under her belt before coming to KPU. While she had met with beer representatives and brewmasters during her restaurant days, it was only after attending a microbiology lecture on beer and wine fermentation that she seriously considered a career in craft beer.

“I thought brewing was a neat way to use my degree, but I knew I needed to know more,” says Ashley. “When I saw the KPU program, I thought it would bring everything together.”

Truer words were never spoken, as Ashley not only found a career that built upon her previous education and experience, but a partner. She and fellow KPU brew student Mike Nicholson started dating and are now engaged with long-term plans to eventually open a brewpub of their own. Mike graduated from the program along with Ashley and is the Head Brewer at Britannia Brewing.

For now they're both happy to be working for respected craft breweries and expanding their knowledge and skills in an ever-changing and creative industry.

“There's always more to learn. I enjoy learning about new innovative things,” says Ashley. “Now I'm in the environment I need to be in, and KPU helped me get there.”

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## final words

**Favourite beer:** My favourite style of beer is probably Gose, it's a kettle sour beer with sea salt. It's not too sour. It's an easy-drinking beer and I'm a salt fanatic.

### What are you working on now?

We've got a Berliner Weisse style beer Pequeño Cabo; we just filled our tequila barrels and we're letting it age for a year. Four Winds has a lot of barrel-aged beer and is always working on new and interesting things in addition to our regularly offered beers. We also have Edna, which is a crab-apple and cranberry sour farmhouse ale.

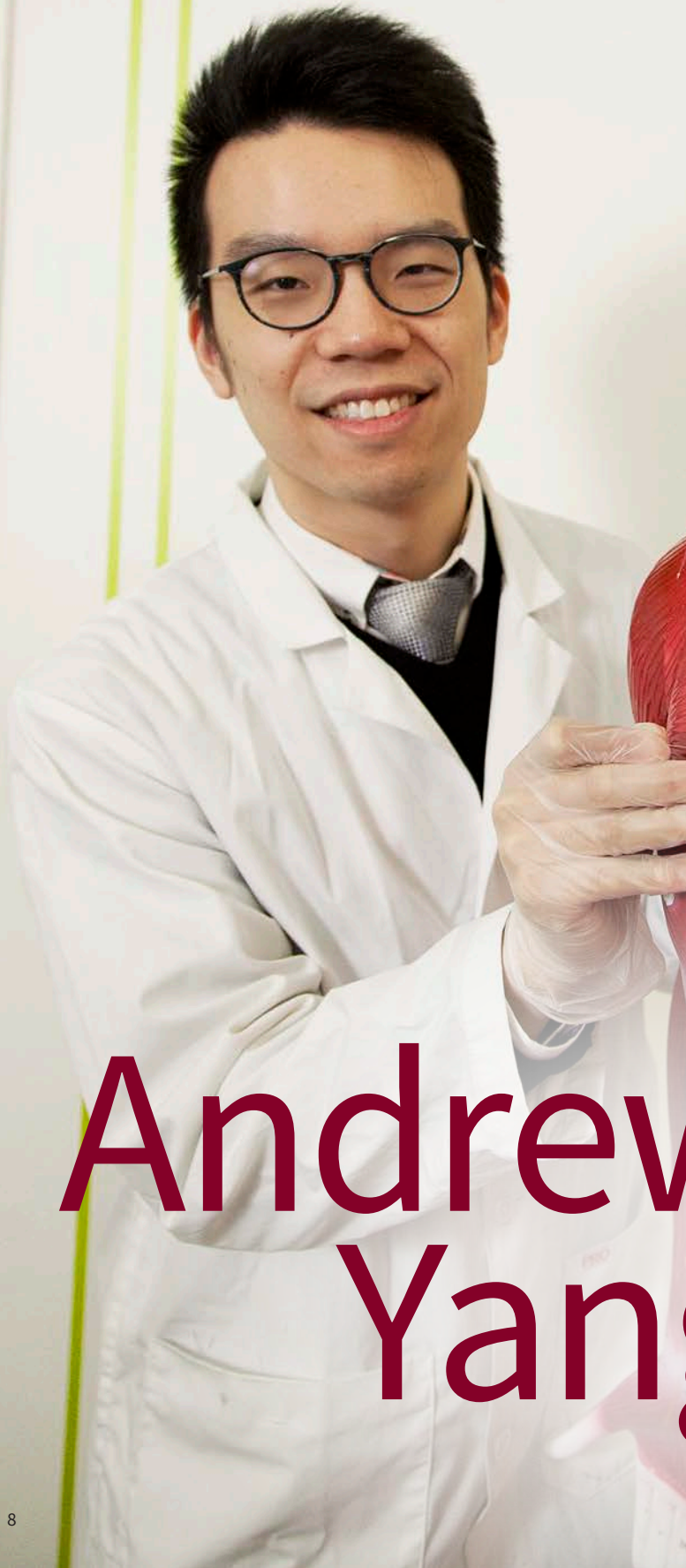
### If you went back to school at KPU, what would you take?

I've heard they've opened a program in the weed industry. I find that interesting because when I started the brewery program, it was also a new program and the craft beer industry was really growing. I'd be interested in learning about that [cannabis] now that it's legal.

**Favourite moment at KPU?** Meeting my fiancé Mike Nicholson. We met in the program. Getting to know him was definitely a highlight. It was very helpful for studying. We're getting married in Cuba in March.

### What was the biggest benefit of your KPU education?

Getting in contact with people in the industry. I went to one of the meetings when I first started at KPU and they had a list on the wall of potential jobs. I got my first job brewing from that list, at Yaletown Brewing. It was very helpful for me. I learned a lot on the floor really early on. I like to keep good contacts. You never know when you might need a certain type of yeast. That's another good thing about KPU. We stay in touch with other grads who work at other breweries.



# Andrew Yang



# “I can’t wait for what is to come.”

Sliding a needle under an eyeball is one of the trickier acupuncture points Andrew Yang mastered while studying at KPU.

“When we were practicing it, we were all nervous,” says Andrew. “But our prof was very experienced and calm and guided us through it.”

Andrew is one of the first graduates of KPU’s Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Acupuncture diploma program, which launched in 2016 – making the university the first public post-secondary institution in the province to offer such a program.

Combining ancient Chinese philosophy with Western biomedical science, the program provides students with the necessary skills to work in the healthcare fields of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. The curriculum includes 460 hours of clinical work under the supervision of practising and experienced acupuncturists.

Andrew did his clinical rotations with several established and well-regarded clinics including: UniHealth Group, A & T Pain Solutions Acupuncture Centre, and Viva Care.

“The most valuable experience I gained from it was the patient interaction,” says Andrew. “Applying the theoretical knowledge we learned in class in an actual clinic was very helpful.”

Taking the next step in practising acupuncture, Andrew is currently taking his professional license exams, which are issued by the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of B.C., the regulatory body for practising acupuncture in the province. After his final exam, Andrew plans to gain experience working at an acupuncture clinic in Richmond with the long-term goal of one day opening his own clinic.

While Andrew has always had a passion for healthcare, volunteering at numerous health facilities as a teenager and young adult, it was an early childhood experience with acupuncture that set him on the path to a career in alternative medicine.

“My mom has asthma. At that time, I had weaker lungs and my mom was afraid it would develop into asthma. I was always coughing, wheezing. I saw this TCM doctor and after a year of acupuncture he was able to boost my immune system. At the time I thought it was hocus-pocus, you know?” laughs Andrew. “I was only eight or nine years old. I had no idea how it worked. But as I got older I started to appreciate the benefits more. I was very fortunate to meet that TCM doctor; he helped me out so much.”

After learning about the new acupuncture program at KPU, Andrew enrolled expecting to learn how to help patients. What he gained was a shift in perception.

“When I started the program, I was expecting to help patients. I wasn’t expecting a shift in mindset,” says Andrew. “Learning TCM has helped me perceive things in a more holistic manner. From the traditional Chinese medicine perspective there is a balance – yin and yang – that isn’t measureable, but it’s there.”

Andrew is set to embark on a career in a healthcare field that is gaining traction across North America as more people are seeking complementary treatments and alternatives to Western medicine.

“It’s only the start of the journey, but it’s already been quite rewarding,” says Andrew. “I can’t wait for what is to come.”

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## final words

### Biggest myth about acupuncture?

Acupuncture needles don’t have to hurt. They aren’t very thick. They’re very thin. When people think of needles, they often think of needles for taking blood. Those are thick because blood has to travel through it, but acupuncture needles are hair-thin. Another myth is that acupuncture is just for muscle pain and soreness. Actually, it can treat a lot of internal things such as colds, headaches, dizziness, constipation, infertility, and gynecological issues, a lot of everyday things.

### Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?

Dr. Yan Qu was really influential in teaching us. Her first degree was a bachelor of medicine in China and then she went into TCM. She was able to answer our questions quite thoroughly.

**Fun fact:** Andrew won second place in a Mandarin singing contest for university students who are not native Mandarin speakers. He entered the contest with the encouragement Dr. Yanfeng Qu, his Mandarin instructor at KPU. Mandarin classes are part of KPU’s acupuncture program and are designed to provide an advantage in clinical settings.





# Colette Griffiths

Pull up a chair in a brightly lit and inviting Mount Pleasant neighbourhood café for good conversation, coffee and the smell of fresh-baked goods made in-house.

Welcome to The Federal Store.

The brainchild of Colette Griffiths and her partner Chris Allen, the couple took over the coveted corner property's lease soon after it had been vacated in 2015 while Colette was in the final semester of her business degree at KPU and working full-time in the restaurant industry.

"When these opportunities present themselves, you have to make the most of it," says Colette. "During my studies, any time I had to do a project or report, I focussed on the restaurant industry because I always had the idea of owning my own restaurant. A café is different from a restaurant, but my education taught me to analyze and project markets. My BBA prepared me incredibly well for owning The Federal Store."

Colette had been working in the restaurant industry for 15 years when she started KPU's Entrepreneurial Leadership (ENTR) program. She was a bit older than many of her classmates, but she

also stood out because she didn't dress or act like a typical business student. She valued non-conformity and still does. As a supporter of local artisans and neighbourhood entrepreneurs, Colette prioritizes preserving accessible community and cultural spaces.

"With the cost of housing and cost of space in general pushing everyone to leave [Vancouver] I think it has become even more important to create a space that will support cultural engagement," says Colette.

Mixed residential and commercial spaces are becoming a rarity in Vancouver. And that's really what The Federal Store is about – creating a space for neighbours to come together and talk over coffee, over a meal, to connect with one another as a community.

The Federal Store is a throwback to an earlier time.

The cozy café pays homage to the corner grocery store that stood there previously for decades. The name and the vintage red sign hanging prominently over the entrance are the same since the '60s. Colette and her husband, with the help of friends and family, completely renovated

the interior to a modern mid-century aesthetic. Geometric black, white and yellow tiles hand cut by Colette and Chris make the floor pop. Minimalistic chrome-legged stools, folding tables and chairs positioned around ample windows add to the popular hangout's ambience.

The Federal Store's appealing aesthetic was funded by Coast Capital Savings Youth Entrepreneurship Award. The award provides \$5,000 in seed money to a KPU student or recent graduate who successfully pitches a new business to a Dragon's Den style panel of judges.

Colette's practicum instructor Chamkaur Cheema told her about the award and encouraged her to apply. She was chosen for her impressive business plan and industry knowledge.

Chamkaur also lent a hand in the early stages of setting up the café by helping Colette find the right people to assist with inspections, and came out to Vancouver to visit the store after the opening.

"A lot of people think he's a super hard ass," says Colette about Chamkaur. "But he really went above and beyond to prepare me. I really appreciate the close relationship I've had with him."

*Continued on page 12*



Colette ran into multiple challenges opening up her business. In addition to her renovation application to the city being held up for months, a BC Hydro quote went up by more than 700 per cent after a significant sum of money had already been invested in electrical upgrades.

“It would’ve bankrupted us,” says Colette whose tenacity brought BC Hydro back down closer to its original quote.

“If I hadn’t done the ENTR program, I don’t think I would’ve had the resources to face some of the challenges we ran into,” explains Colette. “I guess it was the work ethic that the ENTR program instils in you. They really push you. They push you outside your comfort zone in a way I don’t think any other business program does. Once you get into the real world, no one is pulling any punches. If you want to run your own business, you need a program that’s going to show you what that really means.”

Colette would know; her café is doing so well that she left her long-time job as General Manager of a gastro pub in Gastown this past spring to run The Federal Store full-time.

Initially, Colette took KPU’s ENTR program because she didn’t know what she wanted to do beyond running a business.

“I thought, ‘Oh, I’ll take some business classes.’ If I could have told my 20-year-old self where I’d be today, I would be very happy.”

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**“It has become even more important to create a space that will support cultural engagement.”**



## *final* words

**If you went back to school, what would you take?** I would take this program again in a heartbeat.

**Why should employers hire KPU alumni?** The real-world experience you gain from the program is unmatched. There are lots of academic programs out there that teach students the theory behind business, but in reality employers want people who can produce results, not just someone who can explain the theory behind the results. That's where Kwantlen excels.

**What was your best KPU day?** What stands out the most was consulting on a project for a company and hitting sand during my practicum. It was just me and Nitesh [Nitesh Verma, BBA ENTR '14]; we were just exhausted, running on too much caffeine. That project was the culmination of four years. We felt like we had brought real value to the company.

**Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?** There were a number of professors who were supportive during the journey. In addition to Chamkaur, Mike [Ford, business strategy teacher] was really great. He'd come by the store to say hi.

**How have you stayed connected to KPU?** I've had KPU student groups come to the store to problem-shoot issues. The restaurant industry is stressful and doesn't pay well. Few servers can afford to live in the neighbourhoods they work in so one student group recommended more housing co-ops in the city. Another did a viability report on Belvedere Court, a heritage building in Mount Pleasant being 'renovicted.' So many small business owners and artists spent time living in that building. It's so sad. It's a typical story of what's going on in the city right now. Unfortunately it [Belvedere Court] wasn't viable, but learning that saved me so much time.



# Colleen Spier *née Nimchuk*

When Colleen Nimchuk first walked the halls of Kwantlen, she was a single mom with a Grade 9 education, newly aware of her Métis heritage.

Today she's a champion of Indigenous legal rights, advocating for Indigenous People as the Indigenous Justice Strategy Executive Director with the B.C. Ministry of Attorney General. In this new position operating out of the Justice Services Branch, Colleen's work is cut out for her. She is responsible for the B.C. Indigenous Justice Strategy, which will focus on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, decreasing the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the justice system, addressing violence against Indigenous peoples – especially women and girls – improving access to justice and justice services for Indigenous peoples, and designing services for Indigenous peoples that are culturally relevant and appropriate.

It's been a long climb for Colleen – from obtaining her Adult Basic Education (ABE) at what was then Kwantlen University College to becoming a lawyer and working within the highest echelons of the province's justice system appearing at both the provincial and Supreme Court levels in British Columbia. But her motivation remains the same – a better future for Indigenous children, families and communities.

"I was 23 and a single mother with a Grade 9 education who wanted to do something to enhance my career options so I could have a stable income and a good life for myself and my daughter," says Colleen. "I've always had a strong passion to advocate for people without a voice. Once I realized I was a single mother with limited options, I knew that I was someone I needed to advocate for."

Colleen looked at Kwantlen for upgrading. It was an adjustment to go back to thinking like a student, but she had help. April Wright, who worked in the Admissions department, was a constant for the young mom, always there to answer questions Colleen hadn't even thought to ask.

"Every day I was at Kwantlen, April was always there," says Colleen. "It was April who asked me if I had looked into a student loan to further my education, and April who directed me to the right people. I had never had that much support before."

Colleen had a difficult upbringing. Her parents were divorced and she had no extended family support. Her older sister left their home at 16 and Colleen ran away at 14. She spent three

weeks hitchhiking across Canada and through Washington State before police picked her up. She was returned home to her birthplace, in Calgary, Alta., but left again at 15, this time for good, and supported herself working three jobs, until age 21 when she moved to Vancouver.

"I grew up in a very dysfunctional family with parents who divorced when I was around 11 years old. During the volatile separation and subsequent divorce, our parents placed us children in the centre of their disputes, expecting us to choose sides. That process was grueling on me and my sister and deprived us of opportunities," says Colleen.

She also grew up unaware of her Métis ancestry. Raised in Calgary, Colleen recalls her mom speaking a few Cree words and the family eating traditional Métis food, but at the time it was just part of her life and she didn't question it. It was only later as an adult that she had the context to recognize the Indigenous elements of her life, which were later confirmed through a genealogy test.

When she became a mom herself, Colleen didn't have relatives to help her raise her daughter, but she did have help from her community. Colleen and her daughter lived in the Newton neighborhood of Surrey, home to the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Surrey campus. Upon hearing that Colleen was considering upgrading, her neighbours – the Takher family – offered to watch her daughter while she took night classes.

"The Takher family had three children of their own who hung out with my daughter all the time," says Colleen. "My daughter became part of their family as well. Everybody chipped in."

With the help of the Takher family, April Wright, and other Kwantlen staff and faculty, Colleen finished her ABE and went on to complete her Associate of Arts degree at Kwantlen, majoring in Psychology and graduating with distinction, and as the President's Outstanding Graduate in her graduating year.

Three instructors that stand out for Colleen all these years later are psychology instructors Farhad Dastur and Steve Charlton, and English instructor Mary Griffin.

"Those three instructors were not just educators, they were really there for you; interested in supporting you. I didn't have family. I didn't have people cheering me on. They stuck out because they talked to me about everything. They were

*Continued on page 16*



“...every accomplishment is worth celebrating.”

great encouragers and motivators,” says Colleen. “I visit campus every time I’m in town, as I now reside in Victoria, B.C., and the last time I was there, I attempted to contact all three. I couldn’t locate anyone, but Farhad heard I was looking for him [he was off-campus] and called me, and we had a 20-minute conversation.”

During her time at Kwantlen, Colleen was the Aboriginal student representative for the Kwantlen Student Association working under Darlene Willier, who was a great Indigenous mentor. Colleen benefitted from forming friendships with fellow student parents that have lasted decades and continue to this day.

The Kwantlen memory that stands out most for Colleen is the graduation ceremony for her ABE program, where she would have received her Grade 12 Dogwood Diploma. Colleen was told she could be part of the ceremony, but after signing up and realizing the event was the formal Convocation ceremony where all of the undergraduate students are presented with their degrees, she decided not to attend.

“I felt literally embarrassed to cross the stage with everyone who was getting their important diplomas so I stayed home,” admits Colleen. “A couple of hours before grad I felt poorly about the decision. I think I was crying and my then three-year-old daughter noticed how upset I was and asked why. I told her, ‘Mommy is really upset because I’m missing a special moment tonight; everyone is celebrating their achievements.’ She asked why I didn’t go and I told her I felt embarrassed about my accomplishment. She very innocently responded that I shouldn’t be embarrassed to receive something I had earned. She just made the issue really simple and childlike, and I thought what kind of adult role model am I if I don’t demonstrate that every accomplishment is worth celebrating?”

Colleen and her daughter jumped in the car and rushed over to the ceremony.

They just missed it. However, some of the staff finishing up noticed Colleen; they dressed her in a gown, had her cross the stage and took photos of her and her daughter. Colleen still has those photos and is extremely proud of that first step she took to improve her life and that of her daughter.

It was her education at Kwantlen and the support of her community that changed Colleen’s path and enabled her to continue her post-secondary journey and pursue her passion for advocacy to law school. After passing the bar, Colleen specialized in family law, child protection law and mediation for predominantly Indigenous families and started her own law firm Spier & Company Law in 2010 under her married name.

Since then she has served on the board for the Island Métis Family & Community Services Society in Victoria, as both a Director and as President of the Board of Directors, and since 2012, as the Executive Director for the agency. Colleen was also formerly the Vancouver Island Representative of the Canadian Bar Association’s Aboriginal Lawyer’s Forum, and served two consecutive three-year terms on the British Columbia College of Social Workers Board, through ministerial appointment.

In 2005, Colleen married her husband, who is a member of the Lake St. Martin Band in Manitoba. They welcomed a son in 2006. Both of Colleen’s children are registered as First Nations through her husband’s band and identify as Indigenous: both Ojibwe and Métis.

“We try to bring them up aware of the richness of both cultures,” says Colleen. “That’s what inspires me all the time — my daughter and my son, and all the Indigenous children who need a voice. As adults, we need to ensure we work to make the world better for the little people.”



## final words

### Second-best KPU moment:

Being chosen as the President’s Outstanding Graduate! Love KPU! And greatly appreciate my accomplishments being recognized.

### Are you still in touch with anyone from Kwantlen?

The two other moms that I started friendships with back in the day at Kwantlen, we’re still best of friends. They continued on with their Bachelor of Education degrees and are both working as teachers at the elementary level. I just visited one the other day at her school and the highlight: I got to see behind the scenes what goes on in the teacher lounge. Those are friendships that started at the Kwantlen campus in Surrey, and it remains a place I drop in to say hello whenever I’m in town.

### Why study psychology?

I took psychology because of interest, I am intrigued by the workings of the mind. And the more I learned the more interested I became. It’s been extremely helpful in my work. In the legal world and in family and child protection law in particular, you’re dealing with people with trauma who have all sorts of issues that need to be identified in order to do no harm when working with them. Having that psychology lens gave me a way of relating to people; it helped me to understand that people need to process trauma and the different ways they do that in order to move forward in a positive and healthy way.





# INTERESTED IN GIVING BACK TO KPU?

The Alumni Association has vacancies on the board and is accepting applications from interested KPU alumni.

The focus of the board is to set direction for the Alumni Association in collaboration with the Executive Director, determining association goals and expected results, and monitoring the performance of the board and the association as a whole. All successful candidates who are appointed to the board are expected to sit on committees and attend board meetings.

**FOR MORE DETAILS:**

[kpu.ca/alumni/about-kpuaa/board](http://kpu.ca/alumni/about-kpuaa/board)  
[alumni@kpu.ca](mailto:alumni@kpu.ca)



A man with a beard, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and striped tie, stands in the center of a large, empty stadium. He is surrounded by rows of blue plastic seats that recede into the distance, creating a strong sense of perspective. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man against the vast, empty arena.

# Dan O'Connor

**“I didn’t know it at the time, but it was two of the most crucial, invaluable years of my life.”**

Dan O'Connor was one of those rare eight-year-olds who knew exactly what he was going to be when he grew up – a sports broadcaster.

"I loved playing hockey, but I wasn't getting to the NHL with my slapshot," says Dan. "I'm getting there with my brains and my voice."

Growing up in Tsawwassen in a hockey family that billeted a couple of Vancouver Giants players, Dan spent much of high school and his first year of university at KPU living with and becoming fast friends with players in the Western Hockey League. He went to their games, cheered them on, and went from muting the TV at home as a kid calling out hockey plays to bringing a handheld recorder to his housemates' games at the Pacific Coliseum as a teenager, practising his play-by-plays in the nosebleeds.

"I loved the game, but just as much as I loved playing the game, I loved studying it, and I sure as heck like to broadcast it."

Dan is the Play-by-Play Broadcaster and Media Director for the Vancouver Giants, a "dream job" he landed over a year ago after cutting his teeth for six seasons with the WHL's Prince George Cougars as the Manager of Broadcasting, Media Relations and Team Services; and another four years in North Battleford, Saskatchewan as Sports Director for several radio stations.

Since childhood, Dan's plan was always to go into broadcasting and call hockey games. But, it was the advice of his high school guidance counselor Mrs. Foster that encouraged him to take journalism at KPU first before applying to broadcasting school.

"I didn't know it at the time, but it was two of the most crucial, invaluable years of my life," says Dan. "Although broadcasting was the end goal for me, I can't overstate the importance of learning to write; 60 to 70 per cent of my real job now is writing. It's writing stories, recaps, writing for the website, emails for travel. There's such a strong written component to the job. I don't know if I could do what I do if it wasn't for my experiences at Kwantlen."

His journalism instructors left a lasting impact on Dan. Mark Hamilton and Ann Rees stood out in particular. Mark made an impression on Dan for his outside-the-box thinking.

"You could always bet he had something interesting to say, something interesting to teach. You could talk to Mark about anything. He was so well travelled, and so well versed in journalism and the direction of the business, the growth of the online voice, blogs. He made me want to pay attention."

However, it was Ann who brought Dan to the attention of the journalism community. In Dan's second year, Ann gave her students the option of submitting a 500-word essay to the Jack Webster Foundation Student Journalism Awards on how journalism had shaped or shifted their perspective.

Dan didn't write one. He was 19; he couldn't be bothered. The day before the essay was due, Ann sat Dan down and asked why he hadn't written one.

"She told me I was a smart guy, but I didn't want to write one. I was lazy," says Dan. "So the night before it was due I wrote one. I didn't want to disappoint her and sure as hell, I won."

Along with a cash prize, Dan was invited to and attended the prominent Jack Webster Awards dinner, which honours the best in B.C. journalism.

"My parents were so proud. If Ann hadn't given me that kick in the ass I needed, I wouldn't have had that on my resume. At Kwantlen, my teachers went the extra mile. It wasn't just about earning a pay cheque. They really cared about us."

X

## final words

**If you went back to KPU, what would you take?** I heard there's a beer school now. If that's true, sign me up!

**What's the biggest benefit of your KPU education?** It's a big world out there, and KPU was the perfect transition into the real world for me coming out of high school. It taught me all sorts of values about education and life. And it didn't have this huge price tag and pressure. I learned a bunch in an affordable, team-oriented comfortable environment.

**One of your favourite KPU moments?** I did my practicum at the South Delta Leader newspaper. At the end of my month, they gave me \$100. I was so excited.



# Daniel Chai

**“Each week has new discoveries for both the students and myself.”**





For many, public speaking is a terrifying prospect. Performing improvisational comedy is unthinkable. But not for Daniel Chai. For him, it's cathartic.

Meet the Kwantlen Polytechnic University journalism grad, working reporter, and co-founder of the Vancouver-based comedy improv troupe The Fictionals. He is a man who thrives on being in front of a crowd.

"Improv for me is a great creative outlet, a way to let loose and have fun and be creative in a safe and fun environment," says Daniel. "I think people get meaning through comedy. It can put serious topics into perspective. It's almost cathartic for us to act out these situations and for audiences to laugh at it."

In addition to regularly performing with The Fictionals, Daniel teaches an improv class at KPU every Monday night for students, staff and the public. The workshop is free for students, thanks to funding from the Kwantlen Student Association.

The environment, much like Daniel himself, is relaxed and inviting. Daniel leads a check-in where everyone shares how they're doing, followed by warm-up exercises. After that everything goes. The goal for each workshop is for participants to feel a little more connected not only to others, but also to themselves.

"Each week has new discoveries for both the students and myself," says Daniel. "A lot of times in class, there are students with an internal block. They're trying to find the right idea or the right words, but in improv everything is right. Failing is totally fine and failing can lead to new discoveries."

Being given permission to fail also gives permission to take risks, a skill that is extremely useful inside and outside of the improv workshop. The classes also teach flexibility and innovative thinking.

"In yesterday's exercise we did a fun storytelling exercise called change," says

Daniel. "Students were partnered up and had to tell a story. The listeners then would tell their partners 'change' and the storytellers had to change an element of their story. To change up your ideas on the fly is something that can work really well outside of the improv workshop. It helps open us up to more possibilities whether we're applying for a job or studying for an exam."

Changing up his perspective is something Daniel does frequently. In addition to his improv work, he's the Events Writer for online news outlet the Daily Hive's Vancouver and Calgary editions. Previously he was a reporter for the Surrey Now newspaper.

He's also a working actor and has appeared on TV shows including DC Legends of Tomorrow, and on the recently debuted Telus STORYHIVE-winning web series Geoff and the Ninja.

"I get to play the lovingly-annoying next door neighbor Liam," laughs Daniel, who sports a comical gold tooth in the series preview. "It's about what would happen if your roommate was a ninja? Hijinks ensue."

While Daniel's career has taken many twists and turns – he's been a reporter, teacher, communications professional, actor and comedian – the common thread has always been storytelling.

"For me, my goal was always to discover stories and to help tell stories," says Daniel. "Moving from journalism to improv and becoming an actor was just a continuation of those goals. I get to continue telling stories, but now I also get to make up those stories."

"No matter where my career has taken me, or will take me I'll be forever grateful for the grounding my education gave me. That base knowledge that I can reach back to in whatever job or situation I'm in. I'm grateful to have had that time at Kwantlen."

X

## final words

### What would you take if you went back to KPU?

If I went back now I would become more involved in student politics. I run the [improv] workshops in collaboration with the KSA. The KSA works very hard to run programs for students. If I could go back, I'd be involved in that to give back more.

### What was the biggest benefit of your education?

The benefit of studying at Kwantlen for me was the experience of the instructors. Many of them are still working and can guide the students in a real modern way. All of my instructors had great knowledge that they passed on. I'm very thankful for that.

### What new projects are you working on?

I've recently started studying the art of voiceover. I'm taking courses and I'm excited to explore another creative outlet.

### Favourite memory of KPU?

One of my favourite memories of Kwantlen back in the day was a photography journalism course because that for me really ignited my love for photography. With the Fictionals, I do a photographic series on social media. One is showcasing Vancouver street art and the other is the lovely scenery Vancouver is home to. The course showed me how to look at the world in a different way. Now though I take photos with my smart phone [laughs].

### Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?

All of my journalism instructors. Mark Hamilton was one of them and is still teaching at Kwantlen. My teachers arrived earlier so we could work on projects. Their doors were always open to help us find solutions. They had years of experience so to be able to tap into their experience was really inspiring. Talking to current students, it seems like it's still the same way. I try to take some of those teachers' passion and encouraging techniques, and incorporate them into my teaching as well.



# Gagan Jutla

**“The biggest opportunities I was given at Kwantlen were the co-op experiences.”**

**G**agan Jutla has drive. He has goals. He has his head down.

The son of immigrant parents – his mother is from India and his father was born in Africa and raised in Europe – Gagan watched the tireless work ethic of both his parents who at times “had to take on a job just to take on a job and pay bills.”

“They always made sure my brother and I were taken care of,” says Gagan. “Seeing that work ethic was definitely something that helped me in school and in my career. Put your head down, you know.”

He has certainly embraced that work ethic. In just three years he has pole-vaulted from student intern while finishing his degree to accountant, then to senior accountant, and most recently to manager at one of the top accounting firms in British Columbia: Grant Thornton LLP.

A 2015 graduate of KPU’s highly regarded Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting program, Gagan credits the five co-op placements he completed during his undergraduate degree with propelling him forward through graduate school and rapidly up the ranks of his firm.

“The biggest opportunities I was given at Kwantlen were the co-op experiences,” says Gagan. “I did five, which is more than the typical three co-ops most students complete. I took longer to graduate than some of my peers, but I think that additional real-world experience helped me to succeed more quickly and early on in my profession.”

As an accounting manager at Grant Thornton, Gagan has grown from managing money and clients to becoming responsible for the growth and development of a team of people – something he takes very seriously.

“I’ve got mentees,” he explains. “I sit down and help these accountants map out their futures, their next five to 10 years.”

That pivot from mentee to mentor may have happened quickly, but it was a natural next step for the young leader who continues to give back to KPU through an annual scholarship he created for working accounting students who find themselves in financial need. Recognizing that not everyone has the same opportunities, Gagan wanted to give back.

“I worked throughout my time at Kwantlen. I really wanted to give back any way I could and a scholarship could really help students who have work commitments and can’t spend all their time studying.”

Gagan recently received the Outstanding Young Alumni award from the KPU Alumni Association. The award recognizes KPU alumni under 30 years old who have demonstrated excellence professionally and through community service.

In addition to his career and philanthropy, Gagan makes time to contribute to the local arts community. He is a board director and treasurer for the Jericho Arts Centre, a non-profit theatre in Vancouver that provides space and opportunity for any artist who has the drive, but not the money, to put on a show.

“Drive” is a reoccurring theme for Gagan. Now that he has achieved his five-year goal of becoming a manager in less than three, he has his sights set on a partnership within the next 10 years.

“I’ve got drive. I’ve got hunger. It goes back to work ethic.”

“I’ve seen my parents work super hard and I see myself doing the same,” says Gagan. “Kwantlen really sets students up to succeed, but you still have to work hard. I see my future. I have goals.”

**X**

## final words

### What are you currently working on?

I just finished a billion-dollar IPO [initial public offering]. I can’t say more. [laughs]

### Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?

Lindsay Wood, my co-op instructor. She’s a great individual who always helped me. If I have any questions or doubts, I can go to her. I’ve always been in touch with her.

### What was your best KPU day?

The massive live Lego build for Career Day. I helped organize the event during my first co-op with the KPU Career Services Office. The theme for the event was “build your career.” I came up with the idea of bringing a professional Lego builder to campus. I found the only Lego-certified builder in Canada and hired him to come to campus to do a massive interactive live build during the event; it was really cool.

### Why should employers hire KPU alumni?

I recruit from all of the big B.C. universities and I see the quality of our accounting graduates in comparison to others. Kwantlen students are given everything they need to succeed. One of our [Grant Thornton’s] biggest concerns when hiring is, “Are our students going to be able to pass their CPA exam?” That costs money. Knowing an employee’s undergraduate education has set them up to succeed is a load off the mind of any employer.

### What do you tell people about KPU?

I’m always talking about KPU’s accounting program. KPU’s biggest asset and competitive advantage is teaching real-world applications and critical thinking. They really set students up to succeed.

KPU Alumni are everywhere, doing amazing things. Since 2007, the KPUAA and KPU have 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!

**KPU  
ALUMNI  
AWARDS**

Do you know a KPU graduate who should be recognized for their outstanding achievements?

Deadline is April 15, 2019  
[kpu.ca/alumni/awards](http://kpu.ca/alumni/awards)



A man with a beard, wearing a brown jacket and blue jeans, stands on a dirt path in a park. The path is lined with trees and grass, and the scene is lit with warm, golden light. The man is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

# Kevin Skrepnek



# “I doubt I would’ve gotten the job if it wasn’t for Kwantlen and the courses I took.”

The first time Kevin Skrepnek saw British Columbia, it was on fire.

Kevin was a teenager flying over the Rockies when the pilot directed the plane’s passengers to look out the window where a huge forest fire was burning below.

It was a fitting introduction for the future Chief Fire Information Officer of the B.C. Wildfire Service who in 2017 kept British Columbians and the rest of the world informed while the worst wildfire in the province’s history raged for months.

A provincial state of emergency was declared on July 7, 2017 after a single lightning storm sparked over a hundred wildfires. The state of emergency lasted 70 days, the longest on record for B.C. Over 1.2 million hectares of land burned, displacing 65,000 people and costing the province over \$568 million.

Not a single person died or was gravely injured as a result of those fires. This was the result of the work of a 4,700-strong army of local and international firefighters, the men and women of the B.C. Wildfire Service, and – in part – to Kevin.

Interviewed for this story just as another record-breaking season of wildfires was coming to a close for 2018, Kevin says the high number of wildfires may not be an anomaly, but instead the “new normal.”

“Having two seasons like that, we have to prepare ourselves that this could be our new normal,” says Kevin. “We’re going to have to take a really hard look at how we communicate to the public. It’s going to be really challenging, but it’s important work.”

Kevin has been in close proximity to forest fires for the past decade. After moving from Ontario to Kamloops – a part of Canada that deals with wildfires every summer – Kevin moonlighted as a wildfire photographer while working other jobs.

“I did a little bit of freelance photography and a friend of mine was a videographer. He was a freelancer for media outlets so we’d go out to wildfires together,” says Kevin. “It was because of him that I got that introduction to the Wildfire Service and on to their distribution list.”

After a few years of working various jobs in Kamloops, KPU’s Public Relations (PR) program came onto Kevin’s radar through a friend.

“It was two years and very hands-on. I had already been working and wasn’t interested in anything too academic.”

PR was a natural progression from the photography, communications and service-industry jobs he had already been doing, so Kevin moved to Richmond for the fall and winter semester at KPU, returning home to Kamloops over the summer to work directly for the B.C. Wildfire Service as a seasonal employee.

“I doubt I would’ve gotten the job if it wasn’t for Kwantlen and the courses I took,” says Kevin. “For example this course in Adobe InDesign – I had never in my life used that program before. My first day at the Wildfire Service I was asked to use Adobe design programs so if I hadn’t gone to Kwantlen, I would’ve been in trouble. It did a great job preparing me for where I am now.”

One of Kevin’s instructors was design faculty Susan Harman. He says her teachings still have reverberations for him in his work today.

“Some of her teachings still stick out in my mind. She taught me not only how to properly put together a PowerPoint deck, but how to deliver it properly. That presentation portion is relevant in my work now. I still take lessons from that course.”

When Kevin began the PR program, he wasn’t dead set on getting into the Wildfire Service’s communications department, but it was always in the back of his mind that it would be a possibility. Now, it’s hard for him to imagine doing anything else.

“I don’t think I could turn around and work for a bank,” says Kevin. “Once you’ve done this where it’s so meaningful and so dynamic. It’s life and death. It would be hard to do anything else. This is where I’ll be for life.”

X

## final words

**What are you up to outside of your day job?** I’m finishing a Certificate in Emergency Management through the Justice Institute [of British Columbia]; I convocate in January 2019. I’m also teaching an information officer course at the JI as a sessional instructor. The teaching side of things has always interested me and that goes back to my time at Kwantlen. The Kwantlen teachers were unconventional because they weren’t teaching traditional content. My PR program was specific and compressed into just two years. That type of instruction interests me.

**What do you tell people about KPU?** I really enjoyed my time at KPU. I really credit the PR program. So much of what I learned there was immediately applicable to my job right away.

What I like about Kwantlen is the fact that there are different campuses; it makes it accessible for a lot of students.

**What was your favourite KPU moment?** One of my favourite moments at KPU was when they put in the Timmie’s [at the Richmond campus.]

# Kristan Ash

**“...this is where  
I found my  
community.”**

By her own admission Kristan Ash has a type A personality.

While pursuing her business degree at KPU, she went into labour while writing the final exam for a Human Resources class. She finished the exam and gave birth to her daughter the next day.

“People say I’m crazy because I’m always doing too much, but I can’t imagine doing anything less,” laughs Kristan.

Juggling two children, a newly minted degree and launching a business? No problem – at least not for Kristan.

Five weeks after her son was born and mere months after graduating from KPU, Kristan launched her first business: Generations Home Health Care Solutions.

The venture allowed her to combine the experiences of her brief stint as a nurse with the business acumen she gained from her undergraduate degree.

On the cusp of a revolution in healthcare, which shifted focus from hospital care to providing patient services as much as possible at home, Kristan sold her business to health care franchisor Nurse Next Door. She joined the company as Vice-President of Franchise and Business Development and under her stewardship Nurse Next Door launched their first 19 franchise locations and now the company is an international franchisor with a name that is synonymous with independent living.

Kristan was inspired to enter the healthcare profession by her father who suffered from lupus, a chronic condition that required frequent trips to the hospital.

“When I was in nursing school, I hated it,” explains Kristan. “I wanted to help people, but when I worked in the hospital I found it very depressing. I always felt like I was doing things to people. Healthcare at the time was different. People spent more time in the hospital. I couldn’t articulate it at the time, but we weren’t helping people to be independent.”

Heeding her dad’s advice that she couldn’t have a job that made her cry every day, Kristan moved away from her home province of Saskatchewan to B.C.’s Lower Mainland and enrolled in the business program at what was then Kwantlen University College.

She found her community.

“I really enjoyed KPU. Coming from the University of Saskatchewan with auditoriums of 500 people, no one cared if you came or went. KPU was totally

different and more my style of learning. I stayed and completed my degree at KPU, which worked out well. I worked while I was there. I had my daughter while I was going to school. I attended evening classes, sometimes a class on Saturdays.”

That same daughter, Kristan proudly shares, just began her first semester of university at KPU. “She started at KPU this fall. I was quite happy. She turned down several other big universities in B.C. to take KPU’s NGO program.”

It’s no wonder Kristan’s daughter is following in her mother’s footsteps by attending her alma mater; she has living proof of just how successful KPU alumni can become. Kristan was named one of Business in Vancouver’s Top Forty under 40, was a Surrey Board of Trade’s Business Woman of the Year finalist two years in a row, and received KPU’s Distinguished Alumni award in 2018.

The home healthcare champion’s career has spanned the field from entrepreneurial leadership to consulting roles to donning a hard hat. She managed the development, construction and opening operations of Bear Creek Villa, a seniors living facility in Surrey and currently serves as Executive Director of the Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice.

Moreover, Kristan has maintained a strong connection to the KPU community, growing what began as a monthly breakfast club among her former classmates a decade and a half ago to a fully-fledged Alumni Association. She served on the KPUAA Board of Directors for six years, including serving as Chair. She also devoted five years to being a member of KPU’s Senate, and spent six years on KPU’s Board of Governors, rising again to the position of Chair.

“It was my way of giving back. I’m a strong believer in education,” says Kristan.

After stepping away from her board work, the Dean of the School of Business at the time Wayne Tebb suggested Kristan try teaching at KPU. Still working full-time, but not one to rest on her laurels even in her downtime, Kristan started teaching Fundamentals of Business in Canada. She continues to teach a class every semester.

“I call it my fun job,” says Kristan. “I believe that healthcare and education are the foundations of a strong society. That’s why I’m drawn to both areas and I see so many interconnections. I love teaching, but I don’t see doing it full-time because the value that I see in KPU is the faculty’s industry experience. I love my work in

healthcare and I want to continue to bring that edge to my students.”

Kristan’s high regard for KPU’s faculty is quickly evident, as she speaks glowingly of many instructors who helped her on her academic journey and continue to provide sage advice. These include Kim Richter, Doug Smith, Bob Benwick, Ron Chay and last, but not least Chamkaur Cheema.

“Chamkaur is still one of those people I go to for advice. He’s a lifelong mentor,” says Kristan. “He was the biggest pain in the butt at multiple points during my undergraduate degree because he pushed me beyond my comfort zone. When I push my students because I know they can do it, I say I’m channeling my inner Chamkaur.”

Of course Kristan pushes herself just as, if not harder, than she pushes any of her students.

She holds a Lean Blackbelt from Lean Sensei International, an MBA, and in the fall of 2019 will be starting her PhD. As Executive Director of Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice, her organization funded an app for family doctors to more efficiently refer patients to specialists. Previously, GPs would have to pull out a physical directory about the size of a telephone book and thumb through the pages by specialty to refer patients.

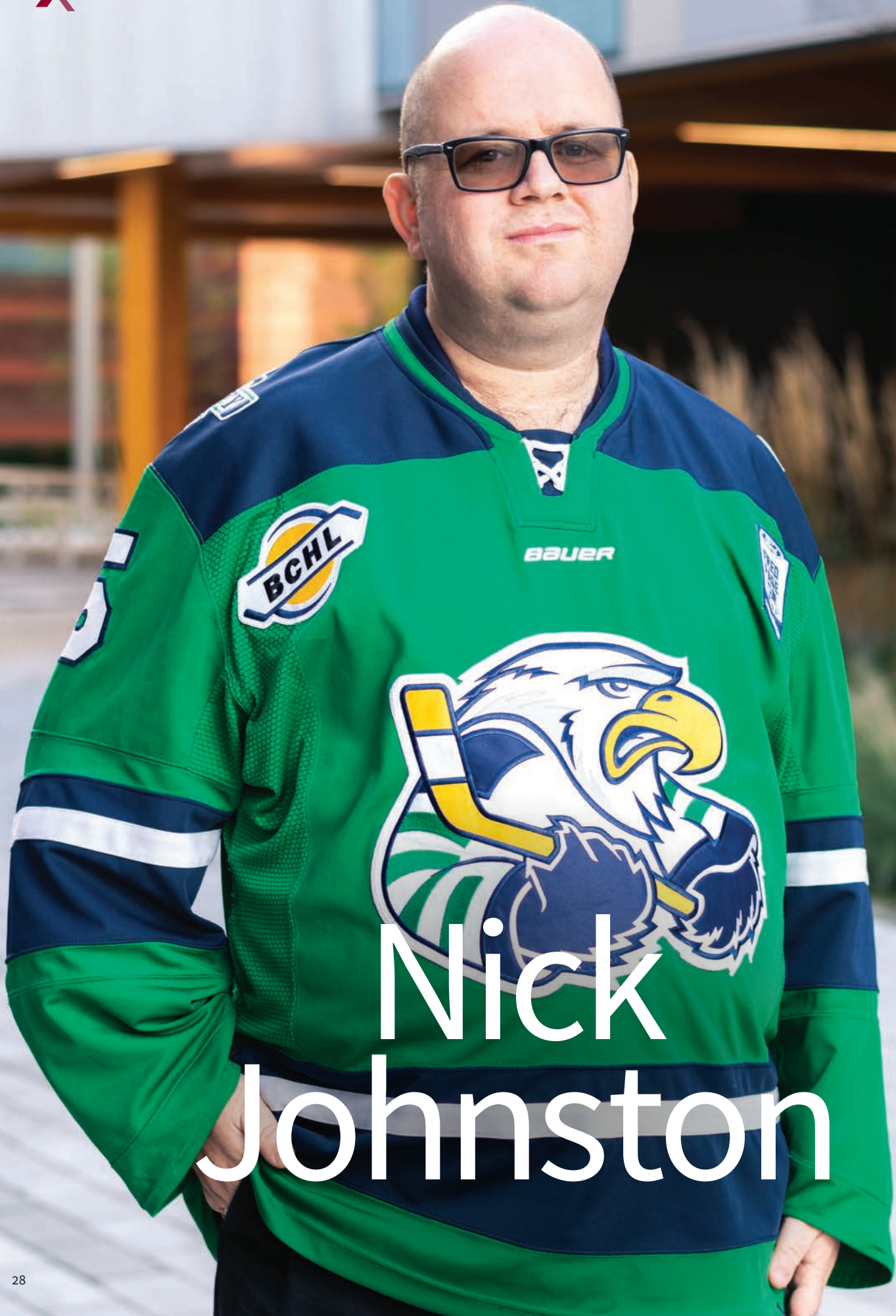
“Doctors used to pull out a big book of every doctor in the province listed alphabetically and by specialty such as orthopedics and refer you. You’d wait a year, go to that specialist with, say, a bad ankle and find out they don’t do ankles, they do hands. So you’d go back to your family doctor and wait for another referral,” says Kristan.

With the Pathways BC app, a doctor can narrow down a referral by specialty, including specifics, such as a bad ankle and wait times. That’s the magic in what Kristan does in fully utilizing her education, business sense and healthcare knowledge. She sees the problem, moves the obstacles and brings the right people together giving them power and a voice; she does it with the healthcare sector, with her students and with the KPU community.

“Why do I feel so connected to KPU?” muses Kristan out loud.

“It comes down to community. For 21 years of my life now, this is where I found my community.”

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# Nick Johnston

# “My passion is giving back to the community.”

Earnest, generous and committed, Nick Johnston is not your average post-secondary graduate. Nick is on the autism spectrum disorder

Speaking from the offices of Johnston, Ross & Cheng (JRC) Ltd. Real Estate Evaluators in Richmond, B.C. where he has worked for the past eight years as an Appraiser Technician, Nick talks about his career and how far he's come since his time at KPU.

“I'll do research on land titles, zoning regulations and comparable sales,” says Nick who works with his father, the J in the JRC firm.

Nick has been gainfully employed since graduating from Kwantlen Polytechnic University's (KPU) Access Program for People with Disabilities (APPD) in 2003. And not just for his father's company. He's also worked for the grocery chain Safeway and spent five years employed at a Silver City movie theatre, a position he was offered while completing a work experience rotation for the APPD program.

In addition to working, Nick is an awarding-winning volunteer. During his time at Silver City, he gave front-of-house presentations to packed movie theatres selling gold hearts for Variety, a charity for children with special needs. He sold a record-breaking 2,624 hearts, the most of anyone in Canada.

“About 10 to 15 minutes before the movie I would tell people I had golden hearts to sell. I sold so many, it got to the point where the projectionist would have to hold off on starting the movie. Sometimes they would give me two or three assistants to avoid a delay,” says Nick of the fundraiser. “It was something I wanted to do. It was fun because I knew I was helping out

the charity and interacting with a lot of people.”

Nick continues to support his community by volunteering at numerous events, including the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, the 2019 World Hockey Junior Championships, and in an ongoing position as Assistant Equipment Manager with the Surrey Eagles Junior A hockey team. Nick also continues to give back to KPU by participating in presentations to potential APPD students and sharing his experiences in the program.

“I tell them what to expect, the kinds of things they will learn and give them tips that will help them,” says Nick. “It's a way to give back to Kwantlen.”

Nick is very appreciative of his time at KPU. Before the program, he never had a job. The APPD program focuses on specific applicable skills necessary to getting hired and being a capable employee. According to Nick, one of the most valuable lessons he took from his alma mater was maintaining eye contact. His class practiced mock interviews, which were recorded and then critiqued by Nick's favourite instructor, JJ Hill.

“After we did the interviews, we'd watch them on video and JJ would tell us what we could work on. For me it was mostly eye contact, focussing on the interviewer, which was hard for me.”

For his avid volunteer work, strong work ethic and commitment to those closest to him, Nick was recognized with KPU's Distinguished Alumni Award.

“My passion is giving back to the community and spending time with friends and family,” says Nick.

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## final words

**Why should someone hire a KPU APPD graduate?** Hiring a graduate means you are hiring someone with a disability who has been trained to handle a workplace environment.

**Favourite teacher?** JJ was my favourite. His style of instruction was easy to understand and he added some humour where it was appropriate. It was just the way he would teach, always answering the questions if I got stuck.

**Funny KPU memory?** *One of Nick's work experience rotations was with the Fairmont Vancouver Airport Hotel in their housekeeping department.* One of my favourite moments was when they gave me the task of changing every phone book in the hotel. It took me a couple of days to do it. It was my favourite because it gave me the chance to see the different rooms. When JJ came to do a site visit, he called me and asked what floor I was on so he could meet me, but by the time he got there I was already on a different floor, it took him four floors to catch me.

**What was the biggest benefit of your KPU education?** The biggest benefit for me was learning all the skills required to hold employment. I never had a job before doing the program.

# Sarah Gleboff



# “I wanted to be the one in a HAZMAT suit.”

Sarah Gleboff was working as a server, saving up to attend university, when she read an article about a graduate of KPU's Environmental Protection Technology (EPT) program who remediated drug sites.

“This woman was cleaning up old crack houses and that really interested me,” says Sarah. “I wanted to be the one in a HAZMAT suit.”

The story sparked something in Sarah so she enrolled at KPU and soon got her wish. In a group decontamination simulation, Sarah was given the option to wear a HAZMAT suit. Not only did she jump at the chance, she chose to be in the suit for the entire scenario.

“We were in this field at the Langley campus and we had a prop that was supposed to be the contaminate. It was really fun, but kind of scary. I started to panic a bit in the suit. I felt claustrophobic. Then we did decon [decontamination], which is where they actually hose you off.”

In addition to hazardous material protective gear, Sarah donned hip waders to take creek measurements, measured the effectiveness of retention ponds at KPU's greenhouse, published blog posts on Environmental News BC and volunteered as an in-school mentor for Big Brothers Big Sisters during her time at KPU. She was also the recipient of a scholarship from the Rotary Club of Langley.

Sarah completed a co-op with the Langley Environmental Partners Society in watershed stewardship and a second student work term with the City of Surrey's solid waste division. It was her work with the city that landed her a job before she even finished her program.

“I got the call while I was in my Occupational Health & Safety class,” says Sarah. “They [the City of Surrey] realized they desperately needed extra help and added me.”

That call came from a division full of fellow KPU alumni. Both Sarah's boss Harry Janda, and supervisor Ela Lukowska also

took the same EPT program and knew first-hand how rigorous and practical the training is. Extending the KPU family even further are two KPU co-op students currently working alongside Sarah.

Since that phone call in 2014, Sarah has continued to work for the city's engineering operations in the solid waste division. As an Engineering Assistant she helps to educate the public in waste diversion and managing the contract for waste collection services.

It's a far cry from HAZMAT suits and hip waders to an office job, but Sarah is very happy with where she's landed. And she credits her time at KPU — in particular her co-ops — with giving her the hands-on experience to understand where she would and wouldn't want to work.

Her advice to current students, “Don't take your co-op for granted.

“Now I'm in an office I'm happy with where I am. It's obviously a lot more comfortable sitting inside. My first co-op was a lot of outdoors work, which was good for me. As much as I thought I'd enjoy the outdoors, I'm a bit of a princess,” laughs Sarah self-deprecatingly. “I don't like working in the rain, so it was a good experience.”

Sarah is currently conducting a major recycling and contamination audit for the City of Surrey. Crews follow recycling truck routes that have been identified with a high number of contaminants and sort through the recycling in advance of the trucks to identify and remove the contaminants.

Contaminants range from clothing to syringes to dead rats. “Very odd things,” according to Sarah, wind up in household recycling bins.

The kinds of things that make it sound like a HAZMAT suit might not be so far off in Sarah's future if she ever decides to pursue the more hazardous type of work that first drew her to the EPT program.

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## final words

**If you went back to KPU, what would you take?** Both my boss and my supervisor took EPT and then they went back and took business at KPU, so I'd probably do that.

**Which faculty member had the biggest impact on you?** Paul Richard is very inspiring. He's so smart and down to earth. It was easy to listen to him and to like him. Chris Hauta was a little hard on us, but he was always there for us if you showed interest or just went the extra little bit and asked him questions. Honestly, all of the teachers were great. What I loved best about KPU was how the teachers were so accessible.

**What was your favourite KPU moment?** There were so many moments it's hard to pick one. I loved how many field trips we had outside, sampling creeks. In a geology class, we had to put hip waders on and wade into the stream and take all these measurements. It felt a little bit dangerous.

**Why should employers hire KPU alumni?** Because we're eager to do what it takes. We're open for new opportunities. We're learning sponges.



## **“I didn’t realize would mean se the parent as w**

Imagine a five-year-old wanting to wear a dress to kindergarten but can’t because her feeding tube gets in the way.

Or a child wearing a shirt with a stretched-out or ripped neckline to accommodate a tracheotomy.

Design that makes a difference is what inspired Taylor Byrom to create a clothing line for young girls with complex healthcare needs.

While still a fashion student at Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Wilson School of Design, Taylor volunteered at the B.C. Children’s Hospital Miracle Weekend. It was there she noticed the need for functional clothing for kids facing complex or ongoing medical issues.

“It was just this moment of looking around and some of the kids were out walking around with their IV poles or in wheelchairs being wheeled around and I thought, ‘Oh my God what do you wear? How are you comfortable?’

Kids are so vulnerable at that age and they’re still finding themselves,” says Taylor.

It was Taylor’s a-ha moment.

After extensive research, including reaching out to the children’s hospital and speaking with parents, she launched her graduate thesis collection Jolie Hart.

The line was named for her grandmother, who lost her battle to breast cancer while Taylor was still in university. A woman with an eye for fashion and looking good,



# Taylor Byrom

## my clothes self-esteem for well.”

Taylor’s grandmother provided Taylor with her first experience with an illness limiting clothing options.

“My inspiration for my line was mostly my nana,” says Taylor. “It was a challenge finding clothes that didn’t make her feel sick and allowed her to function.”

Recalling her grandmother’s experience, Taylor wanted to see how she could make a difference for young children who were facing similar problems.

She got to work, and now had a problem to fix – how to make clothes functional and fun for girls ages two to five with challenging health complications.

As part of her Fashion Design and Technology degree program, Taylor gathered research that proved there was a market for her line and that it would sell. The moment her vision was validated was in Shirley Calla’s fourth-year research class. Taylor held her breath while her instructor handed back her assignment.

“Shirley put my binder down in front of me and whispered in my ear, ‘I think you’re good, no revisions needed,’ ” recalls Taylor. “I got the highest mark in the class. I was stunned and then I started crying. It was overwhelming. I struggled throughout the program and was just getting by, but at that moment I realized I was finally here and that moment was with Shirley. She really did believe in what I was doing.”

Taylor Hart Designs was born about a year after graduation, the emerging

designer was invited by KPU to take part in the university’s work at Innovation Boulevard, an incubator for B.C.-based health technology companies. There she worked directly with children with complex care needs to test her clothes and improve her designs.

“I moved into the health tech space for about 18 months. It got me started,” says Taylor.

In 2016, the ground-breaking designer was recognized as a Surrey Board of Trade Top 25 Under 25, and in 2017, she received the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneur of the Year award. She also continues to volunteer every year at the B.C. Children’s Hospital Miracle Weekend.

Today, Taylor runs her online clothing company from her home. Due to client demand, she’s expanded the line to include boys and infants. In 2019 she plans to debut clothing sizes all the way up to youth age 16.

Taylor Hart Designs are available as sketches on Etsy and her company website because all her clothing is made to order. Customers can specify size, colour and adaptations such as faux pockets, hidden and exposed openings for feeding tubes, necklines to accommodate tracheotomies, removable backs for wheelchair users to remove excess bulk, and super soft fabric for children with sensory processing disorders.

For Taylor, design isn’t just about clothes. She wanted to do something that would make a difference, that would have impact.

“The best part for me is when a little one puts on a shirt that is functional for them and they say they like their tube because it’s working for them and it’s not uncomfortable anymore,” says Taylor.

X

## final words

**Any surprises in your business?** I got great feedback from a mom. She said, “this is great because I can be a regular mom; I can put my kid in something that’s fashionable and I didn’t have to cut holes in it.” I didn’t realize my clothes would mean self-esteem for the parent as well.

**What do you tell people about KPU?** Love it! I was a totally different person before I graduated. We do a practicum in the fashion program and I did mine at Kensie, which I then got hired for. I was terrified. I was so quiet and shy. I couldn’t imagine being an assistant to a designer. Kensie and Kwantlen changed it all. I walked out of that internship and said, ‘I can do this!’ I don’t know that I would’ve started THD if it wasn’t for Kwantlen. I loved my time there, and when I find time to go back to an event I still love it.

**Favourite KPU moment?** Most every fashion person is going to say The Show. It’s the culmination of four years of sweat and tears. It was really, really cool. A bunch of girls and I were standing at the top of the stairs at the River Rock [venue for the 2013 Show] and [KPU] President Davis was there and he looked right at me and said, “You’re the girl with the adaptive clothing line.” I struggled with my education at KPU. I didn’t have the best grades so for the president to pick me out from a crowd of other amazing designers was just a great moment.

**Which faculty impacted you the most?** All of my fourth year teachers were amazing: Shirley Calla, Alex [Diaz], and Andhra [Goundrey] really believed in what I was doing. Lindsey [Norris] really believed in what I was trying to accomplish.

**Were you always interested in fashion?** I grew up with my mom and my nana who had their own craft company. All my clothes were hand-made, but I had no interest in learning how to sew until I took home ec in high school and I had to make pajama pants and making clothes just grabbed me. I started designing like crazy. My home ec teacher saw how passionate I was about it and told me I should go to Kwantlen.

# Events & Activities



KPUAA Board of Directors



## 2018 Future Alumni Award bestowed upon Rimi Afroze

Each year KPU recognizes students who while maintaining a good academic standard also make impactful contributions to KPU and the external community. In 2018 we were pleased to honour Rimi Afroze for her work raising awareness about positive health outcomes among students. During her time at KPU Afroze gave back, organizing a health and wellness convention, presenting research at international conferences, raising money for Rohingya refugees and being recognized by the United Nations.

## KPUAA 10th Anniversary Celebration

On September 17, the KPUAA celebrated 10 years along-side their Annual General Meeting. Guest speaker and KPU alumnus and donor Ankit Sharma spoke to attendees about his passion for the institution and the work of the past 10 years. The event included greetings from Dr. Salvador Ferreras on behalf of KPU, and the Outstanding Young Alumni Award presentation to Gagan Jutla. To celebrate our 10th Anniversary those attending were treated to a special anniversary video presentation followed by a cake cutting.



### Interior Design Class of '93 Alumni Chapter Event

The Interior Design Class of '93 Alumni Chapter planned and hosted a 25-year reunion event on October 20 at the Wilson School of Design. The event was well attended by 25 KPU Interior Design Alumni from the class of '93 and their guests. The evening included a cocktail reception and was capped off by a tour of the new Wilson School of Design building.

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

# MESSAGE FROM the KPU Alumni Association Chair

Dear KPU Alumni,

This past year has been an exciting one for the KPU Alumni Association. We have seen many advances for our young and growing society. We celebrated our 10th Anniversary, signed a five-year Memorandum of Agreement with KPU, brought on and provided seed funding for three new alumni chapters including the Wilson School of Design Alumni Chapter, the Interior Design Class of '93 Alumni Chapter and the KPU Accounting Alumni Chapter. We signed on two new Affinity partners – Artona Group Photography and Leaders Frames. The Alumni Affairs office hired new staff and with additional staff support we expect to move forward with the development of our next three-year strategic plan early in 2019. Finally, we were very pleased to finalize and sign an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the KPUAA and KPU, which is a renewal of our commitment for ongoing partnership and collaboration.

The KPU Alumni Association is led by a young and dedicated board of KPU alumni. The board of directors currently has two vacancies. 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 hope you enjoy this second issue of the KPU Alumni Magazine. If you have a story to share in future issues be sure to connect with us at [alumni@kpu.ca](mailto:alumni@kpu.ca)

All my best,

Ryan Keigher,  
Chair, KPU Alumni Association



# Alumni i



◆ **Andrea Pedro, BA '16 Music**

After graduating Andrea was accepted at the University of Alberta (U of A) on full scholarship. She is studying with Dr. Patricia Tao and Dr. Jacques Després while completing the MMus in Piano Performance. In 2017-18, Andrea held a teaching assistant position teaching undergraduate keyboard skills. Last summer Andrea made her first trip to Europe to study chamber music in Austria, and also performed a piano concerto with Orchestra North in Smithers, B.C. Her trio competed at the National Music Festival in New Brunswick, achieving third prize. In May 2019, she will have her first opportunity to play a concerto with the Chamber Orchestra of Edmonton. Andrea says she would not be anywhere near where she is today without the help of her wonderful piano teacher at KPU, Jane Hayes.



◆ **Arshjot Mangat, BA '17 Sociology**

After graduating with his degree, Arshjot landed a job at the city of Surrey as a Traffic Clerk. Working with the engineering department he helps conduct surveys and hands that information to the engineers. However, Arshjot continues to work toward his goal to pursue a career as a firefighter.



◆ **Aubrey Cameron, BA '17 Asian Studies**

After graduating from KPU with a degree in Asian Studies, and a minor in Language and Culture, Aubrey started working as a Coordinator for International Relations in Japan via the JET Program. His workplace is the Tano Board of Education, and he spends his time teaching English, translating local history, and organizing events in order to promote cultural exchange. Most recently Aubrey hosted a Halloween party dressed as a banana, and overall he is quite pleased with his new role.



◆ **Cassie Micono, BBA '16**

Shortly after graduation Cassie applied for a position as an Inside Sales Representative with Canucks Sports and Entertainment (CSE). Cassie has been a Canucks fan her whole life and now was selling Season Ticket Memberships for her favourite team. After being employed with CSE for five months, she was promoted to Account Executive, Ticket Sales and then shortly after to Account Executive, Premium Membership Experience. Cassie has now been with CSE for 15 months. The knowledge and confidence she gained from her time with KPU has helped her to excel in her role with Canucks Sports and Entertainment, where she hopes to grow for years to come.

# n Touch

**Dano Koren, BA '16 Psychology**

After graduating from KPU with a Bachelors of Arts, psychology major and counselling minor, Dano enrolled in chiropractic school in California. Dano is excited to be able to help people heal and be the best they can be while applying her knowledge in chiropractic and previous knowledge in psychology.

**Elizabeth Morelos, BA '09**

After graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design and Technology, Elizabeth landed a Design Assistant position at a small local company called International Fashions Ltd. She designed numerous collections and travelled the world's largest fashion districts. After gaining hands-on industry skills Elizabeth joined Lululemon Athletica, the billion-dollar yoga and leisure apparel retailer. She got to work with many other KPU alumni at Lululemon, creating beautiful functional products for their guests. Now Elizabeth is a business owner of her own swimwear brand (Island Gal Boutique) – designing, making and selling her products on an e-commerce platform.

**Forrest Wong, BBA '14**

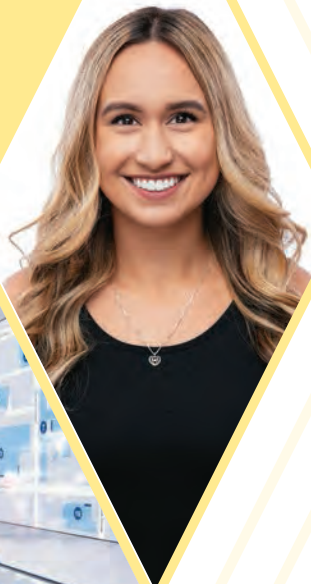
Since graduating in 2015 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, Forrest has used his business education to launch a software development company called Unity Labs with a business partner. They focus primarily on website and app platforms for end users at the retail level. Additionally, Forrest has recently published a self-improvement book called The Paradigm and is currently doing promotions for the book. It is available on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/2JLK29e>.

**Jessica Chauhan, BA '16**

Jessica wasn't sure what direction to take after graduating from the Fashion Design & Technology program. She knew she was on the right path to a career, but couldn't figure out where she was going. After rejecting one position she thought wasn't the right fit, and writing what felt like 13 million cover letters, she ended up at that same company she originally turned down! It turns out that she joined a team at Lululemon with some pretty amazing people. That made all the difference. Jessica gets to work with her peers and meet new people all the time. All this, while being able to use the skills that she gained in the Wilson School of Design, has made this past year a pretty great one.



Continued on page 38



◆ **Jessica MacLeod, BBA '17 Marketing**

Shortly after finishing her practicum, Jessica landed a job as a Social Media Coordinator at Jelly Digital Marketing & PR. On top of managing social media and content for almost a dozen clients, she has attended KPU career fairs, led presentations at networking events and education summits and even become an instructor. In the spring of 2018, Jessica became an official instructor of Jelly Academy - a digital marketing course that prepares small business owners, new grads and anyone else to become certified in Facebook, Google, Hootsuite and more.



◆ **Jonnadel Mamaradlo, Cert '15 Health Care Assistant**

After graduating from KPU as a Health Care Assistant, Jonnadel started working as a casual care aide in Fraser Health Authority facilities. She is very thankful for the HCA program, as she was able to work in one of the biggest hospitals in Vancouver while doing her Acute Care Skills practicum. Jonnadel's biggest accomplishment after completing her HCA is becoming a licensed practical nurse. She is very thankful to KPU, her stepping stone to achieving her goals.



◆ **Justin Lin, Dip '14 General Business Studies**

After graduating with a Diploma in General Business Justin moved back to Taiwan and opened his own coffee shop, Nobox Cafe. However, while putting all the time and effort into running the newly opened business Justin was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Thankfully, even though it was difficult to cope with the discomfort and hardship chemotherapy caused him physically and mentally, Justin has won the battle against blood cancer. It's been almost one year since Justin finished his final chemotherapy, and he has recovered well and learned that it's very important to be thankful for the tiny little things in life that bring simple happiness.



◆ **Kelsey Patrick, Dip '16 Public Relations**

After graduating from the Public Relations Diploma program at KPU, Kelsey worked at a public relations agency gaining experience in the field. After realizing that she wanted to work in-house, so she could focus 100 per cent of her efforts on one brand, Kelsey landed a job as a marketing coordinator in the automotive industry. Only 11 months into the position and after a lot of hard work she was promoted to marketing specialist. Kelsey is excited to continue to grow her skills and experience!



◆ **Kerri Cowie, Cert '03**

After graduating from the Applied Business Technology - Administrative Assistant Program in 2004, Kerri began working for Binpal Engineering, being promoted to Executive Manager - Administration in 2006. In 2008 Kerri moved herself and her two children to Lethbridge, Alta. where she again put her administrative skills to work before joining Ryder Truck Rental in the heavy duty truck industry, working with Freightliner trucks and getting the opportunity to go back to school in the trades program. She completed her certification as a parts technician journeyman. Kerri went from Ryder to two other dealerships to learn more about the heavy duty truck industry, working with Peterbilt trucks and forklifts as a parts technician before accepting the position of Warranty Administrator for Dunlop Western Star Truck Centre in Lethbridge in 2015. Kerri would like to thank Kwantlen for the opportunity to begin her career in administration. Her two children were there when she graduated from both programs, two proud mom moments.

**Kristina Obodovski, BBA '15 Marketing**

Kristina began interviewing for work during her final semester and had a job lined up to start the day after her final exams. After finishing her degree she landed a marketing coordinator role at Vancouver-based company, O2E Brands. With O2E, Kristina got the opportunity to attend a conference in Kauai, went on a sponsored ME to WE trip to Kenya, and was promoted to a new role of PPC Accounts Coordinator.

Kristina recently transitioned to a new role as a Marketing Specialist at InTime Software. She is excited about how quickly her career has grown in less than three years, and that she is now working in B.C.'s prominent tech sector.

**Kyle Darvasi, BBA '11 Marketing**

During Kyle's last year at KPU, he was fortunate to have landed an outside sales position with an office cleaning company in Delta. That kick-started his sales career while completing his Marketing Management degree. Kyle was in the first graduation class of that program in 2014! The following year he got the exciting news that he was going to be a father and transitioned to construction sales for one of the largest producers and distributors of natural stone in the building industry in Western North America. While helping to manage the Lower Mainland location, Kyle gets to be actively involved in many projects and many beautiful custom homes all over Greater Vancouver!

**Luca Patrk, BBA '11 Marketing**

Graduating with a Diploma in Marketing, and a Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management (both from KPU), Luca knew she was destined for a career that blended and merged the two. She quickly entered the recruitment world, working in both national telecommunications and global retail, attracting top talent and building out recruitment strategies and the employer brand. Most recently, Luca made the move to municipal government working for the City of Vancouver as a recruitment lead, where she is centralizing recruitment while building out talent strategies and succession planning, all while coaching, mentoring and leading an amazing team.

**Melany Davidson, BBA '15**

After graduating with her Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resources Management, Melany landed her first job as an HR administrator for a credit union. However, her love was always for the restaurant industry (she was a server all throughout her schooling) and recently Melany took the role of HR & Recruitment Specialist for Browns Restaurant Group. Working every day with such a talented and hardworking team reminds her that she's been fortunate enough to find her dream job!

**Monica Wyllie, Dip '92**

While taking a two-year criminology diploma, Monica worked in the Kwantlen Surrey campus library as a student assistant. While taking courses to finish her Criminology BA at SFU, the Kwantlen Langley campus was built. She applied for two positions and was the successful applicant for a position on the Surrey campus. Monica worked at the Surrey campus for almost five years and then transferred to the Richmond campus. She has been working at KPU for over 25 years.





**Nicole Moffat, BPN '16**

Within one year of graduating, from KPU with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychiatric Nursing, Nicole accepted a full-time position at one of the busiest emergency departments in B.C., which proved to be a truly valuable experience. Nicole thoroughly enjoyed her time at KPU and is most thankful for the amazing instructors she had, some of whom she is friends with today. Their continued guidance and support is what led to high achievement both while in the program, and since graduating. Nicole has now begun a master's degree in Global Mental Health at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, and will graduate in 2019. Nicole is enthusiastic to return to Canada in the summer to share her newly acquired knowledge with her peers, and is confident that the KPU BPN program was a springboard to her success.

**Sara McCreadie, Dip '16**

After graduating with her Diploma in Marketing Management, Sara was hired temporarily as a human resources administrator at Save-On-Foods. On every break she found herself gravitating to the nearby yoga studio. Sara discovered a few community needs that local yoga studios were not catering to, so she is now working to open a studio and cafe in the South Surrey area. She was able to take her knowledge from KPU and her passion for yoga, health food and coffee to start working on her dream, which she didn't know she had while she was a student. Sara also co-hosts and produces "The Diary Of Podcast" (available on iTunes and Google play) as well as some freelance social media support. Basically Sara has been up to just about everything since graduation.

**Seema Nath, APPD '16**

Seema graduated from the APPD Job Preparation program and has been the Co-Chair of the APPD Surrey Alumni group for the last two years. When she graduated, Seema had a hard time finding a job on her own, because of her disability. She went to a job agency at Work BC., knew exactly what she wanted and did not give up. It was hard for her to be patient, but it all paid off. Seema got a job in April 2018. Working at a paid job has given Seema confidence, independence, and the knowledge of how to be safe at work. She is very grateful for all her instructors who have taught her to be successful in a job.

**Taran Gill, BSN '11**

After graduating from KPU with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, Taran immediately got a job on a busy general and thoracic surgery unit. Since then, she has gone on to complete her High Acuity Specialty Nursing training and earned a Master of Science in Nursing degree. Taran currently teaches in the BSN program at BCIT. It's been a great journey, ever since graduating from KPU and Taran is excited to see where her education, training and experience will take her.



**Tyler Stewart, BBA '13**

After graduating with a BBA in Entrepreneurial Leadership in 2014, Tyler started in an outside sales position with Fastenal Co. which is a large multinational organization in the industrial maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) industry. After 1.5 years, he was head hunted by Acklands-Grainger Inc., another MRO company and accepted an account manager position with them. During his three-year tenure Tyler won the coveted Acklands-Grainger President's Club award for outstanding sales performance for his region, as well as several other awards. In the fall of 2018, Tyler was head hunted again by another large organization, Moen Inc. He accepted a Senior Territory Manager position for the Greater Vancouver area in their wholesale and commercial division. In addition, Tyler is currently completing an MBA through the Smith School of Business at Queen's University.

**Vanessa To, BBA '17**

Upon graduating with KPU's BBA Marketing Management degree, Vanessa relocated to Tokyo, Japan to work with the international company Cérélia, specialists in dough and batter-based foods. As the Key Account Manager, she is working hard to introduce their delicious creations to the food service and retail industry.

**Vicki Hsieh, BSN '17**

Since graduating in April of 2018 with a nursing degree, Vicki has been working full time as a nurse in the operating room. This has been her dream since beginning nursing school, and so many instructors helped her to reach her dream. Vicki works with amazing surgeons and anesthesiologists, supportive nurses, and adorable patients (BC Children's Hospital). She is grateful for the encouragement and support she received from KPU nursing instructors, and would not be where she is today without them.

**Zoe Patko, BBA '14**

After graduating from Marketing Management, Zoe was hired by Zenabis, one of the largest licensed producers of cannabis in Canada. She is the Marketing Manager, leading and training a Marketing department of over 10 people specializing in content creation, website development, graphic design, social media, event planning, communications, and SEO. Cannabis is currently the fastest-growing industry in Canada, so Zoe also engages in continuous education by completing KPU's Cannabis Career Training program and attending conferences and events across Canada.



**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**



# Being KPU Alumni Has

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

## Exclusive access:

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

## Discounts on:

- » KPU Bookstore (excluding textbooks)
- » KPU conference facilities and meeting room services
- » Commercial printing through Kwantlen Print Services
- » KPU Recreation's fitness programs
- » KPU Tech's 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.



## INTRODUCING YOUR Alumni Affairs Team

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

Helen Hughes, Alumni Affairs Coordinator joined us in September 2018, as did Stephanie Nikita our Alumni Affairs Assistant. Be sure to drop by our offices at KPU Langley.

[kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni)



Alumni Affairs Office staff (L-R) Helen Hughes, Stephanie Nikita and Nancy Armitage

# Its Benefits!



## Artona Group

» Artona Group and Leader Frames – the KPUAA is pleased to provide KPU Alumni with two new Affinity partners to bring you special discounts and opportunities.

Be sure to visit us for more details at [kpu.ca/alumni](http://kpu.ca/alumni) or order your KPU-branded frame at [leaderframes.com](http://leaderframes.com) and book your studio session at [artona.com](http://artona.com)



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



## TD Insurance Meloche Monnex

An exciting benefit for you as a graduate of KPU.



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# 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 [www.kpu.ca/alumni](http://www.kpu.ca/alumni) or contact the Alumni Affairs office at [alumni@kpu.ca](mailto:alumni@kpu.ca) or call 604.599.3137.



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

  [KPUalumni](#)

 [KPU Alumni](#)

Interested in KPU programs and courses?  
Contact the Future Students' Office for details.

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

