Top History Graduate! ...Sean Carleton overcame Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) to excel as an academic.

Rebels with a Cause ...Cathy Hilton studies 1950s dragsters and finds some answers for today's street racing problems.

A Turning Point ...Brandon Marriott finds a new academic path on Sept. 11th.

Student of the World ...Julian Brooks studies international history following years spent exploring the world.

Making Connections ...Chelsea Horton finds a way to link aboriginal and religious studies

Why History? ...Julian Benedict finds that History provides the best way to make sense of the present.
It might seem perverse in an issue devoted to students, both graduate and undergraduate, to begin with faculty but the dominant story over the past ten months has been the continued renewal of faculty within the department. Felicitas Becker (African History) and Mary-Ellen Kelm (CRC in First Nations Health) joined the department in January 2006. Sterling work by two search committees concluded with the appointments of Paul Sedra (Middle East) and Dimitrios Krallis (Byzantine) who join us in September 2006 and we look forward to the arrival of Helena Pohlandt-McCormick (African History) at the same time. We have some distance to go before we return to our traditional strength as a department but it is enormously gratifying to see the renewal of African History, the new shape of Middle East History and the exciting growth of Hellenic Studies within the university. A future issue will have to report properly on any number of achievements and milestones in 2005-06. We have given the lion’s share of this issue to featuring a few of our very best students. I had the privilege of attending convocation in both October and June and to witness any number of excellent students graduate with degrees in History. Alas, we cannot feature you all. But we would always be pleased to hear from you or to see you back in the corridors of the sixth floor of the AQ. Congratulations and best wishes to all who graduated in October or June. And a particular word of thanks to all who agreed to be featured and to Sheilagh MacDonald who has worked so tirelessly on this issue.

John Craig
22 year old Sean Carleton defines academic success; he is the top History graduate with a 4.01 GPA. He is a new M.A. student who is working as a research assistant on aboriginal issues for Dr. Mary-Ellen Kelm. He was nominated for the Dean's Convocation Medal and asked by Chair, Dr. John Craig, to apply for a Rhodes scholarship.

Despite this recognition of his scholarly work, Sean does not consider himself a shining example of the traditional academic life. He has clinically diagnosed Attention Deficit Deficiency (ADD) and did so poorly in high school that he says: "I'm not supposed to be smart. I got an "A" in gym; it was recommended that I leave school and go into a trade."

Somehow despite his poor academic record in high school, Sean believed in himself and this was reinforced by a strong family and friends. This faith would eventually pay off when a High School Socials teacher recognized his potential, "turned him on to Canadian History”, and told him he would be successful if he learned to apply himself.

"I’m not supposed to be smart. I got an “A” in gym; counselors recommended I leave school and go into a trade.”

This came as quite a shock as Sean had always planned to build on what he thought was his one strength. "I've been playing hockey since I was born. I used to spend every Saturday night at my Grandpa's listening to "Hockey Night in Canada."

Eventually he came to believe in a new dream. He left behind his goal of becoming a professional athlete and enrolled at Capilano College where he would earn a first-class average in History courses. He transferred to SFU and would study with John Craig, Roxanne Panchasi and Janice Matsumura who would eventually provide references for his Rhodes Scholarship application. Sean says he learned "to stick my neck out and do original research."

Sean plans to pursue studies in First Nations. His interest was whetted after reading through 50 year-old textbooks his grandmother had saved. He found references to "civilizing the savages" disturbing. "We are the stories we tell ourselves and such erroneous reports counter efforts toward multi-culturalism."

From his former viewpoint as an outsider looking in, he recognizes that those who are marginalized do not have much say in writing history and he would like to tell their stories. Given his history, he also knows that we have more individual power than we realize. "One person can make a difference."
We've been successful in building and broadening our graduate program over the last two years. In the summer of 2005, a record number of students successfully defended MA or PhD theses.

The fall 2005 semester was one of our biggest intakes, with 20 students admitted to the MA program. Of these, seven applied for SSHRC funding, and five were successful.

To accommodate this large cohort and the diversity of areas of study it represents, we offered several directed readings courses in addition to our regular seminars. As a result, more faculty members were involved in graduate teaching, and more will be involved in supervision.

We admitted 22 students for the fall 2006. 17 will go into the MA program and 5 into the PhD program. Of these, one-third are in Canadian History, one-third in Middle East History and approximately one-third in European, Latin American, Asian and African History.

These numbers indicate that we are reaching students in more fields than ever before, and our reputation is growing. This is further indicated by the fact that most of our incoming students are from other universities, including the two PhDs in American history.

Our PhD applications increased, and of those admitted and coming to SFU in the fall, the majority are divided between American and European History, with one in Canadian History.

We polled those students who applied to our graduate program and from the responses we have learned "supervision within your area" was by far the most important factor in deciding to come to our department. "Reputation of the department" was second, and "reputation of the university" was third. Funding was not highly rated as a factor in the decision to come to SFU.

These numbers reflect the very real strengths of our department and the growing reputation of our faculty members. Our graduate program has grown significantly over the past few years, and has diversified both in the areas in which students study and where they come from.

Special SSHRC award!
Bonnie Schmidt has been awarded a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship—Doctoral, valued at $35,000 per year.

Where Are our Grads Now?
- **Todd McCallum (SFU MA, 1995)** is an Assistant Professor at Dalhousie University
- **Andy Parnaby (SFU MA, 1995)** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Cape Breton
  
  *Both were recently published in the Canadian Historical Review (87,1, March 2006)*
- **Dennis Pilon (SFU History MA, 1996)** will be taking up a tenure-track position in the Political Science department at the University of Victoria this fall. Dr. Pilon recently received his PhD from York University.
Street Racing is often in the news as young men die trying to be the fastest drivers in town. It would seem to be a social illness of the 21st century.

Yet, the same situation existed in the 1950s when a group of outcasts formed the BC Custom Car Association (BCCA) as a way of policing and regulating their own. In effect, according to MA student, Cathy Hilton, they became "Rebels with a Cause".

Cathy Hilton is quick to point out that there are some major differences between the street racers of today and those of yesteryear. BCCA members were mainly working class males who took a hands-on approach to their cars while the modern racer's approach is more surreal: "They have more of a video game mentality."

Cathy Hilton is fresh from delivering a research paper, on hot rodders and drag racers, at the prestigious Learneds Conference held last month at York University. She says: "BCCA were trying to legitimize their enthusiasm which had been seen as dangerous and irresponsible. This is something today's racers could learn from."

She's an intriguing addition to any panel on modern sport because she's an engaging, fresh-faced, well-educated woman who races drag cars. She got involved following a blind date with drag racer Darren Genovese.

Watching him at the track was such a pleasure that she says: "I fell in love; I had to race myself. Our car is a 1970 Nova called 'Purple Reign'. Since the car was built for Darren, he does most of the official driving but we're building a car for me. It's a sport that requires skill and technology. You don't really race other drivers; you race yourself."

Darren's father had been a member of a 1960s drag racing and hot rodding club, called "The Undertakers", associated with the BCCA. She would not recognize the unique historical significance until she saw his official jacket and watched one of his old racing films. At the suggestion of Dr. Mark Leier, Cathy would research the racers for her MA thesis.

Cathy notes that the most unusual aspect of the sub-culture was that they formed BCCA to protect themselves from being harassed by the authorities. "By setting up a place to race and working with the Vancouver police officers who were assigned to them, the clubs attempted to say that a real, professional, cool driver saved his races for the strip."

She notes that today's racers aren't content to be confined to the short track. "They want to race longer distances and on streets." There is more the element of a game and less of a sport; but, the MA student still feels that there is a lesson to be learned: "Street racing remains a problem but there are alternatives and ways to promote it. Today's law enforcement agencies would do well to look at the example of BCCA in the 1950s."
Dean's Convocation Medal nominee and new M.A. student, Brandon Marriott, remembers the day well. He had just returned from living in Israel and this experience made such an impact that he would go on to complete a second degree in History with a Middle Eastern concentration.

At 24 years old, Brandon is a young man who is working toward a decision that will change his life. At some point in his life, he might make a life-altering choice between a career as an academic or a life in the foreign service.

He has the education for both. He completed a degree in Criminology with a minor in Political Science in three and a half years. His degree in History took him only one and a half years and he graduated this year with a GPA of 3.85.

All indications are that he will do very well in the academic world. He has been accepted into the M.A. programme in History; he will work as a research assistant and study the concept of the Apocalypse in various religions. This fits with Brandon's global experience: "There is a universalism of religion, a way of reaching God."

Brandon has travelled extensively over the last five years. Most recently, he travelled through Mexico and Belize, where he took some time out of his vacation to study depictions of Christ. He's also travelled to over forty countries throughout the Middle East, West Africa, South East Asia, and South America. Wherever he goes, he tries to use the languages he has studied - Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish, and French.

This knowledge of languages, world travel and education would seem to make him a natural for work with the Canadian Foreign Service. He's already had some success. "I was 21 when I was included in a group interview; there were lawyers and academics in with me. They basically said that I should come back in a few years."

Depending on his eventual decision, Brandon might do just that.

"I came in late to Bill Cleveland's Middle East History class on September 11th, 2001 and walked into a scenario on terrorist attacks and planes exploding into the World Trade Centre. We had a front row seat on events as they were unfolding but I thought I was listening to some "Dooms Day" scenario. It wasn't until I went to tutorial that I discovered the attacks had actually occurred. It taught me not to come in late ever again."
A Student of the World

How does a kid from Vancouver Island find himself becoming a resident expert on the Balkans? That's a question PhD student Julian Brooks is asked over and over again. Since he has no family or religious ties to the region, people are understandably puzzled.

As always, there is no easy answer. In his thirties, Julian already has an impressive knowledge of the world, especially the Balkans. He's gleaned this understanding from practical experience, from studies and from the insights provided by a support network of faculty members with expertise in the region.

Julian's interest in international matters started as a teenager in Courtenay, B.C.. He grew up with Christopher Klein-Beekman who was killed by a suicide bomber outside the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad in 2003. Julian says: "We were like brothers; we took courses together in high school and at UVIC, drank beer, talked about sports, girls and international politics." Julian would accompany Chris's brother to Jordan to claim the body. "That was a tough trip but the U.N. staff was amazing," Julian recalls.

Prior to the tragedy, the friends kept in touch. While his friend worked at various international UNICEF posts, Julian worked in London with refugees from ex-Yugoslavia. "They provided me with contacts when I travelled to the Balkans and I had a very good experience. The people are painted as blood-thirsty killers with a pre-disposition to a cycle of violence. This simply isn't true."

After completing an ESL certificate in England in 1996, he took a job with a private school in the Republic of Macedonia, a landlocked country north of Greece. He spent three years in Skopje, the capital, with a bird's-eye view of international involvement in the area: "It's a small city and all the embassies are in the downtown core. It's hard not to miss things and there are always rumors swirling about."

One of his jobs was to teach "American" English to U.S. Embassy staff. This was part of an emergency preparedness program implemented just before NATO started
bombing neighbouring Yugoslavia in March 1999. Julian would leave shortly after hostilities broke out but he felt that the area was still a mystery to him. "After almost three years, I was just beginning to understand the region."

This fascination with the area stayed with him. Julian completed a B.Ed at UBC and was working as a teacher when he persuaded Professor Andre Gerolymatos to allow him to audit a Balkan History course. He was hooked. Following education cut-backs in 2002, he decided to enter the MA programme. "I went from teaching full time to subbing one or two days a week. If it hadn't been for that, I might not be here."

Julian convocated with his MA in June, 2006. His thesis focused on how Balkan nationalism evolved as the result of its connection to western Europe. His thesis ran almost 200 pages. "I wanted to do it right; I'm glad I did the last chapter on the Macedonian movement because it connected to what I had seen and heard."

It's obvious that Julian finds this part of the world fascinating: "The Balkans is at a strategic crossroads. Their history was shaped by three regions - Russia, Central Europe and the Middle East and by three religions - the Orthodox faith from the Byzantine Empire, the Catholic faith from the West and the Muslim faith from the Ottoman Empire."

Macedonia is only one of the countries involved in this great, confusing area and it is a complex, multi-ethnic country in its own right. When asked how he interprets the dizzying amount of data from the area, he responds: "It literally took years to understand the country and to speak Macedonian with some fluency."

Julian's research on the area is first rate. His senior supervisor, Andre Gerolymatos, says: "He is a superb student and he writes beautifully. I really look forward to his PhD."

Julian has tentatively decided on studying the first multi-lateral peace-keeping mission sent into the Balkans in 1903. "It failed for the same reasons the efforts fail today. They were very undermanned; they misread the situation and national interests took precedence over aiding the victims." While he recognizes that recent NATO efforts repeat a tired pattern, he is optimistic: "I met many people who don't hate one another; they joke about creating a Balkan state for those who can live together."

Julian wants to give a more positive sense of the area and is grateful for the insights and support he gets from faculty. "Andre Gerolymatos is one of the few Balkan experts in Canada. I'm currently doing readings with Thomas Kuhn who is an authority on the Ottoman Empire; he has done considerable archival research in Turkey. I'm also being directed by Russian expert, Ilya Vinkovetsky, who recently taught at the American University in Bulgaria. He, too, knows the Balkans very well and is in touch with historians who study the region. I couldn't ask for a better start to my PhD work."
Convocation Fall 2005
Chelsea Horton responds to historical data in the same way that some people can "play by ear"; they hear a song and then piece notes together into a musical score. In much the same intuitive way, Chelsea is able to make the connections between cultures, lessons and course work, and amongst several very different religious traditions.

She knew she would commit her life to History when she realized that it is the study of relationships. Chelsea had her "eureka" moment while studying aboriginal history with former SFU faculty member, Paige Raibmon. "I felt she did an amazing job of stressing the sense that everyone in our society has much to learn from Aboriginal history and that we are all implicated in the history of colonization."

This ability to make connections would surface during her time as an Honours student when she interviewed friends and relatives of one of the first Aboriginal Bahá’í women in Canada. Chelsea saw this as a chance to study both First Nations and religion. This interest would lead to an MA thesis on the Aboriginal -Bahá’í encounter in British Columbia.

Chelsea convocated at the October ceremony last year and is now at work in the PhD programme at UBC. She followed senior supervisor Dr. Raibmon because "she pushes me to the bounds of my thinking and beyond."

Inspiration came from other faculty as well. Alec Dawson "pushes students to question all received truths.” Middle East specialist, Derryl MacLean, was "wonderfully instrumental in helping me link the literatures of Aboriginal history with those of the Bahá’í faith and the history of religion more broadly." This guidance provided Chelsea with much-needed insight into the notable growth of the Bahá’í religion in B.C., by some 900 Aboriginal members, between the 1940s to the 1990s. Chelsea sees this increase as a direct link to the Bahá’í tradition of "legitimizing, honouring and validating native spiritual prophecies and practices."

"I felt she did an amazing job of stressing the sense that everyone in our society has much to learn from Aboriginal history and that we are all implicated in the history of colonization."

It is this tradition and Chelsea's links to Bahá’í members that has allowed her access to some unique Aboriginal experiences. On two separate occasions, she was invited to join Bahá’í members and help run the kitchens at potlaches, or ceremonial feasts in Alert Bay. Because of their community involvement, Bahá’í members have a place of respect: "They are regularly honoured and have been asked into the potlach to dance in full regalia."

Despite her participation, Chelsea readily acknowledges her status as an “outsider”. "I try to handle my research with sensitivity; I do not presume that I have a right to be there; I was invited to be there. I try to be very clear about who I am and what my intentions are.”
Honours Walking Tour

Sean Carleton as the ghost of Simon Fraser

Heather Skricezewski (DA), Hilmar Pabel and Wileen Keough (faculty)

Allen Seager and Mark Leier (faculty)

Wyatt Wright and Karl Segnue in Naheeno Park

Roxanne Panchass videotaping the Honours Walking Tour

Lisa Kilner in Freedom Square
This year, the students enrolled in the History Honours program completed a somewhat unusual assignment. Taking inspiration from SFU’s 40th anniversary celebration in 2005, each of the students in the Honours Tutorial (HIST 305) researched a site at the Burnaby Mountain campus that reveals an important aspect of the University’s past.

The students drew primarily on materials available to them at the SFU library and archives. A number of participants also conducted oral interviews. Students coordinated their presentations, creating “Walking Past SFU,” a two-hour public history tour of campus that was open to students, faculty and staff. But these were no ordinary class presentations!

Sean Carleton started the tour off as “the ghost of Simon Fraser” in a presentation that called attention to the University’s name and its colonial legacies. Ryan Gallagher shared with us his research on the architecture and landscaping of SFU by focusing on the three trees that stand in the garden of the Academic Quadrangle. Tracey Duncan drew our attention to the role of the visual art collection at SFU, the politics of acquisition and de-acquisition. Wyatt Wright took us to the President’s Office, giving us a view of the past from “above.” Karl Segnoe revealed the mysteries of Naheeno Park, an overgrown and neglected site that was an early effort at building community in and through public space on campus.

Taking us to the Interfaith Centre, Jennifer Bancroft reminded us that SFU has always been an institution peopled by individuals and communities of religious belief. Julian Benedict presented the hidden history of a “nude sauna” in the early days of SFU, inviting reflection on the changing histories of sexuality and policy on campus. Trevor Checkley presented the site of the former Shell station at SFU, touching on issues of campus planning, amenities, corporate involvement, and protest. Julia Smith invited participants (men and women) into the space of the SFU Women’s Centre for a gendered perspective on the University’s history. Lisa Kilner took to the podium at Freedom Square, giving voice to the words of thinkers and activists from the 1960s both on and off campus. Finally, Adam Schubel outlined the history of SFU as a site of film production, completing our tour with a critical look at issues of funding and revenue at the University.

The tour was an enormous success. It gave students a chance to be historical researchers, writers and educators while building and participating in an intellectual community with implications beyond the bounds of the traditional classroom. “Walking Past SFU,” took its participants and observers to spaces we often fail to notice at all, sites of memory and forgetting that reveal the presence of historical complexity and meaning between classes, down corridors, up the stairs, and around the corners of the University.
Jennifer Bancroft—Jennifer’s interests lie in the history of religion and the relationship between history and literature. Soft-spoken but intellectually powerful, her heroes include Natalie Zemon Davis and Hilmar Pabel. For the short term she is looking to serve as a researcher and writer for a political think-tank, preferably liberal in outlook. Wise beyond her years.

Julian Benedict—A veteran of the academy, Julian is a model of reliability, hard work and good sense. He is interested in everything and everyone. Among his more memorable contributions to the Honours Programme was his timely serving of home-made apple crisp in History 400. Laments his student loans.

Trevor Checkley—Trevor joined the Honours Programme after a semester of History courses and pub sessions at the University of East Anglia. He writes eloquently about the genre of “popular history” and shall be doing his Honours thesis on ice hockey in England, thereby ensuring a prize for the briefest thesis on record. England made him.

Lisa Kilner—Polite, reserved and willing to raise her hand for ten minutes at a stretch, Lisa has found her niche in a talkative cohort. African American history is her thing and she writes convincingly about the need for professional historians to recognize the importance of film as a public instructor. Loves veggie burgers.

Adam Schubel—Describing his early undergraduate career as “tumultuous”, and nearly lost to Political Science, Adam has found a home in History as he cultivates his interests in music, film and travel. He works profoundly with the historical significance of art, whether a commercial icon or volunteer graffiti on the Berlin Wall. Leads charge to pub after class.
Karl Segnoe—“Po-Mo” Karl works thoughtfully and engagingly on all matters theoretical. He can render intelligible the obscurest of passages in Foucault, Derrida, Barthes, Saussure and Bourdieu. Karl has helped to resurrect the History Student Union and is a name to watch in University governance. Takes a liberal view of due dates and class times.

Julia Smith—A splendid writer and speaker, Julia is the conscience of the “little person”, including women, workers and ethnic minorities. She is a ready and able challenger of received wisdom and is adept at puncturing intellectual balloons. Julia wishes to see historians expand their work on film and other broadcast media. Fearless in debate.

Wyatt Wright—A lone wolf in his enthusiasm for military history, Wyatt uses wit and sound argument to convince his peers that there is more to war than soldiers and battlefields. On other matters and debates he raises the mantle of common sense and defends the traditions of the historian’s craft. Poses as a conservative.

June 2006 History Award Recipients

Gold Medal and Stephen McIntyre Book Prize (top graduating student in History $400 and Gold Medal)— Sean Carleton

This award recognizes the highest academic achievement in History. Sean has a GPA of over 4.0, with no grade below A-. This year’s Gold Medal field was extremely competitive, with several outstanding students.

Margaret Ormsby Prize (best essay in Canadian History $275)— Julian Benedict graduates with a 3.99 GPA in the History Honours Programme and a GPA of 4.013 in all of his university courses. He is currently finishing the final academic requirements to enter a teaching program in 2007.

European History Prize (best essay $250) — Sara Ellis is completing a double major History and Humanities.

William L. Cleveland Essay Prize in African/ Middle-Eastern/Asian History (best essay $200)— Denys (Dennis) Gajdamaschko is completing a History major with a concentration in Middle East and Islamic Studies, as well as pursuing an interest in Russian History.

Richard Morgan Memorial Book Prize (best essay in Canadian Native History $250) — Robert Taylor graduates with a History major and Geography minor.

SSHRC prize: Leanne Page is the recipient of a Canada Graduate Scholarship for her studies as an MA student in the English Department at UBC. Leanne convocated with a GPA of 3.9 after completing a double major in English and History, with an EMI in French. She is the winner of a book prize from the French Department and was chosen to sing the national anthem at her convocation.
Julian Benedict is a Dean's Convocation Medal nominee with a GPA of 3.99 in History. This is an accomplishment given he completed the Honours programme without ever taking a break from his studies.

This mature student recommends History to anyone who wants to find their place in this rapidly-changing modern world.

Rather than finding History to be focused on old generals and ancient military battles, Julian says the discipline provides a much more personal and contemporary insight: "I wanted to enlighten myself about the way the world works and History just made sense of it all."

"History frequently concentrates on the individual; there are no pre-set models one must follow; it is intensely personal, offering students the ability to investigate many issues that have not been studied before."

Far from the study of endless names and dates, Julian notes that History trains you to propose an idea and support it with solid research. "I thought I'd learn the art of argumentation in Philosophy, instead I learned it in History."

"History does not teach you knowledge but how to find knowledge effectively. This is a real challenge in the computer age, given our greater reliance on web-based information."

Julian recognizes that the best teachers train students to find their own answers: "The most rewarding professors do not teach you history; they teach you the skills of a historian.

Professor John Craig balances teaching content and skills. Dr. Allen Seager encourages you to engage your own opinions and work with primary sources. Dr. Ian Dyck provided those of us in the Honours Programme with new ways to think and analyze the past."

"I thought I'd learn the art of argumentation in Philosophy, instead I learned it in History."

He finds that History is a dynamic platform for the right type of mind. Julian applied to the Honours Programme to get to know his fellow students and was greatly impressed: "Their knowledge, their thoughtfulness and attention to detail was truly humbling."

As a mature student he was delighted to see such potential: "It is so encouraging to see so many young people excelling in academia."

Julian also recognizes that students, who are passionate about a career in History, are wise to start early: "the academic life is a young person's game and this economy is becoming less and less forgiving."