

OVER THE EDGE

UNBC'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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20

MARCH
2025
THURSDAY



4

UNBC
Geography
Students Shine

9

Living with Chronic
Illness and Health
Anxiety

10

Alumni
Profiles

A Mystic Semester

BY LUTHIEN THIELMANN SHE/HER

On an evening at the end of August, buffeted by wind, I was standing on the bow of the SSV Corwith Cramer looking down at the raging waves of the open Atlantic. I had a moment of wondering how my studies at UNBC had led me to this place, this sunset, these ocean swells, somewhere near the continental shelf and out of sight of the New England coastline.

Last semester I had the opportunity to take part in a study abroad with the Williams-Mystic Coastal and Ocean Studies program located in Mystic, Connecticut, a partnership of Williams College and the Mystic Seaport Museum. This program redefined my perception of university.

The Williams-Mystic program is based on the idea that students will learn through experiential and interdisciplinary education. The program involves taking four courses: American Maritime History, Literature of the Sea, Marine Policy, and a choice between Oceanographic Processes or Marine Ecology. Every student takes a skills class and goes on three field seminars. Williams-Mystic does the best they can to match their tuition and fees to what you pay for a semester at your home institution.

The field seminars are really the highlight of the program. The first is an offshore sailing trip, with my group we spent 10 days sailing in the Gulf of Maine. I went into the trip knowing nothing about sailing thinking I was going to hate it, but by the end of the trip I was sad to leave and already

thinking about how I could get back on the boat. During the trip I got to learn all about sailing through hands-on experience with sail handling, steering the ship, doing science research and deployments, and 6-hour watch rotations – yes that means standing bow watch at 3am staring at the stars while listening to the waves crash against the ship.

The Second field seminar was to the Pacific Northwest; my cohort went to Washington State. We got to visit Seattle, Neah Bay, Port Townsend, and many other cool places. Among other things, we learned from Indigenous peoples about land and fishing rights in the area, we learned about salmon populations and restoration, and how the Fraser and Columbia Rivers have shaped the physical landscape.

The Third field seminar was to Louisiana. Here we explored the beautiful areas of New Orleans, Cocodrie, Port Fourchon, and Grand Isle. This trip focused on how land loss is affecting the area, hurricane damage and resilience, the history of slavery in the area, and Cancer Alley among many other things. You get to participate in a one-of-a-kind learning experience from stakeholders and knowledge keepers, tour a shrimp factory, and even try alligator.

These field seminars offered powerful learning experiences that are unique to studying abroad. Back in Mystic I got to learn blacksmithing at Mystic Seaport Museum in a shop that was built in the 19th century. At the start I



On the bow of the SSV Corwith Cramer

Luthien Thielmann

knew nothing about blacksmithing; by the end of the program I had enough experience that the Museum said they would hire me to work in the shop. We got to make all kinds of cool objects: hooks, fire pokers, knives, tools, bottle openers, and keychains. I even managed to get them home in my suitcase. On my last day in Mystic, the Museum was doing a historic day where all the staff were in character set in 1876. I went into the shop to say goodbye to my instructor, who was in character and unable to talk to me directly with all the other people in the shop watching her forge Christmas ornaments. I looked at her and said thank you, she gave me hug and slipped a small forge-welded heart in my hand. Definitely a fond memory from my semester in Mystic. I got to meet some amazing people including all of my professors who were so supportive and encouraging. They all helped us with

self-guided science research, searching the museum's maritime archives, writing our own policy projects, and even reading Moby Dick, with our wrap-up discussion aboard the Charles W. Morgan, the last remaining wooden whaling ship in the world.

My study abroad was the highlight of my university education so far. I would encourage anyone to study abroad in a heartbeat. I think travelling through education is the best way to immerse yourself in other cultures, meet new people, and try new experiences that you would never get the chance to do otherwise. This is the neat thing about UNBC is that you get these cool opportunities to learn and study abroad while earning credits for your degree. Williams-Mystic is only one of the amazing studies abroad opportunities that are available; there are plenty of others available through UNBC.

Climate Change Education for Teachers in Northern BC

By the CETE Research Group: A. Lautensach, C. Ho Younghusband, G. Thielmann, D. Litz, H. Banack, and J. Crandall School of Education, University of Northern British Columbia

Recent elections in the US and Germany reveal a troubling trend: voters prioritizing short-term economic and social concerns over climate security. In northern BC, where temperatures are projected to rise 2.5 to 3 times faster than in the Lower Mainland, this shift in priorities is particularly concerning.

Scientists warn that a 43% cut in greenhouse gas emissions is needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C—a critical threshold beyond which climate disruption accelerates dramatically. Ignoring this reality limits our options and increases the likelihood of worst-case scenarios.

However, there's still hope. Canadians can help create a "less worse" future by avoiding denial and status

quo thinking. Students especially can make decisions that positively impact their futures by setting goals, analyzing trends, constructing scenarios, and taking Earth-conscious action. Collectively, these efforts can determine whether regions remain habitable.

At UNBC's School of Education, our Climate Education in Teacher Education (CETE) research group believes education plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges. The BC K-12 curriculum currently lacks comprehensive, cross-disciplinary climate change education that could benefit future generations. Meanwhile, many young people report feeling unsupported as they face anxiety and despair about our environmental future.

Since teacher preparation directly impacts educational quality, CETE works with pre-service and in-service teachers throughout northern BC. We help them implement the provincial curriculum while enriching it with knowledge, skills, and competencies that empower

students through climate change education.

Over the past two and a half years, we've developed ten workshops covering topics like climate change education methods, emotional responses to climate change, curriculum adaptation, and health impacts. These workshops are available online, in-person, or in hybrid formats, and recordings can be accessed on the CETE webpage under the UNBC School of Education website.

Our research includes surveys and focus groups with teachers in northern BC, and our project incorporates teaching resources, professional development, and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

We invite students from all programs to contact us for more information about K-12 climate change education. We're also eager to learn about your views, feelings, and concerns regarding climate change impacts in northern BC, and how you see education as a vehicle for climate action.

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UNBC Geography Students Shine at National Geomatics Competition

BY RACHEL PAGDIN

At the beginning of February, six students from the UNBC Geography Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) Club set out for Calgary to attend the 6th annual National Geomatics Competition. This year, the NGC brought 51 students from 9 schools across Canada together to challenge and learn from each other.

So what is geomatics anyway? Even as a geography student, I struggled to get my Google searches to tell me what the difference was between geomatics and GIS and geospatial analysis. It turns out geomatics is an umbrella term for all kinds of “geo”-type methods, including the ones above plus cartography, remote sensing, and surveying. I should have remembered that from my introductory cartography class (sorry Roger!). I don’t feel too silly about it though, as the few geomatics engineering students I surreptitiously asked during the conference didn’t seem to know either.

After icebreakers on Wednesday night and a networking and job fair on Thursday, the day came we’d all been waiting for: the release of the problem prompt. It could be anything—the only hint we had was the previous year’s prompt, an open question about using remote sensing for wildfires. When it was revealed that we’d be addressing traffic congestion in the Town of Banff, we immediately turned our minds to the problem. Then, the next surprise: we were off to Banff

for the day! We all piled on to the bus, driving through the beautiful Rockies. In theory we were working on our ideas, but many of us just let them percolate and enjoyed the view.

In Banff, we heard from municipal staff about the huge traffic challenge as the town of 9,000 people hosts tens of thousands of vehicles a day in the summer season. Paid parking downtown, extra parking lots, and improved bus and bike options had helped a bit, but congestion can rival Toronto levels on a daily basis. They were excited to hear some new ideas and they helped us understand the issue by answering our many questions. Of course, there was a little time to explore the town and we took advantage of the beautiful sunny day to wander the streets.

Back in Calgary at the hotel, it was time to really get to work. Our solution was due by 11 o’clock the next morning, so every 3-person team was sequestered in their hotel room to get it done. Our team had agreed we wouldn’t work through the night but every waking moment up to the deadline was spent brainstorming and refining ideas, exploring and analyzing data, making our presentation, and looking for any holes in our plan that could give the panel of judges an opportunity to stump us.

Handing in our materials felt like a real accomplishment the next morning! We didn’t have much time to revel

in it, though—we were fourth on the presentation list and only had time to run through our script once before we hustled over to the university to make our time. Thankfully we didn’t have time to stew or get too nervous! We presented our idea—public locker storage in strategic locations to enable people to use existing transit options—without a hitch and returned to the watch room, relieved, to support the other UNBC team presenting later that afternoon. Their solution—transforming a few streets to one-ways to streamline traffic flow and encouraging an evening culture to move traffic away from peak

times—impressed us all and they were awarded third place at the awards gala the following day. Both UNBC teams were recognized with a “Most Unique Solution” award, so we definitely left our mark!

The whole competition was a fantastic experience. I was inspired and learned so much in a short time, and I got to make new friends and see some new beautiful places. Thank you so much to the Office of the President and Environmental Dynamics Inc. for supporting our trip, and to the NGC organizers and the Town of Banff for putting together such an awesome event!



UNBC Geography students and their faculty advisor

Rachel Pagdin

Honoring Louis Riel’s Legacy Through Campus Reconciliation Efforts

BY: BRIANA GREER

Louis Riel, a pivotal Métis leader, remains a powerful symbol of resilience and cultural pride. While many commemorate Riel on his November 16 execution date, others honor him on the third Monday of February (BC’s Family Day). This year, February 17th was dedicated to his memory, highlighting his lasting influence on Métis rights and culture.

At UNBC, the Northern British Columbia Graduate Student Society (NBCGSS) is actively supporting reconciliation through various initiatives that foster cultural understanding among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

During the 2024-25 academic year, NBCGSS has hosted Indigenous-focused workshops, coffee-and-chat sessions, and notably passed a referendum securing permanent annual funding for Indigenous

programming.

The Honouring Indigenous Culture Gathering was a standout event that brought together Indigenous community members from Prince George and surrounding northern regions. The gathering featured:

- Local drumming performances
- Métis sash weaving teachings
- Presentations on Métis storytelling, art, and leadership
- Information sessions highlighting UNBC’s support for Indigenous students

Beyond cultural enrichment, the gathering fostered a sense of belonging for Indigenous students, especially newcomers to UNBC. Non-Indigenous students engaged in hands-on learning, gaining deeper cultural understanding in an inclusive environment.

The event’s success led to a significant milestone: at their Annual General Meeting, NBCGSS passed a constitutional amendment ensuring dedicated funding for Indigenous programming each year. This guarantees ongoing support for cultural connection and learning opportunities.

Additional initiatives included coffee-and-chat sessions where students engaged with their representatives and learned about Métis culture, and a workshop on the Michif language where students learned introductions and explored the language’s historical significance in Métis communities.

NBCGSS’s efforts reflect a strong commitment to creating a culturally safe learning environment and promoting meaningful dialogue about shared responsibility in reconciliation.

From Student Writer to Professional Journalist: A Conversation with Former Over The Edge Editor Colin Slark

BY AHMAD JALIL

For Colin Slark, current Prince George Citizen reporter and former Editor-in-Chief of Over The Edge, the journey into journalism began with a simple desire to write. “I wanted an outlet for writing that wasn’t one of my classes, that was more fun,” Slark recalls of his initial involvement with UNBC’s student newspaper.

Before taking the helm as Editor-in-Chief for the 2015-2016 academic year, Slark’s journalism experience included high school writing classes and work experiences with the Prince George Citizen and local CBC Radio Bureau. His first contribution to Over The Edge was a review comparing DC and Marvel comics’ relaunches – a far cry from the faculty strikes and administrative controversies he would later cover.

“At the end of the 2014-15 academic year, basically the entire staff and board of directors were leaving,” Slark explains. The previous editor, Jasmine Kirk,

recommended he apply for the position. After an interview at Zoe’s Java House downtown, Slark received a crash course in newspaper production before taking over.

During his tenure, Slark covered significant campus events, including the 2015 faculty strike. He remembers interviewing professors on the picket line at the University Way turnoff, where English professor Kevin Hutchings brought his guitar to play union and protest songs. The paper also reported on controversial issues like NUGS’ transit pass funding challenges and the appointment of former Harper government cabinet minister James Moore as chancellor.

The newspaper published twice monthly under Slark’s leadership, though maintaining consistent content quality and quantity proved challenging. “Sometimes people just sort of wanted to write about their personal experience. People didn’t

really want to write about hard-hitting stuff as much,” he reflects. To address this, Slark created a dedicated reporter position to encourage more news coverage.

One of the biggest challenges was keeping the paper alive during periods of low staff numbers and limited board membership. “In my first year, we had so few staff members and members on our board of directors that basically the biggest goal was just trying to keep it alive,” says Slark.

Looking at Over The Edge today, Slark appreciates the evolution of the paper’s design and branding. “Overall I think the graphic design looks a little more professional in general, and I like the use of the UNBC colors,” he notes, comparing it to the previous tabloid format. “I think it looks better and more professional.”

When asked about advice for current student journalists, Slark emphasizes the

importance of local reporting and getting out into the community. “Sometimes it felt like a bit of an uphill struggle to get the writers to write about what’s going on in their own backyard,” he reflects. However, he maintains that student journalists can break important stories and do meaningful work, even without formal journalism training.

Today, as a professional journalist with the Prince George Citizen, Slark’s experience at Over The Edge helped shape his career path. His journey from reviewing comic books to covering city news demonstrates how student journalism can serve as a stepping stone to professional reporting while providing essential coverage of campus life.

“I’m glad it’s still active,” Slark says of Over The Edge. “It helped me figure out what I wanted to do, and so I’m glad that opportunity is still there for other people.”

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OVER THE EDGE
UNBC'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER



Inside the Edge

*Q&A section

Are there any topics that are off-limits? How does OTE handle controversial or sensitive subjects?

At Over the Edge, we’re open to all topics you’re passionate about writing on! While no subjects are off-limits, we do consider where pieces might fit best. Our print newspaper, which goes out through our media partnership, typically features content that speaks to a broader community audience. But don’t worry if your piece tackles more controversial or mature themes – our website is a perfect platform for these stories, giving writers more flexibility to explore complex or sensitive topics. Our editorial team is always here to chat about the best home for your work and help you shape your ideas.



OTE is typing...



22nd Annual BC Natural Resources Forum in Prince George

BY EHSAN TAGHIZADE

One of the major January events in Prince George was the 22nd Annual BC Natural Resources Forum, held from January 14-16, 2025, at the Prince George Conference & Civic Centre. This year's forum theme was "BC Natural Resources – Purpose, Partnership, and Prosperity," exploring their collective contributions to positive economic and social impacts locally and globally. Through dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, participants delved into opportunities created by purpose-driven initiatives, the power of local and international meaningful partnerships, and

pathways to shared prosperity in British Columbia's natural resource sectors.

The BC Natural Resources Forum (BCNRF), in its 22nd year, had become Western Canada's premier multi-sector resource conference, brought together First Nations, government representatives, and the natural resources sector to discuss opportunities, innovative solutions,

and success stories. The forum provided a positive, non-partisan platform for discussing and learning about the latest trends and opportunities within the resource sector in BC and across Canada.

Each year, the forum attracts many federal, provincial, and local government leaders. There is also strong interest, support, and attendance from Indigenous leaders, resource developers, and representatives from the service and supply sectors that form the backbone of our resource economy.

This forum comprised various sections. After the official conference opening, there was a "Fireside Chat: Building Trust Through Collaboration – Rio Tinto and UNBC," where Dr.



Ehsan Taghizade



Ehsan Taghizade

Geoff Payne, UNBC President, was a panelist. Over the course of the event, numerous panels covered different topics, with valuable questions from the audience being well-responded to by the speakers.

Holding an exhibition with the participation of various companies was one of the most important parts of this event. One of the main highlights of the event was the attendance of students with support from UNBC. UNBC once again did an excellent job of helping students expand their communities and networks.

PEI, I Have A Question for You

BY NOLAN MAGGS

I have a question for you, Prince Edward Island: Why do you exist as a province?

When you joined Canadian Confederation, not at Charlottetown but only later, long after your sisters decided to give this Canada thing Macdonald was selling a try, you were late to the party. You were populous for the time, and for some reason, we kept pretending you were relevant. Nobody since then has decided to tell you that you throw the balance of confederation off significantly. Why should you have the same decision power in constitutional amendments as the titans that represent millions?

Your population is around 1% of Ontario, the most populous province, and your landmass is

merely 0.1% of the country's total. Neither of these figures suggest you warrant special treatment. In a just world, you would likely be merged into neighboring provinces. I get the distinct feeling this idea would be strongly resisted, though.

The imbalance our special province has created is striking. Using our electoral ridings to divide the country into divisions of roughly the same population as PEI produces results that are truly eye-opening. If we were to base provincial status on your population, major Canadian cities would contain several provinces each. In fact, Canada would be home to 259 provinces, imagine school children trying to memorize all those names and capitals!

President Answers

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If you had to rename the university for one day, what would you call it?



I would keep it the same as I think the really does encapsulate all we are 🤔

Growing Innovation: UNBC Student Leads Hydroponics Project for Sustainable Food Production

ADRIEN ZIMMERMAN

A new hydroponics system is taking root at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), spearheaded by twenty-six-year-old Madi Tokarchuk. Originally born in Saskatchewan, she moved Prince George less than a year ago and started her degree at UNBC in September.

Currently pursuing a degree in Environmental and Sustainability Studies, Madi's interest in hydroponics was first spurred during a fall semester class titled "Introduction to Environmental Citizenship". As a part of the class, students were tasked with completing a project to make real-world change in their community. Madi's group decided to focus on hydroponics to improve food sovereignty, and thus her hydroponics journey began.

Hydroponics growing is a method of food production in which plants are suspended in a water and nutrient solution with a net pot, allowing them to grow without soil. In comparison to conventional farming, hydroponics uses less water, less herbicides, and can

produce higher yields. Most plants can be grown in a hydroponic system, except for root crops, bushes, and trees. Madi is particularly interested in how hydroponic systems can be utilized in northern communities to provide a reliable source of year-round food.

Funding for the hydroponics setup was provided through a UNBC Green Grant, which provides one-time funding for projects to promote sustainability at UNBC. Any member of the University can apply for funding including students, faculty, staff, and campus-based organizations.

The plants grown with the UNBC hydroponics system will be sold to the Thirsty Moose Pub for cost recovery, and any surplus vegetables will be sold to students, making fresh produce more accessible to the campus community. She estimates that they will start selling heads of lettuce at less than two dollars per head. There is also the potential to utilize UNBC's compost system to provide nutrient input to the system, which would reduce costs

even further.

Madi encourages people to try hydroponics at home and advises that "anybody can do it, anywhere, anytime, if you've killed every plant you've ever had, you can still use hydroponics and be successful at it". She is also interested in seeing more hydroponic and growing systems employed in the community, "plants bring people together; you never go to a garden and see angry people". Madi invites those interested in hydroponics to attend her hydroponics and composting workshop at UNBC. Participants will have the opportunity to build a DIY hydroponic kit that comes with everything needed to get started from home. This event will run Tuesday March 18th from 1 - 3pm as a part of UNBC's Green Week. More information about the event and Green Week can be found through the UNBC Sustainability webpage.

Madi's journey exemplifies the innovative spirit of UNBC students, proving that with curiosity and dedication, we

can make a meaningful impact in our communities.



Adrien Zimmerman



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Nowruz at UNBC: Welcoming Spring and Saying Goodbye to Winter

If you've been around UNBC long enough, you've probably noticed Nowruz decorations popping up every spring. Since at least 2014, they've been a part of campus life. But Nowruz is the equivalent of Christmas time for millions across Asia, marking the start of a new year and the arrival of spring.

(Disclaimer: This article reflects my personal perspective as a Persian writer. Nowruz is celebrated in diverse ways across different cultures and regions.)

What is Nowruz?

Nowruz (also spelled Navruz) has been around for over 3,000 years, celebrated by millions across Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraqi Kurdistan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia's Bayan-Ölgii province. It's also widely observed in parts of Turkey, India, and beyond.

It all started as a Zoroastrian festival in ancient Persia, marking the arrival of spring—a literal fresh start. In 2009, UNESCO recognized Nowruz as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and today, cities worldwide host festivals full of music, dance, and food. But it hasn't

always been smooth sailing.

The History No One Talks About

Like many cultural traditions, Nowruz has faced bans and suppression. During certain periods in Iran, parts of the former Soviet Union, and Afghanistan, celebrating Nowruz was outlawed. Governments saw it as a symbol of resistance, a tradition too tied to national identity and independence. Indigenous communities in Canada and beyond can relate—their traditional celebrations were also banned for decades. But cultural traditions don't just disappear. People kept Nowruz alive underground, and today, it stands as a symbol of resilience for many inculding my motherland Iran.

How Do People Celebrate?

Nowruz is all about joy, connection, and making memories with loved ones. The festivities are packed with traditions that bring people together:

- Visiting family and friends, sharing sweets and traditional food.
- Elders giving children Eidi—small gifts of money or sweets.
- Kids going door to door, singing Nowruzi songs and collecting Eidi.
- Jumping over bonfires during Chaharshanbe Suri, an ancient

fire-jumping ritual meant to burn away bad luck.

- Dancing, eating, and partying—lots of it.
- ## The Haft-Sin Table: More Than Just Decor

One of the most iconic Nowruz traditions is the Haft-Sin table, where seven symbolic items, all starting with the Persian letter “S,” represent different aspects of life:

- Sabzi (Sprouted Wheatgrass): Growth and renewal.
- Senjed (Oleaster Fruit): Love and wisdom.
- Samanu (Wheat Pudding): Prosperity and sweetness.
- Serkeh (Vinegar): Patience and aging.
- Sib (Apple): Health and beauty.
- Sumac (Crushed Red Berries): Sunrise and the spice of life.
- Seer (Garlic): Protection and good health.

Other items include a mirror (self-reflection), goldfish (movement and life), candles (light in the darkness), coins (wealth), and painted eggs (fertility). Books of wisdom, Shahnameh, or Hafiz's poetry, (and for muslims, the Quran) remind people of their cultural roots.

Saying Hi to Spring and New Beginnings

Nowruz is a time of joy, renewal, and

fresh starts. As the days grow longer and flowers begin to bloom, it's a chance to reflect on the past, set intentions for the future, and surround ourselves with warmth and positivity. May this Nowruz bring you happiness, success, and plenty of good moments shared with loved ones.

Nowruz Mobarak!



Behrouz Danesh

Prince George Finally Unfrozen: Welcoming Spring!

BY SHIVI JUJAL (STUDENT, ENV. ENGINEERING UNBC/UBC)



David Douglas
Botanical Garden

Shivi Jujal

Prince George Finally Unfrozen:
Welcoming Spring!

By Shivi Jujal (Student, Env.
Engineering UNBC/UBC)

As Prince George's icy terrain thaws after four months wrapped in winter's embrace, we all eagerly await the first signs of warmth.

Two weeks ago, I woke up for my 8:30 AM CPSC 110 class and rolled up my dorm window to discover the first glimpses of grass! The snow had begun to melt, and winter seemed to be loosening its grip. But little did I know, Canadian weather has a sense of humor. It lured me in with a few bright, sunny days, only to strike back. That Thursday morning, I rolled up my window again to be greeted by heavy winds and a fresh shroud of snow.

Scenic campus views while walking to those early morning classes in winter

This was my first Canadian winter, and it tested me well—from running out of Keyoh at 11 PM in -10°C due to false fire alarms to witnessing (and experiencing) black ice betrayals on roads and sidewalks. Let's not forget the dreaded feeling of tiny stones and ice invading your boots! Despite these challenges, I'll never forget my first angelic sight of tall winter conifers dressed in fresh snow—a sight that made all the cold feel somewhat worth it.

Spring at UNBC isn't just about changing weather—it's a renewal of energy. The days are getting longer, and I find joy watching the “evil” snow melt away. For all of us, this transition marks the countdown to the end of the semester. The approaching warmth signals not just winter's end but also the anticipation of summer break, travels, and new adventures. Yet there's something

beautiful about witnessing nature's patience—the slow melting of ice and the reawakening of life in the city, especially on campus.

Views of the David Douglas
Botanical Garden

I can't wait to see the fresh pulse of life in trees and wildflowers around campus, especially at the David Douglas Botanical Garden! In Prince George, winter's transformation into spring is more than just a seasonal change—it's a shared experience, a collective sigh of relief, and our quiet celebration. It's a reminder that after long, testing months of cold, warmth always returns.

As we wait for winter to finally bow out in the coming weeks—and as another wave of midterms knocks at our doors (Finals are right around the corner!)—stay cozy, take care, and stay tuned!

Living with Chronic Illness and Health Anxiety as a 20-Something

BY ISABELLA MESQUITA

Living with a chronic illness is rarely discussed among young people. While chronic conditions are often associated with older populations, many 20-year-olds, including myself, navigate these challenges daily.

I struggle with several conditions, but POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) has been the most difficult to manage. POTS affects the autonomic nervous system, causing an abnormal increase in heart rate that leads to dizziness, fatigue, and heart palpitations. It limits my ability to exercise and play basketball, the sport I love. The rapid heart rate and dizziness make high-intensity activities difficult, and honestly, it just scares the shit out of me sometimes.

On the surface, I might say living with a chronic illness sucks, but it is what it is. Dig deeper though, and it can be soul-destroying. I mourn the happy, energetic, healthy person I was as a kid. It breaks my heart when I can't do what a typical 22-year-old can do, when I miss out or can't keep up. Sometimes being around a doctor is the only time I feel at peace. I fear deteriorating to the point where I can no longer enjoy life or take care of myself.

Pain management has become a constant part of my routine, balancing rest and activity, using heat or cold therapy, taking medications and vitamins, practicing mindfulness, and sometimes simply doing nothing because my body demands rest.

What I struggle with most is the health anxiety that often accompanies chronic illness. In severe cases, this can develop into hypochondria. These feelings are valid and terrifying. When you've faced life-threatening health situations growing up, you confront your own mortality much earlier and more

frequently than most kids. It's a harsh reality no child should face. Being young should mean feeling invincible, not worrying that your body might not be strong enough to keep you alive.

Unlike a broken bone or visible injury, chronic pain doesn't have outward signs. This leads to misunderstandings and lack of empathy. People might think you're exaggerating or using your condition as an excuse. But living with chronic pain requires immense strength and resilience.

Mental health inevitably suffers. The constant pain, limitations, and fear of the future can lead to depression, anxiety, and a deep longing for health. Maintaining positivity when your body feels like it's betraying you is challenging. Acknowledging these mental health struggles is crucial, seeking therapy, talking to loved ones, and finding healthy coping mechanisms can make a significant difference.

Here's what's important to remember: you are not alone. Many young people understand what you're going through. Finding a support system, whether friends, family, or online communities, is essential. It's where you can share experiences and find comfort in knowing others face similar challenges.

Living with chronic pain teaches valuable life skills. You learn to prioritize health, manage time effectively, develop empathy for others, and appreciate what you have. These skills serve you well in all areas of life. It's also essential to advocate for yourself—speak up about your needs, listen to your body, and push for more tests if something feels off.

I'm not sharing this for pity. I wrote this to raise awareness and understanding about the realities of living with chronic illness and health anxiety,

and to remind others that they aren't alone in their struggles. It's a call for empathy and support, and a reminder that resilience can be found even in the toughest circumstances.

To all young people living with chronic pain: you are seen, you are heard, and you are doing a fantastic job. Keep pushing forward, care for yourself, and know you are not alone.



With the dog

Isabella Mesquita

NBCGSS Student Week 2025: A Week of Diverse and Exciting Events

BY EHSAN TAGHIZADE

NBCGSS successfully hosted Student Week 2025 at UNBC from January 28-31, 2025, offering a variety of engaging events.

The opening ceremony, held in the Canfor Theatre, UNBC, featured an interesting and heartwarming speech by Dr. Geoff Payne, UNBC President.

One of the highlights of the week was the British Columbia Federation of Students (BCFS) Leadership Workshop on January 28. The event's speaker, Cole Reinbold, Secretary-Treasurer of BCFS, provided a comprehensive introduction to BCFS, detailing the opportunities available to students. According to her presentation, BCFS,

founded in 1975, has over 170,000 members. She discussed various types of grants, research funds, and student loans available through BCFS, as well as other services like student discounts, insurance, and handbook and day planner design. The annual Skills Development Symposium, held every May, was also highlighted as an exciting event. Memorable slogans from the workshop included "Stronger Together!", "Diversity in Our Advocacy," and "Work Starts at Your Students' Union". One noteworthy aspect of her presentation was her effective use of pause techniques and personal experiences in practicing speeches.



Ehsan Taghizade

ALUMNI

SECTION

I grew up in Valemount, BC, and my family moved to Prince George the year I graduated high school. I started at UNBC in the fall of 1998, after I spent six months working and backpacking across Australia. During my first semester I attended an International Studies class taught by Geoffrey Weller, and I was hooked.

I was keen to find a job that required me to travel and learn about other countries, cultures and languages. The professors at UNBC stoked this passion, and I took advantage of the language classes and co-op program to work in China for a semester. After graduating, I moved to New York to intern for an international humanitarian NGO. From there, I moved overseas to work with NGOs in Kenya, South Sudan,

Zimbabwe, Somaliland, and later with the United Nations in Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Palestinian Territories, Somalia, and Iraq. I gained extensive experience with program and project management in development, humanitarian and emergency situations.

In 2022, I left the United Nations and accepted a position with Women and Gender Equality with the Government of Canada. In 2022 and 2023, I worked remotely from all over the country including Charlottetown, Yellowknife, and Whitehorse. I've now taken a job with Public Safety Canada, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, and settled in Victoria, BC. After 18 years working overseas, British Columbia is still my favourite place to be.

**Lindsay
Harkness**

**Bachelor of
Arts
International
Studies, 2004**



Alumni Profiles

**Tanner
Moulton**

**Bachelor of
Commerce
International
Business &
Finance, 2018**



I chose UNBC due to the proximity to my hometown of Fort St. John, BC. A few other things that I found attractive about UNBC were the small class sizes and the ability to really feel a part of the University community. The professors were very personable and approachable throughout my time at UNBC which proved to be very valuable, and is something that sets UNBC apart. Graduating from the Prince George campus and now working in the community has opened many doors for me. When attending events in the community the UNBC alumni presence is always strong, which allows those connections to continue to build.

Since I graduated from UNBC, I have been employed by TC Energy as a Public Affairs

Advisor. Later this year, I will be celebrating six years working for the company and I couldn't be more thankful. Having been able to work on the largest private investment project in Canadian history has been an unimaginable experience, and I appreciate the doors that opened for me because of the degree that I received at UNBC.

I now serve as a member of the UNBC Alumni Council and have for the past 4 years. This position has allowed me to stay closely connected to the University, and represent and advocate for other alumni. I also am a board member of the Prince George Chamber of Commerce where I can connect with like-minded individuals to ensure local businesses are supported and advocated for.

SECTION

ALUMNI

When Do Graduate Students Write?

BY ALIREZA NOORY, DIRECTOR AT LARGE, NBCGSS

The timing of graduate students’ research writing is a critical question: on which days of the week do they typically engage in this activity?



Author, Alireza Noory

This study aims to address these questions by analyzing data from over 1,000 days of Grammarly usage by graduate students at UNBC since 2022, facilitated by the premium service offered by the NBCGSS.

Since May 2022, NBCGSS has invested significant resources each year to provide premium Grammarly services to all graduate students at no cost. Due to the limited number of available user accounts, it is important for NBCGSS to monitor the number of active Grammarly

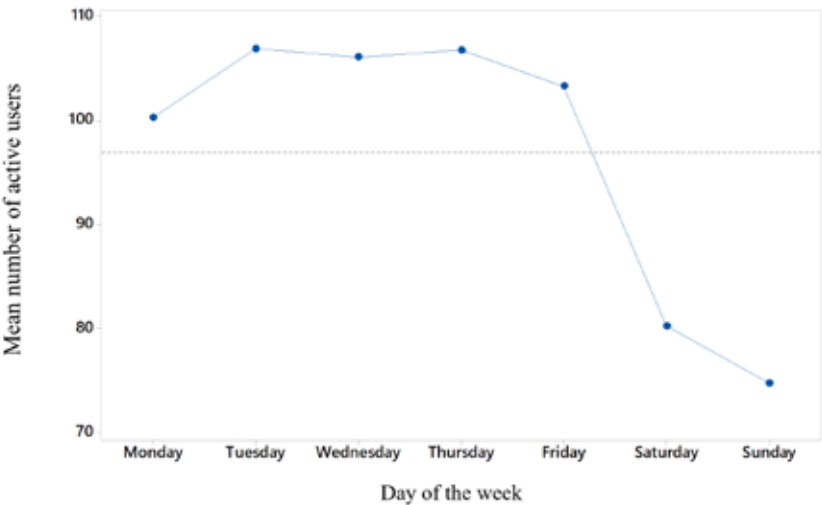
users among students. From May 2022

writing on specific days of the week:

Weekdays vs. Weekends: As shown in Figure 2, active usage of Grammarly is significantly higher on weekdays (Monday to Friday) than on weekends (Saturday and Sunday). This suggests that students primarily engage with Grammarly during their academic work throughout the week.

Peak Days: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays consistently exhibit the highest number of active users. This likely corresponds to academic schedules and deadlines, which are typically concentrated in the middle of the week. This trend is evident in various means and over 95% of the week’s trends.

Figure 2: Mean Plot of Active Users During Weekdays



Seasonal trends are evident in the data collected. Certain months show significant spikes in activity, especially at the beginning of new semesters and just before major submission deadlines. This highlights Grammarly’s important role in supporting academic writing during critical periods. Conversely, user activity declines notably during specific times of the year, such as the last week of December. Additionally, the overall number of active users has significantly increased as NBCGSS has begun removing inactive accounts from its subscription list. The fluctuations in Grammarly usage tied to academic days and events suggest robust engagement among UNBC graduate students, driven by academic demands and supported by NBCGSS investments in writing resources. The variations in usage patterns across different days and months also emphasize the importance of timing in student productivity and engagement with writing support tools. Furthermore, with approximately 100 accounts going inactive each day and considering the high cost of Grammarly, it is crucial for NBCGSS to receive support from UNBC to maintain the full complement of 250 accounts. Without this support, we may have to reduce the number of accounts to 150 in order to continue providing this free service to students.

to February 2025, there has been a consistent increase in the number of active Grammarly members, indicating a growing dependence on the platform for writing support among graduate students. Figure 1 illustrates the daily usage of Grammarly by UNBC graduate students throughout 2024. As shown in Figure 1, of the 250 accounts purchased by NBCGSS, the maximum recorded usage was 156 active accounts in one day, indicating that 94 accounts were inactive each day. As illustrated in Figure 2, the average number of active users was less than 100, so the average number of inactive users was more than 150 each day.

Figure 1: Daily Usage of Grammarly by UNBC Graduate Students in 2024

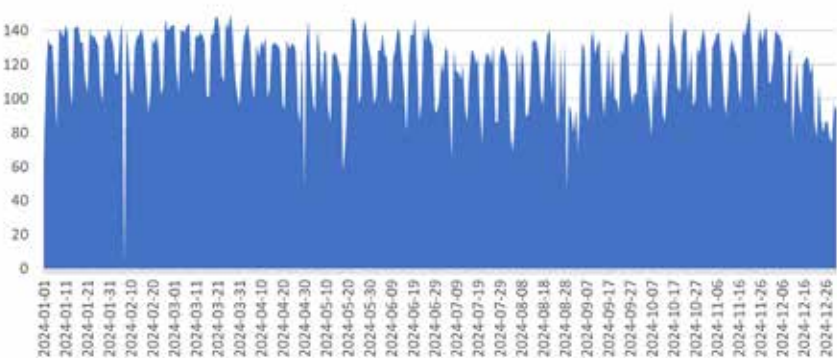


Figure 1 shows noticeable fluctuations in user activity over time. A closer examination reveals that these fluctuations occur on a weekly basis, indicating that certain days see higher usage while others experience lower engagement. This raises the question: Which days of the week are preferable for students to write essays, papers, thesis or complete assignments? Are weekends—when students are generally more relaxed—better, or is the beginning or middle of the week more suitable?

Based on Figure 1 and 2, and considering Grammarly usage as an indicator of scholarly writing activities, such as essays, papers, and theses, it can be concluded that UNBC graduate students spend more time

Graduate Teaching Assistants at UNBC: Know Your Rights and Benefits

BY BEHNOOSH ROKNALDINI

At the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) play an essential role in the academic environment by mentoring students, grading assignments, and assisting in course delivery. Despite their crucial role, many GTAs may not be fully aware of their rights and workload protections. CUPE 2278 Component 3, the union representing GTAs at UNBC, is working to ensure fair treatment and transparency. Here's what you need to know.

Are You a GTA or a Student Assistant?

One of the biggest concerns for student workers at UNBC is job classification. The difference between a GTA and a Student Assistant carries important implications for pay and responsibilities:

- Student Assistants typically mark multiple-choice or simple assignments with no feedback, or perform lab setup tasks with minimal student interaction.
- GTAs provide substantive feedback on assignments, hold office hours, help with course material delivery, and assist with assessments requiring more than basic marking.

If your role includes both Student Assistant and GTA responsibilities, you must receive a GTA contract. If you believe you've been misclassified,

reach out to the union.

Track Your Hours!

A major concern for GTAs is workload management. Remember:

- You are not required to work beyond your contracted hours
- If approaching your hour limit, notify your supervisor before exceeding them
- Your options are to either stop working once you reach your contracted hours or request additional compensation for extra hours

To prevent disputes, supervisors must complete a Workload Agreement at the beginning of the term and hold at least one meeting during the semester to review workload expectations.

Speak Up and Stay Informed

GTAs deserve fair treatment. If you believe you're being overworked or missing out on benefits, CUPE 2278 is here to advocate for you. For concerns or questions, contact the union at unbc@cupe2278.ca.

By staying informed and asserting your rights, you contribute to stronger, fairer labor practices at UNBC for yourself and future GTAs.

Connect With Us

Join us monthly for **Coffee with CUPE** in Building 10, in front of Degree Coffee. We provide TAs with a

free coffee coupon! It's a great opportunity to meet your CUPE representative, ask questions, and stay informed.

Follow us on Instagram at [@unbccupe2278](https://www.instagram.com/unbccupe2278) for event announcements and reminders.



UNBC Alumni
tell us how UNBC has helped
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Contact Ahmad
overtheedge@unbc.ca

OVER THE EDGE
UNBC'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER

CN Centre Gets Colourful Makeover for 30th Anniversary



The CN Centre is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a fresh look! During a recent Wednesday walk-about, CFUR Radio chatted with manager Glenn Mickelson and local artist Mercedes Mink about the building's transformation.

The centre's iconic forest green interior has been updated to a creamy white, complemented by Mink's vibrant 9×15-foot mural. The artwork depicts rolling hills with Prince George homes, regional animals, and a flowing river—capturing the essence of our community.

"I wanted to represent those aspects and experiences where I'm connected to something small but vibrant," Mink explained. Several local kids even contributed to the painting, creating lasting memories at the venue.

More of Mink's murals can be found around Prince George at Pine Centre Mall, Clavie, Tanae, and McKenzie Skate Park.

CFUR Radio: Carbon Capture Technology with Dr. Steve Helle

13

CFUR Radio recently welcomed UNBC Associate Professor Dr. Steve Helle to discuss the realities of carbon capture technology. While often touted as a solution for reducing emissions, Dr. Helle reveals that carbon capture is universally energy-intensive, requiring 20-30% more energy consumption to implement. "If you're capturing CO2 from natural gas combustion, you'll need to burn about a third more gas just to power the capture process," explained Helle. He noted that most operating carbon capture plants only achieve 50-80% capture rates, making it pollution reduction rather than elimination. When comparing energy solutions, Dr. Helle advocates for electrification as the more efficient path forward: "Electrify your heating, your hot water, your mobility around town - your carbon footprint becomes a fraction with clean electricity."

RCMP Warns of Job Scams Targeting Prince George

Prince George RCMP is alerting residents about fraudulent job postings targeting our community. According to Cpl. Jennifer Cooper, these scams typically involve online job ads promising flexible or work-from-home opportunities.

"If they ask you to accept funds into your bank account before you've done any work, stop right there," Cooper warns.

The scam often involves victims receiving and depositing checks, then transferring money back to the "employer" before discovering the original checks were fraudulent.

WorkBC Regional Manager Bev Schwartz advises job seekers to watch for red flags like unusually high salaries with no experience required, poor grammar in postings, or requests to transfer money.

Victims should report incidents to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre and local police.



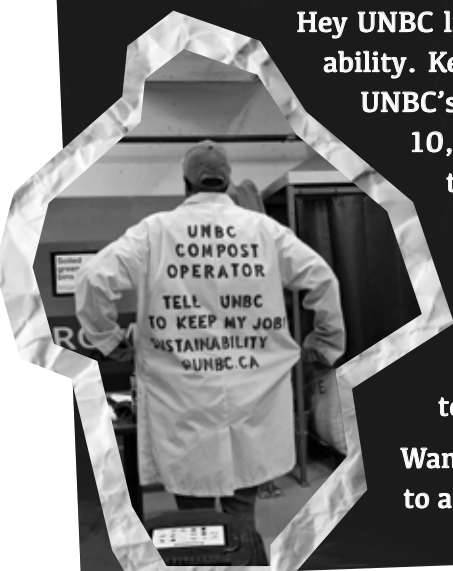
UNBC Compost Program Faces Uncertain Future

Hey UNBC listeners! Things are heating up in the world of campus sustainability. Keaton Freel (aka local hip-hop artist Freaky T) has been running UNBC's expanded compost program since September, diverting nearly 10,000 kilos of food waste from landfills. Despite this success, Keaton's position might get tossed out this spring.

"I love this job," says Keaton, who processes 500-700 kilos of food waste weekly. "I just hope we can continue."

While UNBC Facilities Director David Claus appreciates the program's success, the original plan was for the position to be temporary until the system stabilized.

Want to support keeping this position? Email sustainability@unbc.ca to add your name to the support letter.



This content was made possible with the support and funding of the National Community-Campus Radio Association, the Government of Canada's Local Journalism Initiative (LJI) Program, and the Community Radio Fund of Canada.



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The Year of the Snake

BY EHSAN TAGHIZADE



Ehsan Taghizade

Lunar New Year in 2025 will be celebrated on January 29, marking the beginning of the 15-day Spring Festival. This year is associated with the Year of the Snake. Chinese New Year celebrates the start of a new year based on the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar. Recognized as one of the most significant holidays in Chinese culture, it was added to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list by UNESCO in 2024. This festival signifies the transition from winter to spring and is observed from Chinese New Year's Eve (the evening before the first day of the year) to the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the new year. The first day of Chinese New Year falls on the new moon between January 21 and February 20.

Chinese New Year is rich with myths and traditions, historically a time for honoring deities and ancestors. Customs and practices vary widely across different regions of China. On New Year's Eve, families come together for an annual reunion dinner. It is a tradition for families to thoroughly clean their homes to sweep away bad luck and welcome good fortune. Red paper-cuts and couplets with themes of good fortune, happiness, wealth, and longevity often adorn windows and doors. Other common activities include lighting firecrackers and giving red

envelopes with money.

The Chinese zodiac consists of 12 animals, each representing a year in a 12-year cycle: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig (or Boar). This new year is also celebrated at UNBC by decorating the Global Lounge with beautiful Chinese lanterns and distributing sweet envelopes.

Happy Chinese New Year to all!



Ehsan Taghizade



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Unlocking Free Travel: How Smart Credit Card Use Can Get Students Free Flights

BY AYAAN PUNJANI

For students in British Columbia, turning 19 is more than just a birthday—it is the gateway to financial independence. With the ability to apply for a credit card, students can begin building their credit history while unlocking valuable perks like free flights. With the right credit card, daily expenses can be converted into travel benefits, adding fun to a student's life.

Step One: Start with a No-Fee Student Credit Card

A credit card with no annual fees is the ideal first step for students just starting to use credit. The TD Aeroplan Visa Platinum Card and the CIBC Aeroplan Visa Card for Students are two great options for starters. Both cards offer welcome bonuses that increase initial earnings and reward Aeroplan points on everyday purchases.

Imagine this: You pay your tuition—around \$12,000—with your new CIBC Aeroplan Visa Credit Card. Since the card offers 1 Aeroplan point per \$1.50 spent, that alone earns you 8,000 points. Add the 10,000-point welcome bonus, and suddenly, you are sitting on 18,000 Aeroplan points—all from one smart transaction.

Step Two: Using a Loophole to Overcome Credit Limits

Most students assume a low credit limit (generally in the \$1,000 range) bars them from making large payments such as tuition. However, an effortless way around this is to prepay your credit card before making a large payment. For example, adding \$12,000 to your credit card account effectively raises the amount of available credit, making it possible for you to charge tuition without exceeding your limit. Your balance continues to be zero after the payment is processed, preventing interest charges.

Key Tip: Keep your outstanding balance under 30% of your credit limit at the statement generation time. This strategy will increase your credit score within weeks.

Step Three: Turning Points into Free Flights

To understand the real value of these points, let's break it down:

A round-trip from Prince George to

Vancouver during off-peak is less than 12,000 Aeroplan points. With 18,000 points, you can redeem a free return ticket and still have points to use towards travel in the future—all from paying tuition strategically.

If you don't want to redeem your points for travel, you can also use your Aeroplan points for gift cards to over 300+ brands, including Save-On-Foods, Sephora, Lululemon, Best Buy, and many more.

Step Four: Upgrade to a High-Reward Card

Once you have built a credit history, it's time to level up. The American Express Cobalt™ Card is a game-changer. With a \$12.99 monthly fee, it offers an unbeatable 5 points per dollar spent on dining, groceries, and food delivery—essential categories for students. If you spend just \$500 a month on grocery and dining, you could rack up 30,000 points annually, enough for several domestic flights or even international travel when redeemed strategically.

Why Credit Cards Matter for Students

Credit cards are an essential financial instrument that isn't simply for spending. Applying for loans, renting an apartment, or even getting a job all benefit from having a high credit score. Here's how to make good use of your card:

- Always pay your balance in full to avoid interest charges.
- Maintain credit utilization below 30% in order to acquire a strong credit score.
- Use the 'prepay' technique to make large payments without harming your score.
- Treat points as a bonus, not an excuse to spend more.
- Set up auto-pay to ensure you never miss a payment.

Final Thoughts: Travel Smart, Spend Smarter

University life is expensive, yet it can be well worth it with some planning. Start with a no-fee student credit card, utilize it responsibly, and upgrade when the time is right; earn free flights, redeem valuable rewards, and build a long & strong credit history. When used responsibly, a credit card is not merely a spending card—it's a passport to financial independence.