

## Achieve BC and Me

### ► My Co-op Adventure Around the Province

By Sharon Roberts

If you think that you know anything about teamwork, an experience like working with the Achieve BC (ABC) tour might make you think twice. No previous amount of experience working with others could have prepared me for the demands of being an ABC tour team member.

The ABC tour team consisted of seven individuals all under the age of 30. Under the direction of one team leader, we toured over 40 communities around the province over a nine-month period to promote the information available on the ABC website ([www.achievebc.ca](http://www.achievebc.ca)). Five government ministries have contributed to the ABC site, which contains information on everything from prenatal and early childhood care, to post-secondary and career opportunities available in British Columbia.

I learned rather quickly that there was no hope of maintaining any kind of routine on the road. We visited one school and one mall during our weeklong stay in each community. Our visits included setting up and taking apart a large, interactive exhibit that showcased the highlights of the ABC website. Our setup start time ranged anywhere from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m., causing our schedule to be very dynamic. Everything from awkward stairs and ramps to elevators and doors that were too small for our pieces to fit through, sometimes made getting our exhibit in and out of the location an obstacle course. All in all, the process always served as a great activity to build problem-solving and teamwork skills.



*Sharon Roberts learned all about teamwork while promoting Achieve BC around the province*

This job was both physically and emotionally demanding, but the skills and experiences that I have gained were truly worth it.

The hardest thing to cope with was the fact that I was a member of this team 24 hours a day; I didn't get to go home and forget about work at the end of the day. In addition, it was hard to have some "me" time, unless I wanted to be cooped up in my hotel room. On occasion we were permitted to take one of two team vans for an afternoon, but because there were so many of us, we often

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*Triple C, also known as the Communication Co-op Committee, is a volunteer student group that connects co-op students and promotes SFU Co-op.*

# Confessions of a Hockey Intern

## ► A Look at Co-op with the Canucks

By Emily Chu

Before I got hired to work for the Canucks, I had never watched a game of hockey in my life. Maybe the Canadian in me was dormant my entire life, but it surfaced once I had to learn the entire culture of hockey.

My nonexistent hockey knowledge would not have been such a disturbing factor if I did not need to *write* about it. If my job were nothing more than a behind-the-desk nine-to-five job, then it would be alright. But I was always following the players around during practices and taking pictures, recording their audio and writing about stats and standings.

So how does a person who knows nothing about hockey learn to write about hockey? There is not exactly a manual on this sort of thing, or a *Hockey for Dummies* on sale at the corner store. It would have been great if there were an 'Introduction to Hockey 101' course that I could have taken beforehand. But then again, no one else in Vancouver probably would even need such a course, besides me.

Right off the bat, I was tossed into a locker room and asked to write blurbs after a morning skate. My first time took a few hours since I could not even tell the players apart; hockey players in uniforms all looked identical to me. At first, I relied on the little numbers on their helmets for assistance, but they were not always within proper viewing distance. The numbers were only helpful in telling the Sedins apart, or other look-alikes like Tyler Bouck and Nolan Baumgartner.

I am glad to have had the opportunity to go to about 50 hockey games this year. I know that probably half of Vancouver, if not more would have given their left arm for this opportunity and it is just a shame that I did not appreciate the games until sometime into December. The first half of a season was sort of a blur since I was still having a hard time understanding where the puck went.

Some of the material sportswriters use can sound like a completely foreign language. I did not know what "notching" a goal meant, or what giving up a "contest" was. Listening to the live play-by-play wasn't very helpful



*Emily Chu gives us a peek into the locker room*

since I did not understand why they would "change on the fly", or why the announcer kept saying "poke-checked." Picking up hockey lingo was completely self-taught, thanks to the help of newspapers and radio talk shows.

I will always remember the first time I recorded audio after a game, even though all the pushing, shoving and budging amongst other reporters was a little over the top. Recording the audio and dealing with hockey players was not too difficult because I usually followed the media scrum and recorded whatever the other reporters asked. It would be like a scene from the news, where a star shows up and then 20 reporters flock to him in a herd and shove mikes and cameras to his face. Lights would be shining and everyone would be pressed up against each other in this tiny little crowd. Fortunately for me, it was not intimidating during scrums because I had no idea who the player was and was oblivious to his superstar status, which is probably a good idea, since being star-struck probably would not make for very good journalism.

During a media scrum, with a dozen people crammed tightly around a single player, there's bound to be less-than-ample room to breathe. And when you're stuck in the middle of the scrum, it's hard to be immune to body odour and disturbing breath. It was funny because during one of the last practices, there was a giant bottle of Listerine in the locker

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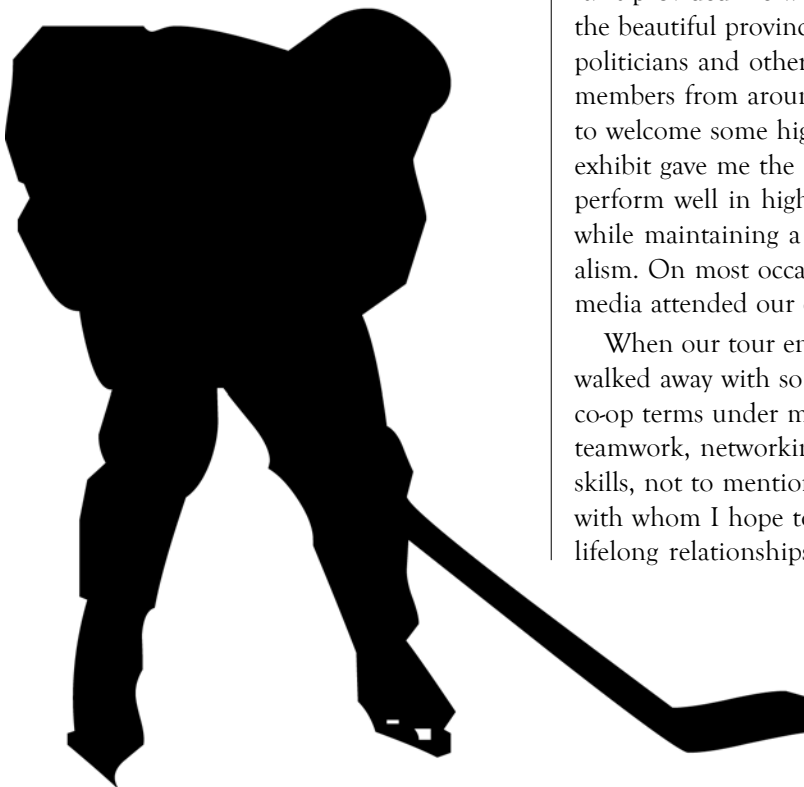
› **Hockey Intern Confessions** continued from page 2

room and a sign that said, “Reporters: use this.” I guess I’m not the only one who likes good hygiene!

Seeing what went on in the dressing room spoke volumes towards my understanding of the 2003–2004 season of the Vancouver Canucks. From an unbiased and non-fan point of view, this team had genuine chemistry. And you can’t create chemistry with just a huge payroll and superstars. Each player seemed to fit into the giant puzzle, and the bond between team members continued off the ice as well.

It was a great year for me. I got a chance to see lots of action this year, which provided enough memories to last a while. You cannot win them all, and I was fortunate enough to have spent a season to not only gain experience as a reporter but to see what really went on behind the scenes. Someday in the future, when the Canucks actually bring home the Cup, I will be watching—only from the stands. Except that’s alright, since I am not a hockey fan anyway!

All in all, this job is probably the best thing that’s ever happened to me. The experiences I have gained are invaluable and rewarding. ◀



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had to compromise our plans. So for the most part, I was “stuck” with five guys and one girl, but the great side effect was that I came to know them as my family.

Under normal circumstances, we had Mondays off. This meant one day to explore what our current “home” had to offer, which included doing things like golfing, visiting some unique hotspots in the Kootneys and northern BC, snowboarding at Mt. Washington and in the Okanagan Valley, and hiking and beachcombing in Tofino. Despite sounding like a vacation, these activities also helped to increase the effort and enthusiasm that we all brought to the daily grind.

By learning to work together in non-work situations, our team developed stronger friendships and work bonds. We learned more about each other and figured out how to make our teamwork reach its full potential—a bonus for our employers. Our team-building activities, which companies have been known to spend thousands of dollars on, were built right into our job!

The ABC tour wasn’t the first of its kind, and it won’t be the last (there are already three more in the works). If you have the opportunity to work with a tour like this, take it. It provided me with the chance to explore the beautiful province of BC and to meet politicians and other important community members from around the province. Having to welcome some high profile people to our exhibit gave me the chance to learn how to perform well in high-pressure situations, while maintaining a high level of professionalism. On most occasions, members of the media attended our exhibit as well.

When our tour ended at the end of June, I walked away with so much more than three co-op terms under my belt. I have gained teamwork, networking, and communicating skills, not to mention a new family; people with whom I hope to maintain strong, lifelong relationships. ◀

# Top Co-op Employer

## ► Bringing Co-op to Connexus

By Elana Chan

Have you ever considered that you might one day hire a co-op student in your future job? Maybe it is time you start. Co-op employer Jeanette Lum enjoyed her experience working with SFU Co-op students so much in her previous provincial government position that she took the initiative to create a co-op placement in her current position at Connexus Family and Children Services Ltd.

Connexus is a midsize, private agency that provides a range of services to children, youth, and families in the Lower Mainland. As the program manager in community development, Jeanette's responsibilities include project management, establishing connections within the community to better support the agency's clients, and building collaborative partnerships with the community.

Since starting at Connexus in June 2003, Jeanette has been hard at work setting up a co-op position. Upon receiving approval from the CEO and Directors of Connexus, Jeanette hired one student in the late summer of that year. In the spring semester of 2004, communication co-op student Marika Willms filled the co-op position at Connexus.

The job description of the co-op student varies by student and work-term, as Jeanette says that it depends on the nature of the



*SFU Co-op employer Jeanette Lum (left) pictured with communication co-op student Marika Willms (right)*

project requirements and deadlines. Assisting Jeanette, Marika is conducting community development research; writing formal proposals; working with graphics, format, layout, and editing; and contributing ideas on various committees. Marika is also assisting to collate information and research for the agency's accreditation process.

Jeanette believes it is important that both the employer and student benefit from the co-op experience. At the beginning of the work term, Jeanette meets with the student to discuss his/her learning objectives.

"It is a mutually beneficial experience," explained Jeanette. "Not only does our agency benefit from the assistance of the co-op students in our projects, but the students also leave the co-op experience feeling they learned some valuable skills, which will help them in their future studies and careers."

One year since she started to work at Connexus, Jeanette will be working with a third co-op student this summer. It is due to the contribution of employers like Jeanette Lum at Connexus Family and Children Services that make our co-op experiences successful and rewarding. So when the opportunity arises, perhaps we can think about creating a co-op position in our workplace! ◀

“ It is a mutually beneficial experience ”

# Meet the Faculty

## ► Social Issues Communications - An interview with Dr. Martin Laba

By Candace Bonfield

Social-issues communication is a field with unlimited possibilities, academically and professionally, to apply our communication skills for the betterment of the world around us. Communication, in its many forms, can often be the catalyst needed to create great change and Martin Laba is one person on campus who can tell you how to go about accomplishing this.

Martin Laba is both the director of the School of Communication here at SFU and a distinguished and respected professor. Students of his frequently use the words “charming” and “intriguing” to describe both his personality and teaching style. It is hardly a surprise then that Laba received an *Excellence in Teaching Award* in 2001. His talents are not limited to the classroom though. He has spent many years applying his theory to the real world as a consultant. In this role, he has worked with a diverse group of clients addressing a wide range of subject areas from AIDS to safe driving.

For co-op students who want to follow in Dr. Laba’s footsteps, some important questions come to mind. First, what are the skills that communication students gain from their degree that make them superior candidates for co-op placements?

“Students of communication are at an advantage because of the combination of both theory and application so prevalent in the program,” Dr. Laba declares. “Graduates of communication have a broad comprehensive knowledge base that includes a strong liberal arts, science and social science familiarity. Communication students are ‘trained’ not only to identify and understand but also to analyze the nature of change, assets in a world in constant metamorphosis.”

Next, I asked about identifying and applying skills gained from co-op placements. How can social-issues communication students adapt seemingly unrelated experience from current co-op placements and apply them to future jobs in their niche field?



*Dr. Martin Laba, Associate Professor and Director, School of Communication*

“Learning marketing skills in their standard environments in order to apply them to special interest needs later is important,” stressed Dr. Laba. “Students need to both study and immerse themselves in the media environments that they will be utilizing for their particular social causes in the future.”

Finally, I asked him one last question: what are the greatest challenges or changes in the ‘market’ environment coming up that will affect communication co-op students?

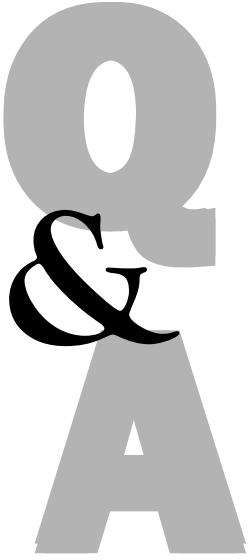
“There will be an urgent and critical demand for highly skilled graduates who have the capacity to think critically, to think quickly, to think on their feet, and not only to adapt to the accelerated pace of change in social, cultural, economic and political environments but to be able to anticipate these changes,” he replied. “Students need to be problem solvers. The social issues communication market requires professionals who can point out where the problems lie and come up with creative solutions.”

Dr. Laba says that students coming out with communication degrees are standing on a ground that is shifting constantly. We will be affected by globalization, new technology and media content and delivery. We must be prepared and one step ahead at all times and participating in co-op is a good place to start. ◀

# Where Are They Now?

## ► An Interview with Rena Heer (2002 graduate)

By Jaskiran Uppal



### Where are you currently working?

I am currently the production, programming, and promotion coordinator at Channel M, a new multicultural television station. I assist the Director of Programming, Production & Promotion in his duties and support his role. This allows me to participate in the selection and screening of proposals and programming for the station and gives me exposure to the operation of various departments.

### Where did you complete your co-op terms and what were you required to do for each job?

My first work term was at *Mehfil* Magazine. I was working as an administrative assistant and my duties were typical of a first work-term. My second work term was with Environment Canada, where I was the Communications Coordinator. My job involved liaising with the media, organizing ministerial visits, and working on ministerial briefing materials. My third and fourth work terms were with ISM-BC, which turned into full time employment after my co-op term. ISM-BC offered me a job not only because they knew the quality of my work, but also because I made it clear that I was interested! I worked there for eight months and then had to find another job because the organization was being sold. My next job was at Incognito Software, where I worked as the Business Development Manager, and was responsible for developing and managing our strategic technical and sales alliances.

### What were the most important skills that you acquired through your co-op work terms?

I learned to be flexible, respond to situations professionally and solve problems. In a team atmosphere, you deal with many different personalities and different styles. It's very important to learn to work with, and around, people's differences. Also, I learned that

smaller companies foster more professional development. I have worked for both large, hierarchical organizations and for smaller, understaffed companies. With a smaller company, there is more flexibility to grow and take on higher level tasks that might not be a part of your job description.

### How did you get into the television industry? What steps should a student take if he or she wants to work in television?

Television is difficult to get into. Through my co-op terms and the jobs I gained as a result of them, I made some excellent contacts amongst various organizations. For those looking to enter the field, all I can suggest is be creative, but extremely professional. You want to be noticed and respected at the same time. It is good to consider co-op placements in television, but it is just as important to volunteer wherever you can so that you can be exposed to the industry and the people in it.

### It sounds like you made many networking connections throughout your experiences, and that you'd be able to use your connections to find work. What advice do you have for current or future co-op students?

Landing your first co-op job can be difficult. Communication 200 is a great class that helped me attain co-op work terms related to communications. Getting volunteer experience is also an excellent asset. When looking for volunteer work, students should try to find positions where they can develop skills needed in the field of communications such as event planning and strategic planning.

*For Rena, co-op was an opportunity to gain valuable work experience, to advance her professional development, and to build a network of contacts. Take advantage of the co-op and volunteer opportunities available to you; you never know where they will take you! ◀*

# Where Are They Now?

## ► An Interview with Tara Knight (2002 graduate)

By Katie Laughlin

Tara Knight, program coordinator for The Vancouver Board of Trade's Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT), owes her success to SFU's Co-op program. After graduating in 2002, Tara found a job with a PR agency and worked for such organizations as the 2010 Olympics and the Canucks. In August 2003, Tara landed a position on LOT's committee, which led her to where she is today. Leaders of Tomorrow is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to further the development of leadership and managerial skills in Vancouver's future business leaders.

### Why did she apply for Co-op in the first place?

Like everyone else, Tara wanted to gain real experiences to add to her academic and practical skills. She also wanted knowledge of possible industries that she could work in, as well as contacts for when she graduated.

### What was her best Co-op experience?

Tara only had two co-op jobs (each eight months) because she did not want to leave either job! In 1998, she went to Ottawa for eight months to work for National Child Day. She says she met more people from SFU there, than she did when she was actually attending SFU here in Vancouver. She and her friends actually made a guide for future Co-op students coming to Ottawa and found it the best place to be in the summer. Tara strongly recommends travelling to Ottawa for a Co-op job if you have the chance!

Also, in 2000, Tara worked for the Voyager of Discovery, an initiative of the Vancouver Maritime Museum. She helped with the fundraising event that worked towards saving the historical site, which allowed her to work on tasks she would never have had access to in a corporation. Tara met some awesome people, and experienced the joy of feeling passionate one minute, and frustrated the next because she was so involved in the project and it was something she believed in.



*SFU Communication Co-op alumna Tara Knight*

After the co-op position with Voyager ended, Tara stayed on as a volunteer to help finish the project. It was a lot of hard work and time, but it offered her the most amazing experience.

### How did she get into the job she is in now?

Tara believes that you must get involved! At SFU, she was involved with Triple C, which showed her potential careers that a communication degree could offer. She took workshops, joined the International Association of Business Communicators, and went out and met people in order to let everyone know who she was and what she was interested in doing. Network, network, network!

### Does she love what she does? Why?

Tara loves what she does because she is working for a nonprofit organization and

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because everyday presents a new challenge. Tara has an incredible amount of passion for LOT because she gets to work for an organization that she believes in, which helps students achieve their goals. Tara knows that life presents the most unique challenges and she truly believes that when you follow your passions, you will find success!

**Does she think she would be where she is now if she had not joined Co-op?**

“Absolutely not!” Tara has friends who did not join co-op, which makes her at least four to five years ahead of them because of her amazing experiences and connections. “Co-op gives you access to higher level jobs, it allows you to graduate with a professional resume, connections and experience, and it motivates students to have other ambitious students and employers around them!”

**Does she have any advice for future or current co-op students in order to succeed in the workplace?**

Tara’s words of wisdom for present and future Co-op students is, first, be in touch with your community. Secondly, take what comes to you and try everything once! Thirdly, do not think you will stick to a plan, because you will not! Also, people will find you if you are good at what you do. Co-op teaches you valuable networking and people skills, so always keep in touch and employers will find you! Again, get out and tell people what you are doing, but at the same time, find out what other people are doing. ◀

# Statistics Corner

**04-1    03-1**

**Who we are**

New admits	29	42
Returning students	67	69
Total students enrolled	96	111

**Matching**

Students matched	66	91
Round One matches	5	15
Self-directed co-ops	6	11

**Who’s doing what**

Eight-month term	21	24
First co-op	17	25
Second co-op	20	31
Third co-op	14	13
Fourth co-op	11	14
Fifth co-op	4	7
Part-time co-op	0	3

**Where we’re working**

Greater Vancouver	56	68
Out-of-town	6	16
Overseas	4	7

**Who we’re working for**

Federal government	13	19
Provincial government	2	5
Municipal government	0	1
Government agencies	8	4
Not-for-profit	12	7
Private	31	50

**What other programs we’re placed with**

Arts Co-op	13	n/a
Business Co-op	8	n/a

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