

MINDSET IS EVERYTHING

Lulu Liang

A LEADER
IN LOVE
WITH
CONSTANT
LEARNING

SARAH DAVIS
Taking Loblaw into
the digital age

LEADERSHIP
Lessons from the
Great Pandemic

HIDDEN LEADERS
Detroit's water crisis
and the power of
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FALL 2020

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“The mountains called to me, and I went to them.”

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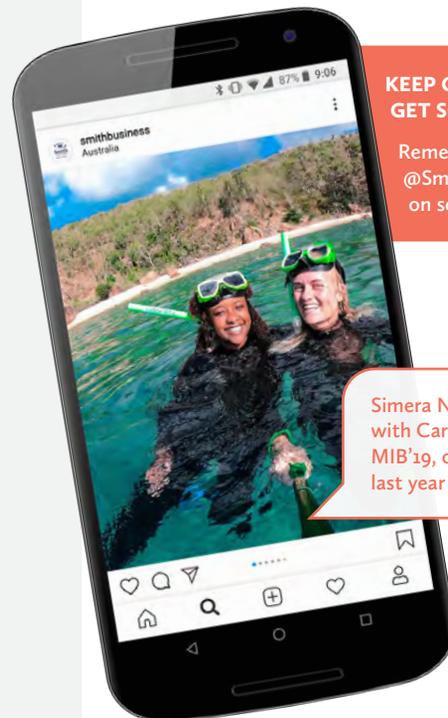
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Simera Negeri, MIB'20,
with Carolina Lopez,
MIB'19, on exchange
last year in Australia.

FSC



DEAN'S MESSAGE

Over the past six months, I have been reminded of the power and importance of community. Countless examples have been shared with me of how the Smith community is making a difference and showing leadership during the pandemic.

Early on, Smith alumni were quick to step up to the plate and rally around those in need. Support took many forms, from donating and producing face masks to providing meals for front-line workers and helping community volunteers connect to those in need.

From the safety of our virtual campus, Smith students, staff and faculty supported businesses across Canada impacted by COVID-19.

In April, we partnered with the City of Kingston and Kingston Economic Development as part of a regional business support network. We offered resources and expertise to help Kingston businesses and not-for-profits adapt and navigate their way forward. Students applied their skills in research, strategic planning and digital profile-building, while earning academic credit and gaining valuable experience. Faculty mounted a “community classroom” to provide information and skills via free webinars, as well as supervising student projects with business partners.

During a summer where employment options were limited, Smith partnered with Mitacs to secure over 80 paid internships for students to assist companies and organizations looking to restore or modify their business operations disrupted by the pandemic—enabling students to earn valuable work experience while helping to bolster Canada’s economic recovery. Faculty and staff provided mentorship, ensuring this important initiative could succeed.

In addition to providing support, community also means coming together to address challenges. In recent months, long-standing systemic issues of racism and exclusion within Smith and Queen’s have been brought to the forefront by students and alumni sharing painful personal experiences. It is up to us, individually and as a community, to change attitudes and structures that have allowed inequities to persist, and to do so with intentionality. Progress requires substantial commitment and comprehensive effort throughout the school and the broader university community. We invited our alumni to help us with Smith’s equity, diversity, inclusivity and Indigenization (EDII) initiatives and, once again, you stepped up.

To date, more than 90 alumni have signed up to help in many ways—from mentoring a student and speaking at events to supporting the alumni task force working group and providing advice as an EDII subject-matter expert.

We encourage you to follow our progress at smithqueens.com/inclusion.

It’s with a tremendous sense of pride to see the positive impact of the Smith community coming together, making a difference, and contributing to a better future for our students and our school.

Thank you for your many contributions and for all that you do to make us a community.

Brenda Brouwer, PhD
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Inside Smith

Two professors recognized for their work with students

Professors Jane Webster and Mike Welker were recognized over the summer with Smith awards celebrating teaching excellence and research supervision. Webster received the 2020 Research Supervision Award. Welker was given the 2020 Teaching Excellence Award. The awards recognize faculty who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the education of students in the PhD and MSc programs. Nominations were made by graduate students.

The Research Supervision Award is open to all faculty who have supervised Smith PhD or MSc students for three or more years during the past five years. Webster, emeritus professor and E. Marie Shantz Chair of Digital Technology, says she was “pleasantly shocked—and very gratified—to receive this award.” Though she recently retired, Webster still supervises students. The best part of this work, she says, is watching students grow to become academics. “I have learned so much from them. They have propelled me into new research areas and methods.”

Indrani Karmakar, MSc’18, PhD’23, describes Webster as “tirelessly committed to her students” with a keen interest in both their academic and personal growth. “She is consistently responsive and available both in the classroom and beyond. And she is instrumental in her students’ job placements and broader academic success,” Karmakar says.

The Teaching Excellence Award is presented to a professor who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the research-intensive education of students in the PhD and MSc programs. Welker, professor of financial accounting and Distinguished Professor of Accounting, says he was surprised and honoured to win. “I continue to think I get more out of the class than the students do,” he says. “I seem to find new perspectives and ideas every time I teach the class.”

Stephanie Donahue, PhD’23, says Welker is truly devoted to the success and well-being of his students. “When the pandemic hit, Mike asked each student if they were OK and how they were handling the new situation. He also kindly let us talk at the beginning of each virtual class about the pandemic, as he could see it was stressing us.”



Award winners Mike Welker and Jane Webster.

Taking on racism and exclusion

Smith introduces new measures to promote diversity and inclusion.

This past summer, a number of university students and graduates across Canada posted often-painful stories on social media about their experiences with racism and exclusion inside and outside the classroom. A number of these posts referred to experiences at business schools as well—including at Smith.

In response, Smith has announced several initiatives to support diversity and inclusion and fight racism. Over the summer, the school formed an equity, diversity, inclusivity and Indigenization (EDII) task force. Area-specific working groups comprised of faculty, staff, students and alumni were also established.

Brenda Brouwer, dean at Smith, says that enhancing diversity and promoting inclusion is a top priority. “While several early-term initiatives are underway, the longer-term and multifaceted strategies required to change culture and mindset are very much the focus of the EDII task force as it develops the School’s EDII strategic plan,” she says.

The EDII task force work builds on initiatives implemented in recent years. These include expanding EDII content in program curricula; hiring diversity and inclusion-focused student support co-ordinators; and providing more training for faculty and staff.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF IMMEDIATE STEPS TAKEN:

- In late August, the EDII task force’s teaching and learning working group hosted a webinar for Commerce students to share their thoughts on how faculty should address EDII issues in the classroom. A followup report summarized best practices. For instance: How faculty can confront their own biases. How to create safe spaces so that marginalized students have a voice. And how to bring more Indigenous perspectives into course content.
- As part of diversity efforts in faculty recruitment, the school has joined The PhD Project, an organization that supports Black, Latinx and Indigenous business students pursuing doctoral degrees and careers in academia.
- In September, Smith faculty and staff endorsed the Smith EDII Commitment to combat systemic racism, discrimination and exclusion at the school. “The pledge serves as a compass to guide Smith’s EDII efforts . . . to cultivate a safe academic and work environment that is truly inclusive,” Brouwer says.



The Smith EDII pledge “serves as a compass to guide Smith’s EDII efforts . . . to cultivate a safe academic and work environment that is truly inclusive.”

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Smith’s Career Advancement Centre (CAC) has taken a number of steps as well. A new partnership with Icon Talent Partners will support Smith’s BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and persons of colour) students with career advancement in employment sectors such as investment banking, asset management, venture capital and technology startups. Smith was the first academic institution to become a partner.

The CAC is also hosting a Diversity Clubs Fair on Nov. 19 to connect corporate partners seeking diverse talent with diversity groups at Smith, including Q+, Edge, the Smith Black Business Association (SBBA), the Queen’s Commerce Mental Health Association (QCMHA) and Queen’s Women in Leadership (MBA and Commerce).

Smith alumni are also getting involved. Recently, the school’s alumni engagement team put out a call for alumni to volunteer their time and talent to assist with EDII, in particular those who are allies, have lived experience as a member of the BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+ or differently abled communities, or professional experience and skills in EDII. To date, more than 90 alumni have signed up to help—from mentoring a student and speaking at events, to supporting student groups and the alumni task force working group, and providing advice as an EDII subject-matter expert. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact EDIISmithalumni@queensu.ca.

Queen’s University senior leadership and deans, meanwhile, have made a commitment to a university-wide response with the “Declaration of Commitment to Address Systemic Racism”. It outlines specific actions to deal with systemic racism across the university.

Working with First Nations

A unique initiative launched through Smith in September is bringing online business training to a First Nations community in British Columbia. Thirty-five members of the Xeni Gwet'in community are taking part in the 12-week program to earn a Certificate of Completion in Administration and Business Management through Smith's Centre for Business Venturing.

The pilot program sees participants work on projects that align with their community's strategic plan. For instance, they'll learn project management and strategic thinking skills that can be applied to areas of need within their community.



Jonathon Araujo Redbird and Christina Tachtampa

The program is led by Jonathon Araujo Redbird and Christina Tachtampa, both MMIE'20, of Redbird Circle, an educational training and consulting company with an Indigenous focus. Redbird Circle was their capstone project in the Master of Management Innovation and Entrepreneurship (MMIE) program. This is the first time the pair has had a chance to deliver their customized educational content to a First Nations audience, teaching alongside a handful of MMIE instructors and advisers.

"It's the medicine wheel," explains Redbird, who is of European and Anishinaabe (Odawa Ojibwa) ancestry from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, of their educational approach. "Before we get into teaching about bookkeeping or marketing, we need to be able to start at the core. How do we bring the business world, our dominant culture . . . how do we swing the pendulum back to Indigenous values and philosophies, merging the two to create an elevated humanity?"

"How do you develop that balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing?" adds Tachtampa, who came to Canada from Greece. "What is the true meaning of reconciliation and building trust? That is a piece of our partnership that works well, balancing western and Indigenous world views."

Shari Hughson, director of the MMIE program, who already had an established working relationship with the Xeni Gwet'in community of 450, recognized the opportunity. "Each student will have a practical project that they will work through over the three months of the program to move them forward," she explains.



Celebrating five years of Smith

Has it been five years already? Yes! On Oct. 1, 2015, students and alumni welcomed a new chapter in our school's history, with the introduction of a new name—Smith School of Business—and a transformational gift of \$50 million from Stephen Smith, BSc(Eng)'72, LLD'17.

The largest gift ever made to a Canadian business school, Stephen Smith's generosity has since helped attract and retain the best and brightest talent from across Canada and around the world through student scholarships and valuable research funding.

"I think that the real wealth in society comes from the human capital that we have, and we get that human capital by having a well-educated populace," Smith said on that day five years ago. "So this gift is a way to give back to society, improve its human capital, help Queen's and help Canada as a whole."



Top: Stephen Smith with students after the announcement of his gift to the school, in October 2015. Above: Students show their appreciation.

A degree for the fintech age

New Master of Financial Innovation and Technology addresses gap in fintech education.



Technology is shaking up the financial world. The latest EY Global Fintech Adoption Index finds that consumer fintech services use has grown by 64 per cent since 2017. A PwC report, meanwhile, says 28 per cent of the world's banking and payments sectors and 22 per cent of the world's insurance, asset and wealth management sectors are considered at risk of disruption due to technology.

With that in mind, Smith has launched a new master's degree: the Master of Financial Innovation and Technology (MFIT). It's the first program of its kind in Canada to address the significant gap in financial technology education.

MFIT is a 12-month degree designed for employed professionals, with training in finance, data-science and machine-learning technologies. Classes are held in the evenings and weekends so students can earn the degree without taking a break from their careers.

"Until now, employers hiring in the financial technology sector have had to choose between candidates who specialize in either finance or technology; it's been a challenge to find talent with strengths in both who understand how one impacts the other, including the opportunities and risks," says Ryan Riordan, director of the MFIT program, as well as Distinguished Professor of Finance and director of research at the Institute for Sustainable Finance. "With the launch of this new program,

we've created a unique educational path that bridges both sectors and equips graduates to succeed in a quickly evolving marketplace."

ASKING ALUMNI

MFIT expands Smith's program offerings for students who focus on finance but also want a professional footing in the industry's ongoing digital transformation, or for technology specialists who want to build their career in the finance sector.

Before developing the MFIT program, Smith surveyed more than 2,500 alumni of existing finance and analytics master's programs to better understand the demands of today's job landscape. Eighty-five per cent identified a need for a program like MFIT.

"Smith has a strong history of recognizing the changing needs of business in Canada and around the world, and quickly developing programs to help fill the talent pipeline with qualified candidates," Dean Brenda Brouwer says. "The new MFIT program is the latest of our new programs that address the changes taking place in how business is done, including the Master of Management in Artificial Intelligence in 2018 and the Global Master of Management Analytics last year." For more, visit smithqueens.com/mfit.

Venturing out

Four alumni-led startups get some support to build their companies.

Getting a business off the ground is never easy. A little help goes a long way, which is why each year the Centre for Business Venturing organizes Dare to Dream. The initiative provides up to \$15,000 in funding, coaching, mentoring and access to space for startups launched by Smith students and alumni. This year's winners run the gamut of business ideas—from helping seniors with medicine to giving local companies a leg up in the loyalty game.



MEDAKI

MedaKi is a health-care platform that links pharmacies and customers virtually. People can book online appointments or talk to a pharmacist via video chat. Prescriptions and over-the-counter items can also be ordered for home delivery.

Sundar Manku, MMIE'19, started MedaKi in Kingston after working in a drugstore. He says MedaKi can help seniors, mothers with young children, people with disabilities and others who have a hard time visiting a pharmacy in person. With COVID-19, he adds, it can also “decrease foot traffic in pharmacies and reduce the risk of exposing the disease to frontline workers.”

DARE TO DREAM DONOR
Valerie Mann, BCom'86



TRAKTAB

Eighty per cent of seniors take pills regularly. Yet over half say they don't always take pills when they should. TrakTab is a high-tech solution to the problem: a pillbox with light and sound reminders, plus sensors to detect when pills are removed. The latter info gets logged in real time to an app. Thus, family can monitor elderly relatives' prescription-taking from afar.

Commerce dormmates **Vinson Lee** and **Matthew Mastromarco**, both **BCom'20**, founded TrakTab in 2018. Lee spent nearly a decade in a wheelchair on a strict medication regimen. That, he says, gave him “a really intimate view on the challenges that chronic medication patients face in taking pills every day. Life gets busy, and especially for those who are vulnerable, it's clear that phone alarms simply aren't cutting it.”

DARE TO DREAM DONOR
Dany Battat and **Gia Steffensen**, both **BCom'78**



INDIE TECH

Sophia Stone, MMIE'20, spent nearly a decade working in consulting. During that time she identified a number of problems that large companies face trying to hire a consultant. So she created Indie Tech, a SaaS (software as a service) consulting management system that uses artificial intelligence to help financial institutions hire the right consultant.

Indie Tech automates the entire process—from finding a consultant to onboarding and managing them. Firms usually go through multiple vendors and staffing firms to blindly find the best expertise, she explains. “They need a platform that creates transparency about who is available and actually qualified in the marketplace, the work that is being done and the ability to manage and use AI to mitigate ongoing risk associated with using external suppliers.”

DARE TO DREAM DONOR
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LUNAR LOYALTY

Sam Shore, BCom'20, founded Lunar Loyalty in January 2018 after working in his father's small business. “I found that there really weren't any customer loyalty solutions that provided both small businesses and users with a great experience,” he says. With Lunar Loyalty, shoppers can earn points at any participating store in their community.

Most traditional loyalty programs only offer rewards at one specific store, Shore says. Plus, many third-party loyalty programs for small businesses are pricey, do not capture enough valuable customer data, and add considerable time at checkout. Lunar Loyalty tries to make the process easier. For example, it links directly to shoppers' debit and credit cards for instant point collection.

DARE TO DREAM DONOR
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The new professor



PHOTO | LARS HAGBERG

Generally speaking, there are two types of investors: retail and institutional. Retail investors are everyday individuals like you and me who buy a small number of stocks and bonds. Institutional investors, on the other hand, include mutual

funds, pension funds, insurance companies, banks and sovereign wealth funds that can manage billions of dollars in investments.

Because of their size, institutional investors can have enormous influence on markets and companies. It's this impact that assistant professor of finance Jingyu Zhang loves to dig into. Zhang, the newest member of the Smith faculty, says he's fascinated by "the intersection of institutional investors, corporate governance and information economics. Unlike retail investors, [institutional investors] have the expertise and the personnel to proactively engage with executives and board directors, voice their opinions over certain issues, and eventually enhance shareholder value."

As part of his research, Zhang is looking at whether—and how—institutional investors discipline corporate insiders' trades. He also plans to examine how these large investors influence CEOs trading shares in their own companies.

Zhang joined Smith over the summer, moving to Kingston in August from China (where he grew up in Tieling, Liaoning Province). He earned his doctorate in finance at Imperial College in London.

Though he likes Kingston so far, it took a while for him to actually tour the city. Upon arrival, he had to follow government-imposed COVID travel rules and self-quarantine for 14 days. Zhang says he's looking forward to continuing his research at Smith. He'll also start teaching Commerce students virtually once the winter term begins. Outside class, Zhang says he enjoys playing volleyball and cooking for his wife and young son.



PHOTO | BILL CASSIDY

Pedal power

In February, just weeks before COVID-19 shutdowns, the Executive MBA class of 2021 gathered in Kingston for its Creativity and Innovation residential session. One activity during the week-long session let students apply team building and collaboration skills they learned in the classroom.

How exactly? Through a fun, but not-so-easy, bike-building challenge in which teams of students had to work together to build children's bicycles from scratch. Parts were distributed among various buckets in a room at the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning. Teams had to figure out how to get tools, parts and put the bikes together as fast as they could.

"Surprisingly, it was not just chaos," says Kevin Abma, EMBA'21. "I really enjoyed seeing how individuals leveraged their skills to accomplish a problem that was new to most of us." In total, 18 bikes were put together and donated to the YMCA of Eastern Ontario.

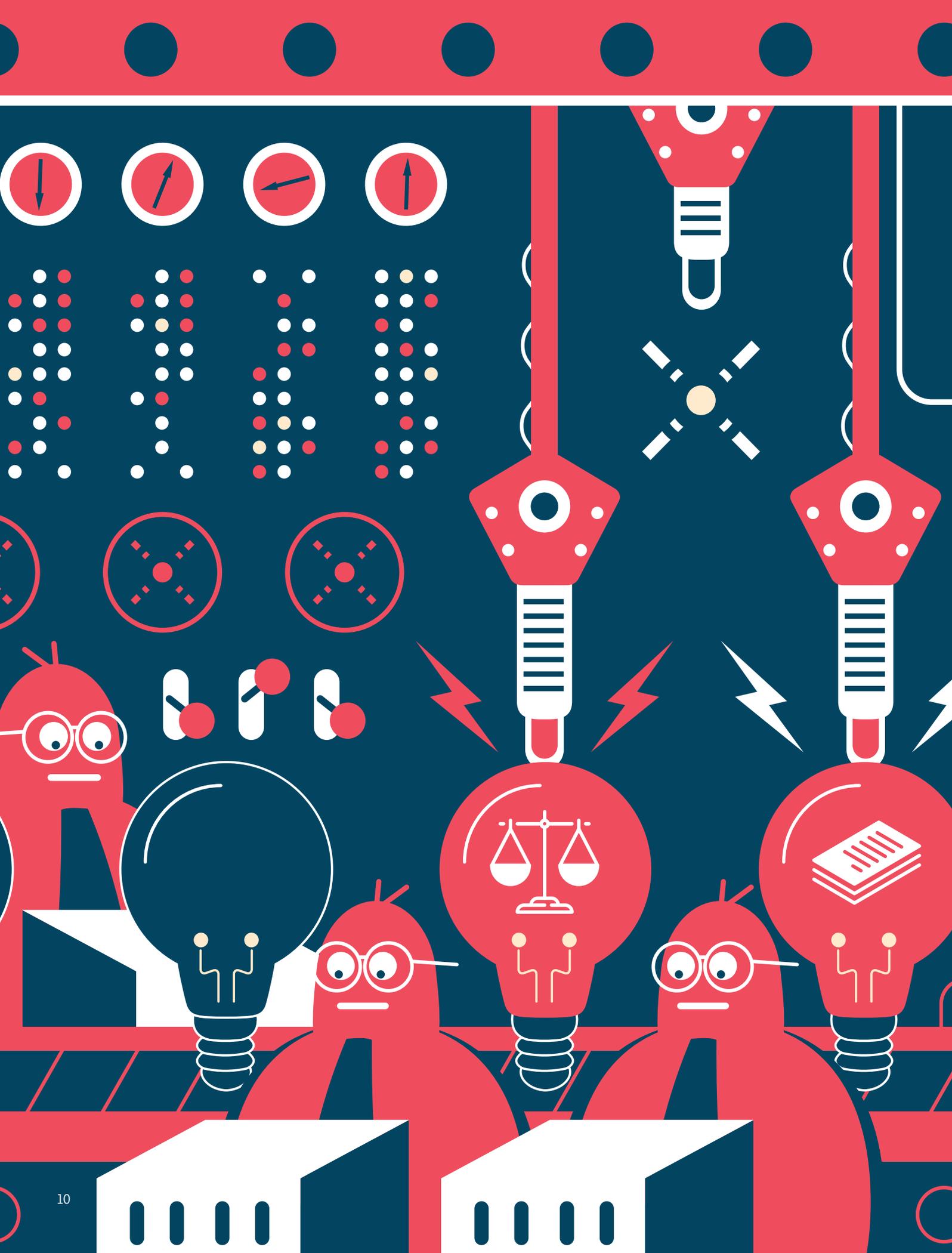
Update: Finding the new dean

The search for a new dean of Smith School of Business has started. In September, Queen's provost and vice-principal (academic), Mark Green, announced the creation of an 18-person Principal's Advisory Committee for selection of the next dean. The committee includes Smith and Queen's faculty, staff, students, as well as alumni and members of the Smith Advisory Board.

David Saunders, who served as dean for 16 years, stepped down last October. With his term nearing its end, this made way for the principal to begin the search for a new and permanent dean.

Brenda Brouwer was appointed interim dean last November. Formerly the vice-provost and dean of the School of Graduate Studies at Queen's, Brouwer joined Smith from the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence, where she was head of academic partnerships, on secondment from Queen's.

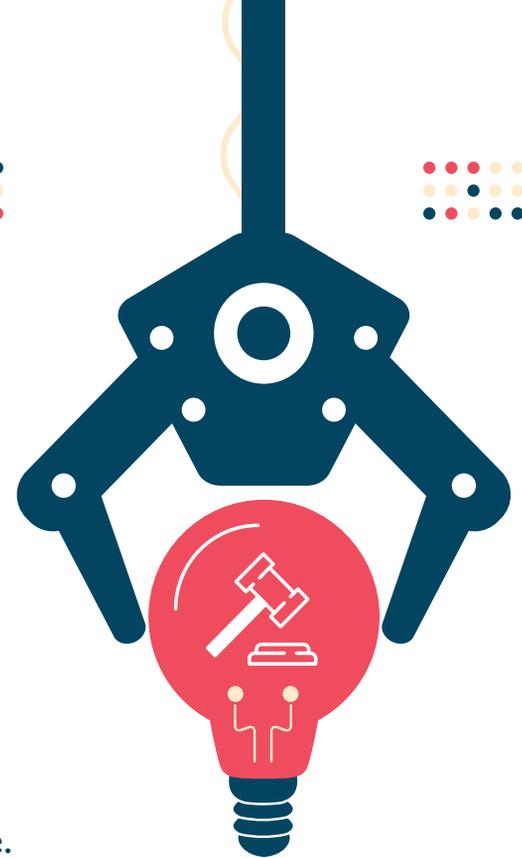
Brouwer is leading Smith through the COVID pandemic, co-chairs Smith's EDII task force and will continue at the helm until July 2021, when a new dean is expected to be in place.





Justice League

By Mark Witten



Artificial intelligence will one day help settle most lawsuits. A team at Smith and Queen's is already working on it. **Their goal: to make the law accessible to everyone.**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada last spring, millions of Canadians suddenly found themselves out of work. Many certainly wondered: Was I treated fairly on the way out? Was my severance package (if I got one) enough? Usually only a lawyer can answer such questions. Alas, the high price of legal advice tends to be out of reach for the newly jobless.

But as of last May, out-of-work Canadians had another place to turn. (And a free one at that.)

MyOpenCourt.org is an intelligent dispute resolution platform. It helps laid-off workers understand their rights under Canadian employment law. During the site's first two months, more than 8,000 workers used its simple-to-use tools—"Am I an employee or contractor?" and "How much severance am I entitled to?"—for common situations like evaluating severance offers or understanding compensation rights as gig workers.

MyOpenCourt is the brainchild of the Conflict Analytics Lab at Queen's, a joint venture of the university's Faculty of Law and Smith. Established in 2018, the lab uses artificial intelligence and data science to make legal dispute resolution faster, fair and more affordable, especially for lower- and middle-income Canadians and small- to medium-sized businesses. The lab brings together researchers and students from Smith, Queen's Law and the Faculty of Engineering, as well as university partners in Canada, the United States and Europe.

In the case of MyOpenCourt, "our tools can help people to quickly determine whether they are entitled to severance or other compensation, and how much, based on data from thousands of previous cases," explains Samuel Dahan, Queen's Law professor and director of the Conflicts Analytics Lab, who also teaches at Smith.

The MyOpenCourt self-help app isn't only for workers. Companies can use it to understand their legal obligations in terminations and their liabilities if workers are incorrectly classified as employees or independent contractors. "Large enterprises have access to lawyers, but small- and medium-sized businesses can't afford to, or don't necessarily want to, hire a lawyer in these situations," says Yuri Levin, who is both director of analytics and AI at Smith and associate director of strategy and partnerships for the lab. Many employment disputes, he says, "could be handled with the aid of AI and data technology to achieve equitable solutions and potentially save businesses and individuals substantial legal fees and time."

The site's predictive approach to severance is unique in that it will soon be based not only on data from actual court cases but also from negotiated agreements. That's important because most employment disputes are resolved out of court. As more Canadian workers and businesses use these online tools to help resolve employment disputes, Dahan expects data from their negotiated resolutions to increase the predictive power, accuracy and timeliness of the tools. "There were 8,000 user cases in two months, which is already much greater than the 1,500 termination notice court cases in Canadian law over the past 60 years," says Dahan.

MyOpenCourt is one of several applications that the Conflict Analytics Lab has been developing. The goal is to increase access to legal knowledge and services in employment, trademark, personal injury, insurance and small claims disputes. Says Levin, "We've been using AI and data science to democratize access to retail, financial and other services for many years. The legal profession is long overdue. In legal disputes, about 80 per cent of cases are standard. These can



be handled by technology and create a win-win situation for parties on both sides in resolving disputes quickly, efficiently and fairly.”

Within the Conflict Analytics Lab, professors and students from Smith’s Master of Management in Artificial Intelligence and Master of Management Analytics programs work jointly with Queen’s Law students. They use their AI and data science expertise to build tools that are expected to transform litigation and the practice of law.

HERE COMES LEGAL TECH

Though the law is often progressive, the legal profession itself is notoriously old-fashioned in everyday operations. Digitization has not come fast. But that’s changing as a wave of legal-tech startups has swept across the industry in recent years. In the U.S., for example, companies such as Ravel and Lawgeex use analytics to streamline contract negotiation and speed up case-law research. Within a decade, about 75 per cent of all lawsuits will be settled with artificial intelligence, predicts Orna Rabinovich-Einy, a University of Haifa law professor and author of the book, *Digital Justice: Technology and the Internet of Disputes*.

“AI will do the heavy lifting for lawyers as a tool for rapidly searching and analyzing relevant case law, helping them to be more efficient with their research and legal advice,” says Dahan. Major business clients, such as financial institutions, are also driving law firms to use AI to help provide legal services more efficiently. “When CIBC’s or Scotiabank’s in-house lawyers are using AI, there is a big push for the outside law firms they hire to do so, too,” says Levin.

While these tools can’t entirely take the place of a lawyer, MyOpenCourt does make predictions that can help employees evaluate a severance offer and make an informed decision about whether to accept it or negotiate for a higher amount. They can also connect with a partner law firm via the MyOpenCourt site that will provide a consultation at no cost and charge a contingency fee if the user pursues a case and wins.

For personal injury law, the lab has developed an AI tool to give users an accurate idea of the amount of damages they could expect to receive based on similar cases. This can help both parties quickly achieve a resolution at minimal cost. In trademark law, deep learning technology is being used to develop an app to help lawyers, judges and businesses more easily resolve trademark infringement disputes out of court. The app can help predict litigation outcomes by analyzing about 100,000 published decisions from trademark cases in Europe. “Our tool

can be adapted and applied in Canada to help businesses resolve trademark disputes because Canadian and European trademark laws are quite similar,” notes Dahan.

RESOLVING CONSUMER DISPUTES

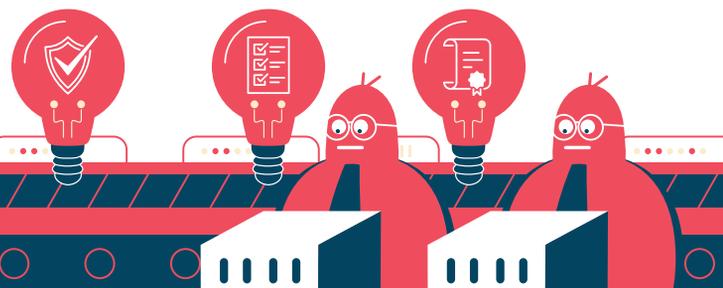
The Conflict Analytics Lab is also developing AI-enhanced tools to help businesses resolve non-legal disputes with both customers and employees, based on data from past negotiated outcomes. “When there is a customer dispute, the customer is often assumed to be lost. If a business can resolve customer disputes more quickly and effectively based on their own and other companies’ past experiences, they can improve customer service and often keep the customer,” says Dahan.

The consumer app is being piloted in the banking industry. But the ultimate aim is for it to be useful for large, medium and small businesses in any industry. Starting with big employers allows the lab to use large data from many companies resolving consumer disputes. In banking, typical examples would be customer complaints about representatives selling inappropriate investments or disputes over bank fees. “Would it be better for the bank to issue a warning the first time and not charge a fee? If the fee is already charged, should the bank reverse the fee once the customer contacts the bank with a concern? Artificial intelligence would be very helpful in quantifying the trade-offs for different ways of resolving these consumer disputes,” says Levin.

Data-driven online tools could also guide employers towards effective and appropriate options for resolving internal workplace disputes such as harassment. “Large and small employers can benefit and learn from important data showing how harassment disputes were resolved in the past,” says Dahan.

AI models can be useful for employers in negotiating salary increases and promotions to help develop and retain talent as well, suggests Levin: “Organizations need to balance the risk of losing a great employee with the resulting cost of hiring and training someone new against the higher salary cost.”

These AI-powered tools can help even the playing field for self-represented litigants and expand the options for how legal and non-legal disputes are resolved. “The lab is trying to create an ecosystem where small, mid-size and large companies, employees and independent workers, and consumers can benefit from using data to democratize and increase access to legal and non-legal services in resolving disputes more quickly, effectively and equitably,” says Levin. “If you do it right, you create a win-win situation for all the players in society.” ■



LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM
The Great Pandemic
of
2020



Yes, these are “unprecedented times”.
But extraordinary leadership is timeless.
And it starts with the smallest things. →

By Julian Barling

What might well be called the Great Pandemic has upended our lives in so many ways, and the act of leading is not immune. Leaders are not functioning in normal times; the people they are leading are likely facing job insecurity, financial insecurity, work overload for some but underload for others, and widespread non-work issues, such as worries about children's socialization, education and mental health, elderly relatives' physical health, and increased family responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, community levels of anxiety in Canada have quadrupled and depression levels have doubled since the onset of the pandemic, according to research published by *Canadian Psychology*.

What does this all mean for leadership right now? It would be easy for leaders to believe that these extraordinary times must surely call for extraordinary leadership. Fortunately, it's just the opposite: In employees' worst moments, the smallest things that leaders do can make a meaningful difference in their lives. Early lessons from leadership during the pandemic combined with decades of research highlight the importance of four key leadership attributes: **the four C's of leadership**.

CONSISTENCY

Leaders' consistency is always important to followers, but never as important as when followers are facing ambiguity, uncertainty and insecurity. What is equally important is the basis for the consistency—it emanates from leaders' honesty, integrity, humility and transparency, and that leaders remain rooted to these principles. Honesty because they tell the truth even when the truth is difficult to bear, what Elliot Ackerman calls “Steely honesty in the face of grim facts”. Integrity and humility because they lead by example. For instance, in July, Ontario Premier Doug Ford falsely claimed migrant farmworkers were avoiding COVID-19 tests. The very next day he apologized publicly—and refused to name the person who had passed on the incorrect information, choosing instead to take responsibility himself.

At times like this, you should feel comforted knowing that employees will not hold you accountable for what you cannot do and encouraged in knowing that they will be inspired by what you did not have to do, but chose to do anyway.

CALM

During normal times, we think of inspirational leadership as “firing people up”. During times of great anxiety, the best of leadership is all about modelling a calm confidence through words and deeds. Perhaps the best historical example is Robert F. Kennedy's extemporaneous speech in Indianapolis announcing Martin Luther King's assassination. Delivered in a sad, monotonic voice replete with pauses, Kennedy empathized with the anger and grief of the crowd, acknowledged their rage but offered a different vision for their future. “What we need in the United States is not division, what we need in the United States is not hatred, what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness,” Kennedy said, “but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer . . . whether they be white or they be Black.” Racial rioting broke out in all major cities when news of the assassination broke, but despite fears by local police who counseled RFK not to deliver the speech because they feared racial rioting, the crowd in Indianapolis left at the end of the speech and went home.

The importance of conveying a sense of calm amidst the pandemic is exemplified by British Columbia's provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. Day after day, she would quietly end her briefings by reminding people that “This is our time to be kind . . . to be calm and to be safe.”

CLARITY

Whilst Barack Obama was still a law student at Harvard, a classmate predicted that he would one day be president of the

United States. When asked why, she claimed that she had never met anyone who could take such complicated issues and distill them in ways that everyone could understand. With so many unanswered and perhaps unanswerable questions leading to widespread ambiguity and confusion during the pandemic, the best of leaders help employees make sense of what seems incomprehensible. They offer clarity to their employees in place of confusion. They do so by sharing the criteria that will form the basis for important future decisions.

The best leaders during troubled times are neither unrealistically optimistic nor in denial. Nor do they add to the confusion by pretending to know all the answers. Instead, the best of leadership is about acknowledging what you don't know, and maybe cannot know.

COMPASSION

The need to show compassion, empathy and recognition during times of great uncertainty would not come as a surprise to most leaders. Yet many leaders shy away from acting this way, believing that they just don't have the time to do so, especially during momentous times. Leaders would do well to remember, however, that precisely because times are so tough, the challenge is not whether you can be compassionate or empathetic all the time; the challenge is whether you can do so at the right time. In what must have been one of the hardest moments of her life, Eleanor Roosevelt displayed untold compassion in a minute. She was in Washington, D.C. when a close family friend came to tell her that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had passed away in Georgia. They sat silently holding hands until Eleanor Roosevelt eventually said, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Closer to home, in April, Ontario Premier Doug Ford publicly showed his gratitude for one employee whose work would normally go unacknowledged. Calling him a "rock star", Premier Ford interrupted his daily briefing and thanked Christopher Desloges, his sign language interpreter, acknowledging Desloges's contribution to the public health initiative.

What are the smallest things you can do to help people want to do amazing work?

A FIFTH "C"?

At this stage, you are probably asking: Is there not something missing? Another "C"? Competence? After all, surely competence is at the heart of successfully confronting the complexities of pandemics. And of course it is. But the lesson from the pandemic is that leaders' competence is assumed. It's "taken for granted". As a result, leaders earn no capital for acting competently. Instead, what we have also learned from the pandemic is that leaders are punished if they show themselves to be incompetent.

A FASCINATING RECENT RESEARCH STUDY

Many of these lessons are highlighted in a recent study of fatality rates in U.S. states with male and female governors. It showed that states with female governors experienced vastly fewer COVID-19 deaths than those with male governors, and that these differences were magnified the earlier stay-at-home orders were issued. Followup qualitative analyses of public briefings help explain why these differences emerged: Irrespective of political affiliation, women governors expressed more empathy and confidence than did males. The implications of these findings have nothing to do with what we might think of as "gender destiny". Instead, the challenge before all of us is whether we can be more empathetic and exude a calming confidence in our leadership interactions, and whether organizations can use this knowledge in leadership development initiatives to help prepare leaders for future challenges.

A CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

Warren Buffett is credited with the observation that "Only when the tide goes out do you discover who's been swimming naked." The tide went out with the onset of COVID-19, and what was revealed was just how extensively inequality pervades our societies, our organizations and everyday work. Women, members of racialized, Indigenous and minority groups, and those who face economic adversity were left to bear a disproportionate share of this global pandemic. The challenge to us as leaders is whether we now simply dream of "a return to normal"—what we now know was a less than perfect normal—or instead use this as **an opportunity through our own leadership to help correct those long-standing ills, and commit to make our organizations, our communities and our world a better place.**



Julian Barling is the Borden Chair of Leadership and Stephen Gyimah Distinguished University Professor at Smith. He is an authority on transformational leadership and was recently named one of the 10 most influential leadership researchers in the world. He is the author of 14 books, including *The Science of Leadership: Lessons from Research for Organizational Leaders*.





The President's Choice

Sarah Davis, BCom'89, is putting big data and analytics into the grocery basket of Canada's biggest supermarket chain.

By Rebecca Harris

Sarah Davis is a numbers person in a business that has, historically, relied more on art than science. So, as president of Loblaw Companies Limited, her mission to take the guesswork out of grocery certainly adds up.

"I have a 'mathy' brain and our business was very much based on gut feel, whether it was choosing product assortment or making merchandising decisions," says Davis, who is leading Loblaw through a data and digital transformation. While she believes there is both art and science to retail, Davis says the company was based "all on art" for a long time. "I wanted to bring the science, and I knew it would be good for the business."

Davis's aptitude for math—she excelled at the subject at her high school in Port Credit, Ont.—was what led her to pursue a Commerce degree at Smith. She chose the school because she thought Queen's was one of the hardest universities to get into. For Davis, studying business was the logical choice. "I thought it was mathy and I would do well at it," she says. "I also thought if I got a business degree, I would easily get a job."

After graduating, Davis was hired at Ernst & Young in Mississauga, Ont., eventually receiving

her chartered accountant designation. She then moved into telecom, working at Rogers for four years, then Bell for 10 years, then back to Rogers for three more. "I did every type of finance role you can do," says Davis, from planning and forecasting, to external reporting, to mergers and acquisitions.

In 2007, a headhunter for Loblaw came calling, and Davis's interest was piqued. A big attraction for Davis to join was the company name: She'd always been a Loblaw's shopper. Another attraction was the location: Davis, who was raising three daughters at the time (they're now in their twenties), was sometimes spending hours a day commuting to work in downtown Toronto from the suburbs where she lived. Loblaw had recently opened a sprawling new head office on the outskirts of Toronto, in Brampton.

CHANGING ROLES

Loblaw, Canada's largest retailer, has more than 1,000 grocery stores and nearly 1,300 drugstores countrywide under banners such as Loblaw's, No Frills, Real Canadian Superstore, Provigo, Maxi, Shoppers Drug Mart, Pharmaprix and Zehrs. It also operates a bank (PC Bank), and its private-label products,

President's Choice and No Name, are among the best known and most popular in the country. Started in Toronto in 1919 with one small grocery shop, Loblaw now employs 194,000 full- and part-time staff, with revenues of \$48 billion last year.

Davis made the leap into grocery and was soon steering the financials of major Loblaw initiatives, first as controller and then as chief financial officer (2010 to 2014). In both those roles, Davis played a key part in Loblaw's multi-year, billion-dollar development and implementation of an SAP enterprise system, which replaced the company's old and outdated IT and supply chain systems.

With an aim to improve operational efficiencies, the SAP technology is used to manage the company's ordering, perpetual inventory, pricing, financials and master data. For example, it allows Loblaw to trace a product from the time it's ordered to when it arrives in distribution centres, to when it arrives at stores, to when it's sold, with the end result being replenishment. "At the point of sale, as soon as the item is scanned, the system knows you just sold a bag of milk—let's put it on re-order," explains Davis. This gives Loblaw a better view into its stores, with benefits like better forecasting and reduced inventory loss.

Putting SAP technology in place proved a massive undertaking. As controller and CFO, Davis describes her role in the project as "making sure that all the numbers were in place, making sure that the flow of data was accurate and being part of the gigantic implementation that ultimately rolled out to every single store and distribution centre."

The upgraded systems proved to be a boon to the company when COVID-19 first hit. "It was pretty crazy that on a Friday we basically sent everyone [at head office] home and on

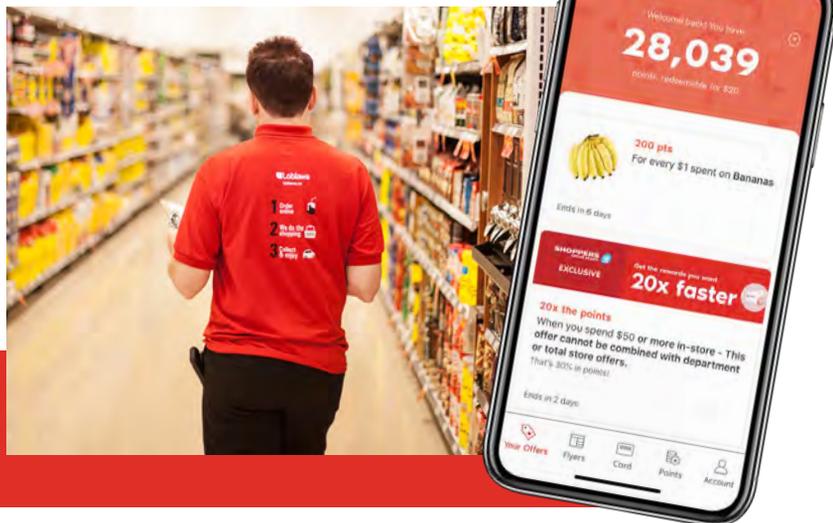
Monday, everyone was working from home and we had few, if any, IT issues," says Davis. "Even in the stores, when we had that unbelievable demand, all our systems—all of the backbone of the company—kept working."

Davis was also a big part of the financial brain trust behind the spinoff of Choice Properties, Loblaw's real estate holdings, into a public real estate investment trust, or REIT. That allowed financial investors to see the underlying value of all Loblaw's real estate, which then increased the company's share price. That in turn helped Loblaw pull off one of the biggest takeovers in Canadian retail history: the \$12.4-billion acquisition of Shoppers Drug Mart in 2013. "Part of that deal was done with equity, so having a higher share price was an important part of doing the Shoppers deal," explains Davis.

As the Shoppers Drug Mart acquisition was underway, Davis got the unwelcome news from her boss, Galen G. Weston, that he'd like her to take on the role of chief administrative officer, which meant she'd be responsible for supply chain, human resources, IT, real estate, strategy and more. "I was seriously devastated, to be honest," says Davis, who loved being CFO and wanted to see the Shoppers deal through. "I didn't imagine myself [as CAO]. I didn't know anything about supply chain or IT. I had been a finance person my whole life and that was what I knew. . . So, it really took me out of my element."

But Davis rolled up her sleeves and learned all different aspects of the business. She ended up loving the job, which she held from 2014 to 2017. Looking back, she says the role made her braver. "It really was this soul-searching moment of 'how can I run supply chain when I don't know anything about it? What am I going to bring to the table and how am I going to earn the respect of these leaders who now have me as their boss

From left: a Shoppers Drug Mart store; an employee handles online orders in one of Loblaw's grocery stores; the company's PC Optimum rewards app. Health, e-commerce and rewards are three key areas of investment for Loblaw.



and I'm not the expert?' And so, it was very foundational for me to figure out what I could bring in order to be useful and how to earn their respect."

What's more, Davis says her time as CAO allowed Loblaw's leadership to see her in a different light, which set the stage for her to be considered for the role of president. "I don't think I could have done this role without [having been CAO]."

THE PANDEMIC ARRIVES

Now in her fourth year in the president's seat, Davis continues to focus on digital and data. Loblaw is investing in three key areas: e-commerce for its grocery, pharmacy and beauty businesses, including investing in new technologies like robotic micro-fulfillment centres; digital health care such as virtual care and e-prescribing at Shoppers Drug Mart; and payments and rewards. In September, Loblaw launched a new payment product, PC Money Account. The bank account combines with the PC Optimum rewards program and allows users to earn points on everyday banking. That same month, Loblaw paid \$75 million for a minority stake in Maple, a provider of virtual health care that had worked with Shoppers Drug Mart during the early days of the COVID lockdowns to offer virtual care.

In addition, the company continues to harness digital tools such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to gain customer insights from PC Optimum. Ultimately, the data lets Loblaw better understand customers. "It allows you to see trends and see what resonates, so we can create offers tailored to a certain cohort and we can see which [offers] work and which ones don't," says Davis.

The data also allows Loblaw to be more efficient and accurate with its promotions. Instead of promoting an item in a flyer, where perhaps only half of customers will be interested, Loblaw can send (via the PC Optimum app) a promotion directly to the customers most likely to like it, based on their previous shopping habits. "As we've put more data and analytics tools in place, I believe that allows us to understand our customers better than anyone else," says Davis. "And the company that knows their customers the best is the one that's going to win."

Of course, winning in 2020 has looked different than anticipated for a lot of companies, especially in grocery. Davis describes her experience with the pandemic, particularly at the outset, as definitely not easy. "It was very stressful, making decisions all the time without perfect information," she says. "But, as a management team, it allowed us to work together like we never have before."

As Davis explains, Loblaw's management team would make decisions every day, inform the stores, explain why they made those decisions, then ask for feedback on what was working and what was not. "At ten o'clock the next morning, [the stores] would provide feedback and by noon, the management team



Inside one of Loblaw's supermarkets in Toronto. The company is Canada's largest grocery retailer.

would work together and say, 'okay, what should we change?' So, it was very dynamic and very agile. And for a \$50-billion company, it was amazing how fast we could make decisions and how fast we could get things done in our stores. So, yes, it was challenging, but also super inspirational."

The pandemic also became a rallying cry for the business, says Davis. "Grocery was deemed an essential service, so there was pride in our business, of saying, 'we're here to serve Canadians; we need to make sure they get their essential food and health items; and we need to make sure our stores, our customers and our colleagues are safe.' So it's been unbelievable in terms of [everyone] coming together for a common purpose."

As a leader, Davis places particular emphasis on listening and learning, two qualities that took root in her childhood. Davis was born in Saint John, N.B., to parents who had immigrated to Canada from England. The youngest of four siblings, Davis didn't have much of a voice in the household—her two older sisters and brother did all the talking. "My mother would joke that she didn't even know I could speak until my siblings all went off to university," says Davis. She spent a lot of time listening and reading the mood, which ended up being a good skill to have in the workplace. "I don't necessarily have to be the talker," she says. "I'm happy to be listening to what others have to say."

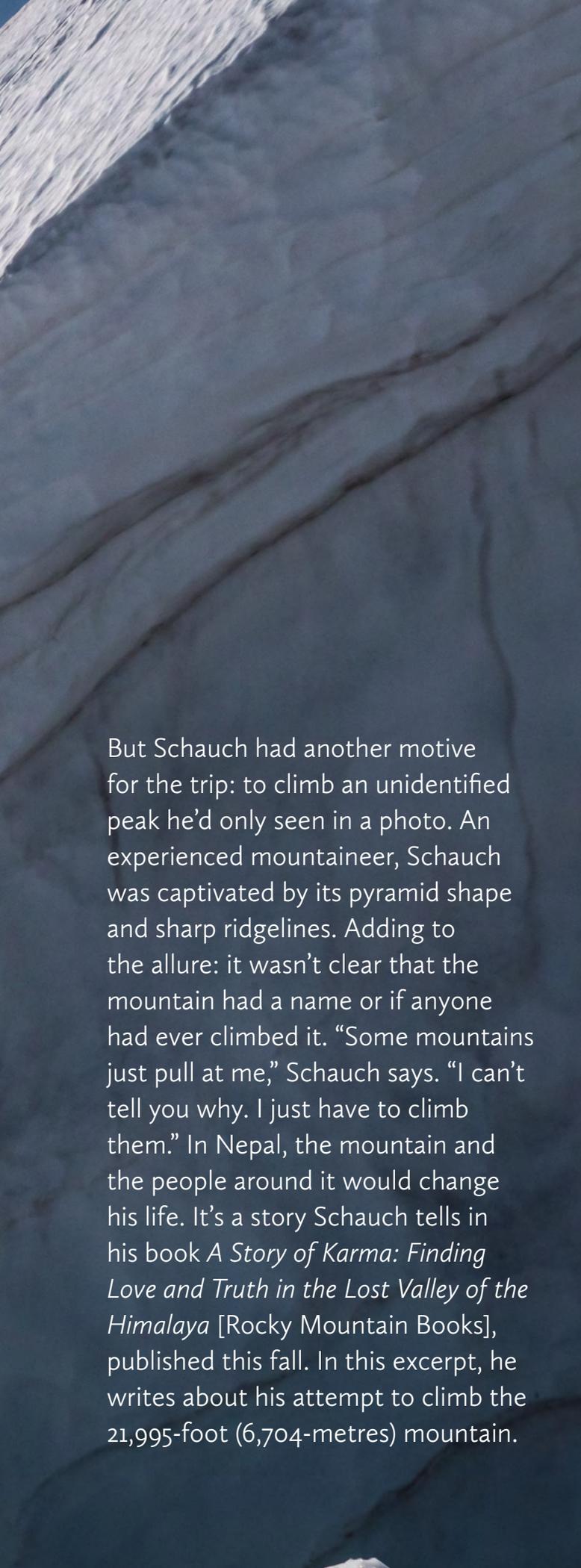
Davis's parents were teachers, and her dad went on to get his PhD and become a professor. The family eventually settled in the Toronto area when Davis was nine. "[My parents] believed a lot in education, so that was my grounding," she says. "It wasn't education for the sake of getting a good mark. Of course, that mattered, but they wanted to teach us how to want to learn. So, they instilled in me a love of learning and never feeling like you're done—there is always more to learn."

Davis would give the same advice to today's business school students. "Be curious, be interested, and continue to seek more learning." Another piece of advice is: be kind. "People don't think of business and kindness going together, but I think they really can and they should," she says. "You don't have to have an aggressive personality to be successful. Be authentic and be true to who you are, and bring that to work every day." ■

A Mountain to Climb

In 2012, Michael Schauch, AMBA'07, and his wife, Chantal, headed deep into the Himalayas of northern Nepal. Their destination: the Nar Phu Valley, a remote region closed to outsiders for decades that was just then being opened to visitors. With them was a team of artists—a photographer, musician and painter. Together, they wanted to document the isolated villages of the valley before the inevitable encroachment of people from the outside altered the valley forever. “We wanted to capture a moment in time, before it was gone,” says Schauch, who lives in Squamish, B.C. and is vice-president and portfolio manager with RBC Wealth Management.

Michael and
Chantal Schauch
on a climb.



But Schauch had another motive for the trip: to climb an unidentified peak he'd only seen in a photo. An experienced mountaineer, Schauch was captivated by its pyramid shape and sharp ridgelines. Adding to the allure: it wasn't clear that the mountain had a name or if anyone had ever climbed it. "Some mountains just pull at me," Schauch says. "I can't tell you why. I just have to climb them." In Nepal, the mountain and the people around it would change his life. It's a story Schauch tells in his book *A Story of Karma: Finding Love and Truth in the Lost Valley of the Himalaya* [Rocky Mountain Books], published this fall. In this excerpt, he writes about his attempt to climb the 21,995-foot (6,704-metres) mountain.

BOOK EXCERPT: A STORY OF KARMA

Outside the snow crystals danced in spirals, as if stirred by an invisible angry force. Some eventually came to rest on the ground, blanketing the landscape. Others returned to the sky, becoming lost in the infinite white that had now become our world.

My two Nepali guides and I had taken refuge in the ruins of an ancient stone hut. It was one of a number of huts—in varying degrees of collapse—that must have once been part of a great village, though all other signs of human habitation had disappeared. We sat in silence on the frozen dirt with our backs to the wall, looking out through what would have been a doorway but was now just an empty space, listening to the mountain winds exhale. Towers of ice and rock as high as 7,000 metres surrounded us like a fortress. They held the authority out here. The three of us, IC, Ngawang and I, were deep in the remote Himalaya of northern Nepal, isolated not just from the rest of the world but also from our companions—my wife, our three friends and the other members of our team—who had remained behind. They were in a village not far away, but at the moment they might as well have been on the other side of the world, our aloneness seemed so complete.

Some might have wondered why I had gone through so much effort, time and money to venture into this desert of ice and rock in one of the most far-flung, inhospitable and even dangerous places on Earth. I know my parents had asked me the question enough times. I could never really give them a reason. The mountains called to me, and I went to them. I'd been answering that call in many places over many years, though never in a place as remote as this.

My wife, Chantal, who was further down the valley, waiting for us to return, had tried her best to support me on this expedition, as she had on so many others. She understood how important it was to me, and she had wanted me to climb my mountain. But I never imagined this journey would take such a severe toll on her. Although she had gone on a number of these expeditions with me, including a recent one that she herself had suggested to Mount Kilimanjaro, trekking through these mountains in the thin, high-altitude air had been much harder for her, both physically and mentally, than either of us had anticipated. It was my ambition that had brought us here, and now it had taken me away from her, away from what mattered most. A shiver ran up my spine. I pulled the collar of my jacket over my mouth and breathed into it, feeling the warmth for a moment against my neck. →

“What is this place?” I wondered aloud, speaking to no one in particular.

Ngawang’s eyes narrowed, studying the wall in front of us, as though each of its stones had a story trapped inside. “This place is empty. Villagers left long time.”

Our hut was no more than four walls of rock stacked about two metres high, bound together by caked mud, with a roof also made of stones, which was supported by wooden beams. The stones were rough and cold to the touch. The whole place smelled of ice and earth. It smelled old. A single ray of light reflecting off the snow outside lit the dim room through the opening at the front.

My eyes traced a crack in the rock wall that ran from the dirt floor up to the beams above me. The beams were also fractured, some of them nearly split in two and caving in from the weight of the large flat stones of the roof. The whole thing looked like it was destined to collapse on us at any moment. But it wasn’t the thought of being buried by the rocks that bothered me most—it was the possibility that no one would ever find us here, amid the many other piles of rocks in what was left of this Himalayan ghost town.

The remnants of the village appeared to be centuries old. The rocks of which the houses had been constructed were reduced to rubble, weathered and faded, covered in red lichen and inscribed with Tibetan etchings unlike any we had seen before, as though from another era. These few human-made markings would soon become invisible, time and weather erasing all traces of the people who had lived here under what must have been extreme hardship.

The only sign of life we had encountered nearby was the print left by a snow leopard. We had discovered it just before getting trapped by the storm. I took comfort in thinking about the snow leopard—a creature that had somehow managed to live within this barren, isolated place. I had imagined it watching us as we fumbled our way forward through the blizzard. How very different it was from me—a living being as fluid as a mountain stream, and as ghostly as the summit we sought to climb. Yet for all our differences, I felt a kinship with it, a sense that both of us had been called to the mountain that loomed above us, that this was where we were both meant to be.

And it wasn’t just any mountain. It was the mountain. A perfect pyramid from its southwest aspect, with sheer faces and a striking ridgeline that snaked its way to a spear-tipped summit piercing both cloud and sky. It was a mountain out of a storybook. I yearned to feel it beneath my feet. To climb it, to experience it, to learn from it, to be part of it—even if only for a brief moment. It had won my heart and beckoned me to come to it. It was a jewel of the earth, buried deep in the Himalaya. And I had found it.

From the moment I first saw it—in a photo a friend had shown me in a restaurant some months before—I couldn’t stop

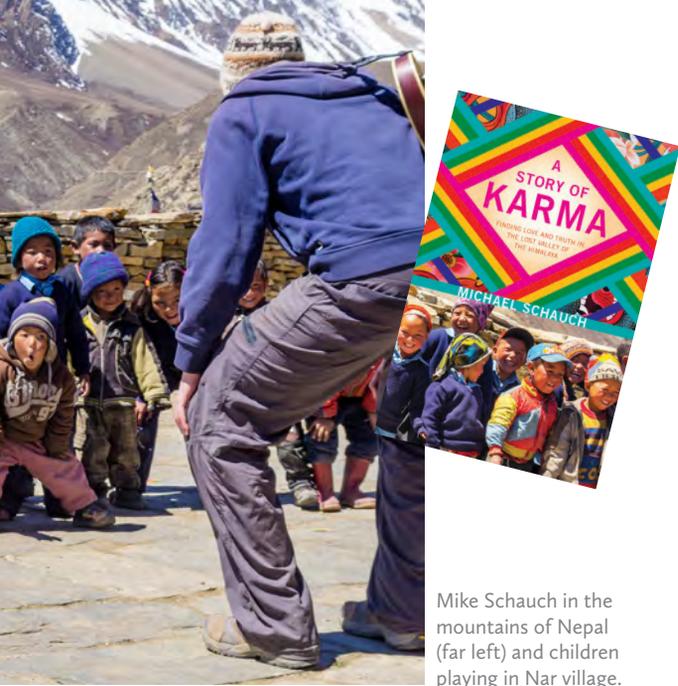


thinking about it. It was a place I seem to have imagined in my dreams; one I felt I had to find in real life. The pyramid mountain drove me into a fit of mountain frenzy—one that consumed me, forcing me on a mad quest into one of the most inaccessible corners of Nepal, where we had come up against a wall of mountains called the Lugula in the upper Manang district, a distant subrange of the Himalaya that formed part of the border between Nepal and Tibet. Thrust up from the Tibetan plateau, the chain of 6,000 to 7,000-metre jaw-dropping peaks formed a serrated horizon so high that even the clouds gazed up to it.

Yet for all the awe I felt in the presence of these Himalayan peaks, there was something equally powerful about the valley where our companions were now sheltering. I had felt something there I had never experienced before—a sense that I had travelled into another world, but also that it was a world I’d been to before. It was as though I was a time traveller from the future who had stumbled my way back into a different epoch, one I had somehow known in an age long forgotten and was meant to return to.

The few mountain dwellers we had come in contact with over the previous days had reinforced these strange sensations. I’d seen them only briefly as we passed each other on the mountain paths. But I’d felt drawn to them, as if they possessed some deep wisdom I’d lost but could learn again if only there were time. Yet we had forged past them, driven by my compulsion to keep moving, venturing ever deeper into the mountains, until they became mere dots of colour against the barren landscape, and then disappeared entirely.

They left my sight, but they did not leave my heart. Who were these Himalayan wanderers? What pulled me to them? I had so many questions. Questions that seemed destined to go unanswered, for my focus on the pyramid mountain was absolute, and I was determined that nothing would get in the way of my ambition to scale it.



Mike Schauch in the mountains of Nepal (far left) and children playing in Nar village.

We'd been trekking for nearly two weeks by then with our companions, and then venturing out on our own, on this mission to find the pyramid mountain, for the last two days. During these two days alone, my Nepali guides and I had crossed many distant rivers and explored outlying valleys and ridges, had covered 30 kilometres and ascended nearly 1,850 metres. I had spent over 15 years training in the mountains to be in a place like this, to climb that mountain that lay so tantalizingly before us—only to find myself caught in a snowstorm.

As I contemplated our next step, the snow crystals outside began floating their way across the exposed threshold, turning to frost on my face and numbing it. Even with my merino wool base layer, microfibre fleece, 800 goose down-filled jacket and windbreaker, I was cold. My body was starting to feel fatigued, partly from the chill that was sapping the energy out of me, and partly from the 5,030-metre elevation, which was making me feel short of breath.

The longer we stayed here the worse it was going to get. We had to leave. I peered outside. Our plan to wait out the storm had failed; it was clear the snowstorm wasn't going to let up.

I looked over at IC and Ngawang. Their faces, once ablaze with mountain fever, were now weary, anxious. We didn't speak, but we knew what we had to do. Lifting ourselves from the frozen earth, we brushed off the frost and shouldered our backpacks. We fastened our jackets and cinched our hoods around our faces. And then, one by one, we ducked through the doorway and into the whirling whiteness. With luck we could make our way back to the village before night fell. I felt defeated, but I also felt we had no choice but to return. ■

Excerpt from *A Story of Karma: Finding Love and Truth in the Lost Valley of the Himalaya* by Michael Schauch. Copyright 2020. Rocky Mountain Books. All rights reserved. michaelschauch.com

WHAT CAME NEXT?

A STORY OF KARMA

As it turned out, Mike Schauch's mountain did have a name: Mount Chako. And it had been climbed—once—by a Japanese party. A Bulgarian team also tried, but gave up when one of their group fell off a ridge and died. After his attempt, Schauch returned to the village, exhausted and bitterly disappointed. "At that point my whole reason for being was to climb that mountain," he says. Now he felt lost. Why was he even in Nepal? he wondered. He soon found out.

Waiting out the snowstorm that had blanketed the valley, Schauch and his wife immersed themselves in village life. They got to know local families, learned the local history and culture. They also found out about local problems—like education. The valley did not have many schools. To get a good education, families packed their children off to one of Nepal's cities. Few could afford it.

The Schauchs wanted to know more. At a small school they found kids as young as three and as old as eight in a single classroom. Up front was a bright seven-year-old girl named Karma teaching English numbers. That night, Karma and her friends visited the Schauchs camp. All of them asked for chocolate, except Karma. She wanted the Schauchs to teach her more English.

"That day really sparked something in us," recalls Schauch. Afterward, he and his wife visited with Karma's family. They wanted to help and eventually arranged to pay for Karma and her sister, Pemba, to attend school in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital and largest city. That school, the Shree Mangal Dvip Boarding School, provides education to children from remote villages in northern Nepal. Eventually the Schauchs sponsored Karma's other sister and have become host parents to two more Nepali girls from similar backgrounds.

In 2015, a massive earthquake struck Kathmandu, killing some 9,000 and injuring thousands more. Many buildings were destroyed, and Karma's school was damaged. Once again, the Schauchs pitched in, helping organize fundraising efforts to rebuild. They've continued to support the school and formed a strong bond with Karma, her sisters and the other students they sponsor. Schauch's book, *A Story of Karma*, tells that story, along with his experiences in the Nar Phu Valley and, of course, his fascination with a mountain that he never did climb.

What does Schauch hope readers take away from his book? "The ability to step outside of ourselves, have empathy for others and listen to others," he says. "That's how we break down our own personal biases and, in the process, get to know ourselves a lot better." He pauses, then adds: "I think that's a very important thing in context of our world today."



PHOTO | PAYLOCITY

On a roll

By Brenda Bouw

Steve Beauchamp, MBA'99, has turned a small Chicago payroll company into a \$7-billion powerhouse that just keeps growing.

Anyone who believes human resources is a mundane profession where people take few risks hasn't worked with Steve Beauchamp, the Canadian-born chief executive officer at Paylocity Holding Corp. in the United States.

Beauchamp has taken his share of professional wagers—moving from big companies to small ones across the United States and embracing new technologies—before taking the helm at Paylocity about 13 years ago. Since then, he's turned the Chicago-area company into one of the largest cloud-based payroll and human capital management software providers in America.

When Beauchamp came to Paylocity—a decade after it was founded by Steven Sarowitz in 1997—the private company had just 100 workers and annual revenue of about US\$15 million. Today, it's a public company with a market capitalization of more than US\$7 billion, 3,600 staff and more than 20,000 clients across the U.S.

Since going public in 2014, Paylocity has seen compound annual revenue

growth of about 25 per cent, with sales reaching nearly US\$600 million in fiscal 2020. The increase was driven by a mix of new products and services and new customers. In April, in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak, the company finalized a deal it had been working on to buy interactive video platform VidGrid, recognizing that video will become a bigger part of how companies communicate with staff in the post-pandemic world.

Beauchamp says his strategy is simple and should be applied to companies big and small: Pay attention to the customer. "It comes down to listening to our clients, finding problems they're trying to solve and finding innovative solutions," he says.

STARTING BIG AND GOING SMALL

After graduating with a business degree from Wilfrid Laurier University in 1995, Beauchamp began his career in the Toronto office of one of the HR industry's largest companies, Automatic Data Processing Inc., best known as ADP. He started in sales, which he found difficult.

"I'm not a natural salesperson. I'm more creative and analytical. So that was definitely a struggle for me," he says.

Beauchamp's father, Ray, a retired accountant for the Children's Aid Society in North Bay, Ont. (where Steve grew up), encouraged him to take the role regardless. "My father said that everyone should sell someday and know what it's like; feel the rejection and uncomfortable process of trying to convince people [to buy something]," Beauchamp recalls. It was smart advice, and the job turned out to be a great experience, he says.

His next move at ADP was into the operations side, where Beauchamp gained a deep interest in technology services, which would help to shape his future career.

After three years at ADP, Beauchamp left to get his MBA at Smith. His goal was to hone his leadership and technology skills for his next role. "I realized my path was going to be about leading people. That's where I got the most passion and energy and where I got the most success," Beauchamp says.

It was at Smith that Beauchamp

3 LEADERSHIP TIPS FROM STEVE BEAUCHAMP

Last year, Steve Beauchamp was named to Glassdoor's list of the Top 100 CEOs in America. The ranking is based on employee reviews. With that in mind, we asked Beauchamp for his best advice on how to become a better leader.

- 1. Practise open, honest and transparent communication.** This is a foundational component of leadership, Beauchamp says. "Do it in the moment. Don't wait for it to be perfect."
- 2. As CEO, you can't spend all of your time marketing what's going well to clients and employees,** Beauchamp advises. "It's really important to find things that we can do better. The way to do that is to have conversations with a wide variety of people across the company to gain different perspectives and uncover what's happening in real time."
- 3. Hire a great team.** "You have to look for people who are good at things you're not good at," he says. "You need a cultural fit, as well as the necessary experience."

learned some key leadership lessons he still applies today, including fostering a team approach, where people with different backgrounds, skills and goals work together. "From a leadership perspective, it's about truly understanding what people's objectives are, what motivates them and getting the most from a team as a whole," he says. "I think that [experience] changed my approach from that point."

His first job after Smith was at Payroll Central, a small, 12-person company in Dallas, a city he'd never been to before. He and his wife, Danielle, who graduated with a degree in teaching from Queen's in 1997, treated it as a new adventure.

"It was definitely a big risk," Beauchamp says of not just the move from Canada in the summer of 1999, but also the startup environment at Payroll Central after working at the well-established ADP. "It was a relatively small company in an environment I wasn't used to. I worked in payroll, but not in the U.S., so I had a lot to learn."

Payroll Central was then sold to Advantage Payroll Services in 2001, a Maine-based company that was bought by Rochester, N.Y.-based Paychex, a much larger company, a year later. Beauchamp and his growing family moved from city to city. He worked as VP of product management at Paychex for five years before being approached by Paylocity,

a much smaller firm at the time.

It was another risk, and another move for the Beauchamp family, this time to the Chicago area. Beauchamp points out that his four children—now ages 13 to 20—were born in three different cities across the U.S.; one in each of Dallas and Maine and two in Rochester.

While the move meant more disruption, Beauchamp was attracted to working at a smaller, fast-growing company building its own payroll software technology from scratch. He came in as president and chief operating officer in September 2007 and moved to CEO within a year. His goal was to expand Paylocity both geographically across the U.S. and beyond payroll technology into areas such as employee benefits, rewards and time tracking.

From the time he took over until it went public in 2014, Paylocity's sales grew by about 40 per cent annually and its staff to about 1,000 employees.

CHALLENGING TIMES

The 2008-09 financial crisis was a big obstacle for Paylocity, in particular around raising money to fuel future growth. But Beauchamp says his team stuck with their expansion plan and was able to raise money and grow the workforce.

A smart move at the time was to hire

people to work from home. That included not just people in sales roles but those in technology jobs such as software engineers. "That sounds commonplace now, but it wasn't 13 years ago," Beauchamp says. The hiring policy helped bring in top talent from other parts of the country to keep the business growing.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit earlier this year, about half of Paylocity's employees were already working remotely, which gave the company a leg up on the transition to a fully remote operation.

The pandemic has been "the most challenging leadership environment that I've ever been part of," Beauchamp says, due to the combination of clients seeking advice on how to manage various programs and more of Paylocity's employees dealing with the challenges of working from home and caring for loved ones.

Paylocity's growth is certainly an achievement but Beauchamp says he gets a great deal of satisfaction watching the company's employees develop. Paylocity has won numerous awards for its strong workplace culture from, among others, the employer review site Glassdoor and the HR magazine *Workforce*.

"I discovered early that I love leading people and creating an environment where people can be successful. To see people grow in their careers is a huge sense of pride for me." ■



HIDDEN LEADERS

Who are the custodians who step up to protect institutions when it really matters? A water crisis in crumbling Detroit led researchers to an answer.

By Simon Avery

Our elected leaders are in the spotlight so often that they become household names, with many of us forming strong emotional ties to certain politicians. But what about those individuals who stand up and take on leadership roles in their communities—often to help distressed institutions, from government agencies to broader spaces such as the environment? These people may lack any official status and remain largely unrecognized, but nevertheless play critical leadership roles through their passionate commitment to a cause.

“When you look at how people care for their neighbourhoods, leadership often falls to custodians of the community,” says Tina Dacin, a professor at Smith who specializes in strategy and organizational behaviour. “But who are these actors? We know they are disparate groups with their own agendas, but how do they come on board in the first place and then maintain their enthusiasm?”

Dacin has researched a diverse set of so-called “community custodians”, from fly-fishing guides to water activists in Detroit, to spotlight this hidden force in society and show that institutions of all types require continuous care if they are to operate effectively.



A UNIQUE VANTAGE POINT

In 2014, still staggering from the Great Recession and just emerging from bankruptcy protection, the City of Detroit considered raising funds by privatizing its water services. The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) presided over decaying infrastructure in one of the poorest cities in the United States, where many residents were having trouble paying their inflated water bills. As the utility struggled to manage its finances, rates had surged to more than twice the national average. In a business decision that would eventually draw international condemnation, the utility began shutting off water to tens of thousands of households with overdue accounts.

By the time COVID-19 struck, thousands of Detroit residents were still living without running water—a situation that made a mockery of the government’s public health strategy that called for citizens to wash their hands.

To most observers this lengthy struggle over water access has looked chaotic. Much more than a fight between residents and city hall, it has been a struggle to keep a neglected public

institution alive. As the drama played out, Dacin and Wren Montgomery, PhD¹⁵, an assistant professor at Ivey Business School, documented how players from across ideological, socio-economic and racial divides found common ground and worked to save the public water system. And although Detroit has still not fixed the underlying causes of its water crisis, Montgomery and Dacin found the beginnings of a blueprint for how society might renew a broad range of institutions, from Canadian health care to democracy.

All institutions require renewal or they will atrophy, say both Dacin, who is the Stephen J.R. Smith Chair of Strategy and Organizational Behaviour at Smith, and Wren Montgomery, a Smith doctoral graduate who specializes in sustainability and general management at Ivey.

Many institutions go into decline because they’re taken for granted. In Detroit, for instance, situated by the Great Lakes, “water is seen as infinite,” they write in their paper, “Water Wars in Detroit: Custodianship and the work of institutional renewal.” Furthermore, the crumbling infrastructure was hidden underground and the city’s privatization consultations occurred behind closed doors. Montgomery collected data from 2014 to 2018, recording how information and power moved among disparate groups of individuals seeking to protect affordable access to publicly owned water services. She moved to Michigan for two years to do her research and was able to conduct lengthy, on-the-ground interviews with scores of key players.

More than 80 per cent of Detroit’s population is Black, and the poverty rate is more than twice the U.S. average, at 39 per cent. “The level of poverty is shocking,” Montgomery says. Once pleasant, middle-class neighbourhoods are today largely deserted, burnt out, overgrown and some even bulldozed to the ground. Many households still trying to build a life in the hollowed-out city incurred the added burden of shame when DWSD contractors came to sever their water access, spraying blue paint on the sidewalk to mark the valves they shut off. One resident who came out of her home in pyjamas to challenge the contractors was taken away by police, Montgomery recalls.

But there were many examples of communities pulling together. For instance, some people would leave their outdoor taps on at night for others to access unseen, and some teachers quietly opened local schools 30 minutes early to allow children without running water at home to wash, she adds.

IT’S EVERYONE’S PROBLEM

Montgomery and Dacin saw a wide range of people fighting back as custodians of public water services, with different understandings of the situation and a variety of skills, resources, objectives, motivations and interests. These people worked both independently and collectively, at times sharing resources,

being energized by each other and ultimately amplifying each other's voices.

Montgomery and Dacin placed the custodians into four groups. The "operatives", comprised of insiders, such as DWSD employees, whose jobs were tied to the water works. They sought to maintain their employment in the time of budget cuts and a weakened union. Their tactics included assuming a role as defender of public water services and broadening the debate to include labour conflict rights.

The second group, the "warriors", included policy experts and environmentalists, who were able to energize other groups of custodians with their experience and by bringing in external contacts. The warriors helped Detroit residents understand the value of keeping water a public resource by presenting the stories of cities where

privatization had failed, including Atlanta and Indianapolis. They also persuaded residents to look at water as more than a utility, playing up the personal and emotional connection we all have to water and arguing that water is a human right.

A third group, the "converts", consisted of community leaders already deeply involved in local causes, from social justice and poverty to environmental issues and civil rights. These custodians were more likely to be visible minorities, female and financially less secure than those from the other groups. But fundamental differences in backgrounds didn't prevent these groups from working together. Warrior and convert custodians, for instance, jointly submitted an appeal about the water shutoffs to the United Nations, and a few days later, on June 25, 2014, the UN responded by declaring the DWSD's actions to be a violation of the UN's declaration of human right to water and sanitation. The announcement drew international publicity to the cause and propelled custodians to organize more aggressive responses to the shutoffs, including blockades and mass demonstrations.

Montgomery and Dacin termed the fourth category of custodian the "agnostics", represented by analysts, bureaucrats and corporate executives. This group wanted safe, clean drinking water, but they weren't philosophically attached to the public-water model. While less passionate about the issue than other custodians, they brought a market view of the crisis and the ability to consider flexible solutions. As one executive told Montgomery, declaring water a human right is the easy part. "Once you solve that then you've got to work on the harder problems, which are, how do we make this infrastructure; actually build it for the 21st century?"

Montgomery and Dacin's research suggests that any assumption that longstanding institutions will survive if left to the oversight of a narrow group of insiders is a mistake. The people at the top running them cannot renew or save the organizations on their own, and if they don't attract "a distributed web of support" then the organizations may atrophy and fail, they write. "Our model . . . underscores both the complexity and enormity of sustaining institutions," they conclude. "No single action or actor can tackle the renewal of a large multi-dimensional institution on their own."

The Detroit water crisis is one example of where institutional custodians have intervened to preserve institutions, and there are many others. Dacin has also explored how hidden leaders actually enforce regulations when government officials are absent. For example, she and Brett Crawford, an assistant professor at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich., looked at how fly-fishing guides enforce catch-and-release regulations in the vast wilderness where state officials fail to enforce the rules.

"These custodians really take the law into their own hands to protect an institution important to them, sometimes turning



into vigilantes,” Dacin said. Their research paper, “Policing Work: Emotions and Violence in Institutional Work”, documents the guides’ tactics, including bullying violators, chasing them and even breaking their fishing rods.

“No single action or actor can tackle the renewal of a large multi-dimensional institution on their own.”

MONTGOMERY
AND DACIN

BUILDING THE WEB

It’s not just utilities and the environment that suffer from neglect today. From education to health care, many institutions have been taken for granted. They will require many “micro actors” to help them rebuild, Montgomery said.

In Canada, the biggest institution at risk may be health care, both Dacin and Montgomery agree, where conditions seem right for their model of custodian renewal. Canadians are overconfident in a system that is being torn apart by stretched resources, unequal care and gradual loss of services—and people haven’t realized that they need to get involved to protect and enhance it, Montgomery said.

Similar to the hidden state of Detroit’s water infrastructure, Dacin suggests that the state of long-term care and public health in Canada has been largely out of sight to most citizens. COVID-19 caused the tragic and often inhumane deaths of thousands of nursing home residents, mostly in Quebec and Ontario. “A crisis can lay bare the faults of an institution,” Dacin said.

The pace of destruction was stunning and left government officials claiming they were unaware of the level of atrophy within the long-term care system. In response, a range of hidden custodians have stepped forward to try to bolster the system. “It is frustrating for people like us who have been telling the government about these problems for years,” said Melanie Benard, national director of policy and advocacy for the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) in Ottawa. “We do often feel like our voices aren’t being heard.”

The public advocacy group works to protect and improve public health care and is a coalition of national organizations representing health-care workers, unions, community organizations, churches, seniors and academics. Although the CHC had hoped the business sector would support initiatives like national pharmacare, which could save money for employers who provide employee drug plans, it has struggled to bring the business community on board.

Other actors are working independently to bring change. In the area of long-term care, for instance, numerous lawsuits against providers on behalf of family members are seeking class action status, and several groups collected tens of thousands of signatures petitioning for improvements.

Penny MacCourt, a retired sociologist and long-term care consultant in Nanaimo, B.C., initiated a Parliamentary petition in June calling for national standards of care. More than 2,500 people signed it, and in July it was presented in the House of Commons. “We felt the petition would give [our efforts] more weight,” said MacCourt, who became involved a few months ago through a family council meeting at the nursing home where her mother lives. Her group has grown through internal networks and is now called Action for Reform of Residential Care. While no one in the group has a political background, members offer a variety of expertise and experiences and share a passion to improve the quality of life for nursing home residents. The group has written a white paper and is trying to find the right channel through which to present it to the provincial government. “The process is all new to us,” she said. “We are trying to move a bureaucracy.”

The pandemic has made “institutional custodians” such as Benard and MacCourt more optimistic about the likelihood of change and has given some of them stronger voices in the public domain. But the months ahead require follow up and the political will to deliver change before people grow tired of the issues. “There is a moment here and we have to seize it. It will disappear if we don’t act quickly,” Benard says.

DETROIT’S TIPPING POINT?

In Detroit, even though active custodians took up the fight years ago, the water crisis remains unresolved. There have been Band-Aid solutions, such as one-time assistance subsidies that eventually dried up, but no systemic change.

The process has moved slowly, Montgomery admits, but the foundations have been laid for change. In 2018, Detroit’s water crisis became an election issue. In March, newly elected Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the city’s mayor, Mike Duggan, announced a water restart plan, paid for by the state government, to restore water service and prevent service interruptions for unpaid accounts during the COVID-19 crisis.

Following protests opposing racism organized by Black Lives Matter, events have accelerated. Members of Congress began championing federal legislation to protect residents from water shutoffs, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan sued government officials, claiming that the water shutoffs had disproportionately hurt Black people. “There’s a lot more awareness now. People realize the water problem is a systemic one that requires major change, not an individual one that carries shame,” Montgomery says. ■

Alumni Voices

RACE AND RACISM

What is the role of universities and business schools in tackling racism and discrimination? How can they ensure better opportunities for all, no matter a person's colour or background?

These questions came to the fore over the summer as people reacted to the horrific murder of George Floyd. A number of social media sites sprang up in which students and alumni told of their own painful experiences with racism. Business schools in particular were called out, including Smith.

Smith School of Business is taking a number of steps on this front (read our story on page 5 for more) but it's important to hear from alumni, too. As such, we invited three Smith graduates to write about their own experiences and give their own recommendations for improvements. What they have to say is important, and we hope you take the time to read their stories on the next several pages.

Reconciliation in the Classroom



Robert Andrews, EMBA'08, on how schools can (and must) do better for Indigenous students.

“First Nation people are a waste of resources.” These words were uttered during my EMBA Americas program. I am well-educated, hold an MBA(s) with Distinction, am a Chartered Professional Accountant, and am a doctoral student in a U15 research university. I was recently appointed as an assistant professor in a business faculty. And I am Blackfoot. I do not appear to be First Nation. What this means is that people share with me their thoughts about race in general, and Indigenous people in particular, unadulterated. They tell me what they really think. Many times, it is painful. My fair complexion has enabled me to move into camps of racial intolerance, undetected. I listen, and the attacks hurt. While the above remark was uttered several years ago, attitudes have not changed significantly today.

This has been my experience my entire life. But my thought

was always that in academia, people would be more educated, less prejudiced, and therefore less racist. Time and time again, this has proven not to be the case.

Indigenous students hear other students talk of how First Nation people are impeding economic development, forestalling municipal infrastructure, or blockading railroads to protest the expansion of pipelines—economic equivalents of the Indian problem that motivated misguided government policies. I knew a young Indigenous woman who worked hard to improve her life and pursue her dreams; she studied hard and got excellent grades. She got into a competitive bachelor of commerce program, only to be told by peers that she was in the program because of the faculty's efforts to accommodate the Indigenous learner, not on her merit. Implicit was that she was not their equal, but inferior. The implication: a waste of resources—someone more deserving should have had her place. She told me this as she held back tears. I could hear the sense of defeat in her voice; I knew it was the second or third time she cried, as she was made to feel unworthy by her peers.

We find racism in universities, and on reflection, it should not be a surprise. The university population, from the students

to academics, to the senior administrators, reflects more broadly the attitudes of many Canadians. Each remark at university takes its toll on impressionable young adults, compounding all the challenges that the university presents to first- or second-year students. These short assaults are cumulative. Some studies have reported that as many as 40 per cent of Indigenous students will drop out in their first or second year because of racism. Graduate students have dropped out of programs because of racism. As I stated, I have experienced this many times before—when I heard it as a graduate student, it stung. Still, I had years of experience to become resilient to the endemic racism experienced by First Nation people. But it stung. Our undergraduates, as well as many graduates, do not have this resilience.

What can be done about this?

For the instructor, try to understand the First Nation communities and their history. Learn about the local culture of the Indigenous communities in the area. Each Nation has different customs, traditions, beliefs and celebrations. Be respectful of these practices and traditions. Talk to your students, invite them to talk to you. As with all students, try to find pathways to success. Understand that the myth of meritocracy is based on the premise that all start at the same place. As scholars, challenge these assumptions. Meritocracy is often a veil and justification for the privilege afforded to the dominant culture.

Understand that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action apply to you, the professor. They are not merely university policy and limited to the senior administrators responsible for Indigenous affairs. I have heard professors say, "That doesn't have anything to do with me in my role." If you live on land that the First People walked on, hunted on, traded on, governed and worshiped on, the calls to action apply to you.

Try to understand the contemporary challenges that students face; they are many and varied. The challenges are unique and, in many cases, the result of chronic underfunding of education, housing and social programs within the communities, and the effects of a government policy that was, in the words of Justice Murray Sinclair, "cultural genocide."

The impact that the residential schools had on our community members endures as intergenerational trauma, effects that propagate through generations after those who survived the residential schools. I have heard from our dedicated Indigenous students that some will hitchhike to get from their remote community to university. Others must choose between feeding themselves or feeding their children, and so students will come to your class hungry. Understand this is not history; it is in your classes. The residuals of this effort of government policy to "kill the Indian in the child" still exists.

Try to use examples from local Indigenous culture; it is distinctively part of our Canadian experience. As we celebrate our multiculturalism, let us make space for the cultures of our First

Nation people. Not as tokenism, but as a genuine opportunity to improve the quality and life of all students, administrators, faculty, and Canadians. First Nation people have much to offer.

For the academic, approach Indigenous research, not as a vehicle for publications and citations, but to exemplify the highest aims of scholarship, seeking truth to improve the quality of the lives of people. Research must be respectful, inclusive and return a benefit to the Nation. The Indigenous culture and ways of life are intellectual property, and these rights must be preserved and protected. Indigenous people are not data, nor opportunities for grants in furtherance of journal articles.

"Some studies have reported that as many as 40 per cent of Indigenous students will drop out in their first or second year of studies because of racism."

And the academy must recognize academic service as not just the time spent on internal committees, but in the way in which society is advanced through service to the community. Policies should enable, not encumber. Universities should serve our society in tangible ways.

Lastly, what can students do? You must understand existing preconceptions and stereotypes about Indigenous people and other historically marginalized groups. Ignorance is often the cause of sexism, discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, ageism, ableism and racism. These beliefs are often inherited from others. Learn about others. Students have led many social movements, on and off campus. Business students should not think themselves removed from social justice, equity, racism and intolerance. You will inherit society from us. You will be called upon to help heal inflicted wounds, whether in the workplace or the environment or your community. Demand that your institution's leaders lead. Remind them of their obligations to create safe learning spaces. If they don't, step forward. You can drive the change, as students before you have.

In many traditional practices, gatherings are concluded with a prayer. While the prayers differ, many elements across all Indigenous communities are similar. The prayer gives thanks and asks for blessings for those in attendance, their children, their families, and particularly for those disadvantaged in the communities. The prayer reminds us of our sacred obligations to our youth and our early adults, and to be thankful for the guidance of our elders. The prayer reinforces the dignity of all people, young, old, those in need, and those less fortunate, and reminds us they all have things to offer. It reminds us to pray for those who need help. The prayer offers thanks for all the gifts we have received and reminds us of our obligations to share. I am always struck by the warmth extended to those Indigenous

and non-Indigenous, recognizing our common humanity and expressing genuine concern for the wellness of all of us. Shouldn't academia reflect and encourage these hopes and prayers for a better world?

Robert Andrews is the executive director of the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Alberta, and is an assistant professor in Indigenous business with Athabasca University.

Assimilation is Harder for Some



David Kong, BCom'14, and recipient of the Medal in Commerce, recalls his first year in Commerce, and the subtleties of racial division.

This summer, as I read stories of marginalization and discrimination written by current and former students, and shared on the Instagram page @stolenbysmith, my first reaction was that of disbelief. I remembered how fun exchange, Commerce Prom and commencement were, and I recounted being woven deep into the Commerce fabric through clubs like QGM, QBR, QUIC and Examblitz. I needed to research my old messages and writings to remember my feelings from my first year. I had forgotten the hurtful edge of my negative experiences, perhaps because these events occurred 10 years ago, or perhaps unconsciously for self-protection.

Like many students, I interviewed for frosh representative positions on several committees, and was not accepted into any of them. It was hard for me, as it was for other students, to rationalize what part of each failure was attributable to my own inadequacies compared to discrimination.

The reality is that the truth lies somewhere in between.

To prove to myself that racial divisions did exist, I re-read all my messages from first year and noticed predominantly white people messaging me to ask for help (see right) and predominantly Asian people messaging me to chat.

How's it going bud? I was just trying to figure out the Comm161 Case for the group assignment, and I'm having quite a bit of trouble understanding it. I've heard you're very strong in math so I was hoping you might be willing to share some wisdom and help me out with the case? If you're able to have a talk on skype or something tomorrow I would really appreciate it, and I'll return the favour however I can.

Hey David, I've been looking at that math problem for quite a while and even tried graphing it on my computer but I'm still having trouble finding the tangent. any ideas?

Here's the assignment. Let me know what you think of my answers!

Yo david! Sorry for the bother, but did you end up doing the proof in 7.6, #108? I'm stuck like hell lol

Can you explain to me how to do question three from the assignment? I'm stuck on it 😞

I looked over an old presentation I made at my birthday party, where I called the first semester the "hardest few months of my life." In this presentation, I described the school as very "white" and very "rich." It was a culture shock. I described the "bro" culture and how my vocabulary came to include words such as "kegger" and "iced" in my first year. That is not to say there was no kindness. But it was more likely to come from other Asians. I met my first girlfriend then. She was Korean. I called her the "only good thing in this program" in a chat message.

Racial division is subtle. On the surface, racial undertones are often not substantial enough for students to realize the effects of race. What really happens in Commerce is that students must navigate an environment dominated by exclusive cliques. Anyone, of any race, can potentially be included into these cliques. There were certainly Asian students in many of the desirable cliques. At its core, the program is elitist, and elitism can often lead to worse forms of discrimination.

I remember telling my parents I wish I were not Asian.

My response function was to attempt to break through the racial and cultural barrier. I tried to help others with assignments, going so far as to join groups with predominantly white students. And I took on a campaign of redefining myself.

I ran for election as my year's socials co-ordinator, putting ads up that read "Beer Kong." It was a great irony because I abided by the 19-plus alcohol laws and had never had a drink of alcohol prior in my life. A ComSoc co-ordinator at the time is said to have laughed at my campaign, saying it was futile against my more popular opponents. I hosted a Super Bowl party at my house with the help of a white male friend I met—my first such friend in Commerce, an exception to the rule, with whom I am still very close. I latched on to him and he pulled me out of social obscurity. I won the election.

I went so far as to apply to transfer to a different school. My admissions essay read largely like what I wrote above.

To my delight, I was admitted to Brown University in the U.S. But by this time, my strategy to change my image seemed

to have worked, and I remained at Queen's. Helped by my redefined image, I joined QUIC and CREO. And with that came social acceptance. The remaining three years in Commerce were fairly happy. I have cultivated many friendships at Queen's from diverse backgrounds.

The fact that I was so close to leaving Queen's shows the situation that many students can find themselves in. We must acknowledge that academic institutions have an exceedingly difficult task of navigating students through the transition to adulthood. A successful matriculating student is forced into contests of academics and popularity reminiscent of the real world. Students are as likely to lose these contests as win them.

“After spending five years in the corporate world, mostly in New York City, I wish I could say things are different in the real world.”

That the program feeds into business, which is largely white and elitist, further presents challenges. To be successful in the business environment, a certain degree of assimilation is required. However, assimilation isn't easy for everyone. For example, students with accents find it much harder to assimilate. Students from poorer backgrounds or visible minorities will also find it harder to assimilate. This disparity is the crux. Overt racism is limited to the fringes. There are plenty of examples of people of no visible disadvantage doing poorly in this contest as there are plenty of examples of the disadvantaged doing well.

In the Commerce program, there were plenty of Asian people in desirable positions—as class president, a QFAC frosh representative, a QCIB frosh representative, and so on. The elected valedictorian was Asian. This fact pattern echoes much of the dissent against @stolenbysmith. Many Asian people are indeed surprised by the movement because they did well. However, the average is advantage for the privileged.

I have the following suggestions to improve the experiences of Commerce students who find it harder to assimilate:

First, I believe that admissions should be changed. For the most part, alumni should not be used to read Personal Statements of Experience to choose students. The use of alumni engenders like-mindedness, carrying forward and multiplying any biases. Having professors do the reading would be better.

Second, I believe the Commerce program should focus more on academics. That means more engaging and more useful course content, fair methods of evaluation, and allowing students more choice in choosing courses. If academics were more of a focus, then the importance of popularity is lower. Also, professors should not be allowed to reuse exam questions, as this habit rewards students who are more connected.

Finally, ComSoc should (and it seems already intends to) produce reports measuring the success rate of applicants by race, gender, etc.

After spending five years in the corporate world, mostly in New York City, I wish I could say things are different in the real world. But today, when I look through my Facebook messages, ironically, I realize that all of the diversity I have experienced was from my time at Queen's. In the real world, it is exceedingly difficult to make meaningful connections with people outside of your own race. Most gatherings I attended in New York City were racially homogenous.

What a shame to see in our globalized society.

David Kong left a four-year career at a New York City-based hedge fund to start his own wine-focused businesses, Glasvin and Somm. A longer version of this article was published in the *Queen's Business Review*.

You Can't Be What You Can't See



Mora Mochama, MBA'12, on the steps we should take to support Black graduate students.

I was the only Black student. The Only One.

Eight years later, on May 26, 2020, I watched with the world the news of yet another Black man killed by the police. That was on a Tuesday. The day prior, the news had been dominated with the story of Central Park Karen (a white woman in New York City who called police on a Black man birdwatching in the park). By Wednesday, it was the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet (a Black woman in Toronto who fell off her balcony to her death after the police had been called to her apartment); Thursday and Friday saw the Minneapolis riots and protests in response to the George Floyd murder.

It would be an understatement to say that it was a hard week to be a Black person. It is really hard to try and be your best professional self when images of people who look like you are being brutalized over and over again. By the end of that week, I was mentally and emotionally exhausted. Once again I found myself in a space—at work—where I was The Only One.

When I returned to work on Monday, I pushed my employer to respond to this moment. But I also wanted to see more actions in the worlds I'd been in. I responded to a call on LinkedIn by Matt Reesor, director of the full-time MBA program, to discuss anti-Black racism with past students. As a graduate of

“It is really hard to try and be your best professional self when images of people who look like you are being brutalized over and over again.”

Smith, I felt my experience could help future Black students and combat anti-Black racism. Most importantly, I want to ensure no future classes have Only One Black student.

So where do we start? Let me discuss opportunities for change. These are based on my own experiences as a student but can apply to business schools and universities in general.

Coaching

One of the unique selling features of the MBA is the slew of coaching options students have available to them. I'd always been intrigued with the idea of an executive coach, so to have access to one was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. When it came to looking at profiles of the coaches to select for individual coaching, it was disappointing. I was presented with a strong list of truly experienced professionals, but all of them white.

It stood in contrast to our class, which had students from all over the world, representing a variety of racial, ethnic and national backgrounds. It was surprising to see this representation lacking in the coaching staff. A coach is adept at helping you navigate blind spots that could hinder your personal and professional development. These blind spots could be personal traits or professional work; those can be changed with the right level of coaching. But some might be rooted in cultural, racialized or gendered experiences, and a lack of diversity in coaching options leaves students without the tools they need to succeed. Racialized coaches are out there and would be an important addition to the roster of coaches available to students.

On-campus recruitment

On-campus recruitment, or OCR as it's known, is when recruiters come to the school to meet, interview and ultimately hire from the pool of students. It's what many in the program spend months preparing for—updating resumés, practising case interviews, researching companies—in hopes of getting noticed, interviewed and hired. Students get a small reprieve from studying to network and meet with professionals.

OCR can be exciting, but I don't recall seeing a single Black recruiter when I was going through the process. In addition, the representation from other racialized groups seemed to be low as well, and I imagine this was the case at other business schools as well. As a woman of colour, I'm always on the lookout for representation, as it can serve as inspiration because, as they say, “You can't be what you can't see.”

Diverse representation in the OCR process can have a significant impact on hiring. In-person networking and hiring

is vital for both employer and prospective employee, but it is also fraught. Unconscious biases can creep in when a racially diverse student pool isn't met with company representatives from all different backgrounds. While schools can't control who companies send, they can be clear with companies that all kinds of diversity will help them hire better. Companies also have a role to play. When students are immersed in a diverse school experience, they will expect the same level of investment in diversity and inclusion from their employer. Businesses should realize that having a robust diversity and inclusion program is a competitive advantage to their bottom line, and they should look for talent from business schools that cultivates leaders with this mindset.

Student recruitment

When I was looking to get an MBA, I spent time at the Black Business and Professionals Association (BBPA) networking events to learn from other Black professionals and learn about potential career opportunities. But few schools reach out to community and professional organizations that explicitly serve Black people. Organizations like the BBPA, Black Professionals in Tech Network (BPTN) and the National Black MBA Association (NBMBAA), offer connections to Black professionals like me who are looking for growth and advancement opportunities. These are just a few of the many organizations out there that focus on professionals of racialized groups. They can serve as an invaluable pipeline for potential business students.

In addition, I was one of the few students who'd come to the program through work in the public service. Although I'm in the corporate sector now, my background in working directly with the public has enriched my work. Black, racialized and immigrant populations are more likely to be represented within public and community service. The demands of those jobs are immense and the stakes are high. Bringing in students from non-traditional career backgrounds would not only enrich their careers but also the experiences of all MBA students.

Of course, there's more that can be done. The Reform Smith initiative (a group started by the current students and alumni behind the @stolenbysmith Instagram account) has highlighted other ways, including changes to curricula that can be made. The invitation on LinkedIn from Matt at Smith to discuss students' experience is a starting point to making change happen. To serve students well during and after they graduate, schools need to keep talking to students about what they need and the challenges they face.

Anti-Black racism doesn't end just by acknowledging it. It ends when every institution does the work to eradicate it.

Moraa Mochama works as a project manager for a national insurance company. She is passionate about the advancement of women and people of colour in corporate spaces. She lives in Waterloo, Ont. with her husband and two sons. ■

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Lulu Liang, BCom'14, Artsci'14, jumped into the CEO spot of Luxy Hair at just 25. Now she's leading the company's global expansion (and launching her own business, too).

By Wanda Praamsma

A Leader in Love with Constant Learning

For Lulu Liang, mindset is everything. If you focus your intention, and cast aside limiting beliefs that can hold you back, the world opens up, and so much more can be achieved.

This is how she completed two full bachelor degrees at Queen's in four years. Moving into her third year of Commerce at Smith, Liang decided she wanted a degree in mathematics as well. To make it happen, she took summer courses, studied French through the federal government's Explore program and, in her final semester, completed 10 courses, many of them in math, after finishing most of her Commerce requirements earlier in the year.

Looking back, Liang says, "it seemed easy, but I know that when I was in it and working on all those courses, it was pretty difficult. I crammed a lot into two years. But I knew four other people who were also working on two degrees at once, and I thought if other people could do it, I could, too."

It's this drive and ambition, coupled with a strong belief in being an "infinite learner," that helped propel Liang at age 25 into the role of CEO of Luxy Hair, a multimillion-dollar e-commerce beauty business and hair extension brand that has grown to 300,000-plus customers in more than 165 countries, with a social media following of more than four million.

Toronto-based Luxy offers a wide variety of hair extensions and accessories, with the goal of making women feel good about how they look. Made of 100 per cent human hair, the extensions are intended for everyone, not just celebrities (although the company's list of high-profile clientele, such as Kim Kardashian, Bella Hadid and Hailey Bieber, is growing).

Since becoming CEO, Liang has expanded the Luxy team from two to 20, revenue has quadrupled, and she has worked hard to establish the company's presence among leading fashion and beauty publications. In 2019, the company made *The Globe and Mail's* list of the Top 50 Best Workplaces (fewer than 100 employees) and is also a certified "Great Places to Work" under the categories of Inclusion, Retail and Hospitality, and Managed by Women.

"I have this innate, internal thirst to always improve and never be satisfied," says Liang, now 27. "I love what LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman said in his podcast *Masters of Scale*, while talking with [Facebook chief operating officer] Sheryl Sandberg: That the moment you think you are the best COO, you stop being the best COO. This idea, that no matter who you are and what you do, there is always room for improvement. There is always opportunity for more learning."

Good Morning Goodes Hall

Born in Beijing, Liang moved to Toronto when she was seven. Her parents, who didn't speak English well and left with a few thousand dollars in their pockets, wanted to provide a better life for their daughter and also wanted to have another child, which was illegal under China's one-child policy at the time.

"I would say I had a very stereotypical, first-generation, Chinese-Canadian childhood, with a strong focus on education," says Liang, who has a younger brother. "We lived frugally, found furniture on the streets, sometimes lived with cockroaches. I worked really hard to get the best grades, and knew that before I could go out to movies with friends, I would first have to wash the dishes for a month."

At the top of her high school class, Liang was drawn to the prestige of the Commerce program at Smith. She loved the intense camaraderie and competition among her peers. She can remember many nights working till 4 a.m. in Goodes Hall, and counts her role as co-chair of the Queen's Retail Forum (QRF), known then as Queen's Business Forum on the Fashion Industry (QBFFI), as one of the highlights of her time at Smith.

Management consulting firm Accenture recruited Liang during her fourth year, and she began the next fall, after a summer of travelling throughout Asia. She spent two years at Accenture, tasked with strategy for Fortune 100 tech companies and retailers. But she was deeply unsatisfied and went looking for a better fit, somewhere she could be herself and that would push her in new directions. She found that at Luxy, whose founders, Alex and Mimi Ikonn, had created a workplace culture focused on personal growth and learning, with reading being a significant part of that culture, as well as mentorship opportunities. Liang started in 2016 as an operations assistant.

“I had no idea what hair extensions were when I first started, but I had followed Alex and Mimi on YouTube and Instagram. I felt connected to what they were presenting and their focus on self-growth and entrepreneurship,” says Liang.

Alex Ikonn says he was immediately impressed by Liang’s drive and her ability to go above and beyond. Even during the application process, Liang chose an unconventional approach, submitting a YouTube video instead of the traditional CV and application form, and presenting a competitive analysis and three-year strategic road map during the interview process.

“She was really an owner from the start. One of our values in the company was extreme ownership, and Lulu definitely exemplifies that,” says Ikonn, who left Luxy Hair and sold the business to the U.S.-based Beauty Industry Group in 2018. “As a leader, she is caring. She both cares about her staff and leads them, and she excels in operations and efficiency.”

Set on being a linchpin—someone who is indispensable to the organization, according to author Seth Godin—Liang quickly moved up the ladder, becoming operations manager within one year, general manager soon after, and then CEO. As leader, Liang strives to continue what the Ikonns started, placing a lot of weight on learning and personal ownership among employees, and at the same time, bringing her own leadership style to the table.

“I have high standards and expect a lot from my team. This is because I also expect a lot from myself,” says Liang. “But I also think I am flexible and approachable and very much open to feedback.”

Liang says she spends a great deal of time thinking about her employees and how to work with their strengths and help them to be confident in their work. On the ground, she regularly coaches staff and offers many opportunities for feedback, both about internal processes and her own leadership. Lunch-and-learns,



Liang with some of Luxy Hair’s products. The company has a social media following of four million. Right: The Habit Journal from Liang’s startup, Evergreen Journals.

plus a monthly book club, team offsites, and other perks, such as healthy office snacks, are all part of the Luxy job package.

“The most important things for me are to build a great company and a great culture,” says Liang. “When you invest in people, the business grows organically.”

The Joy of Journaling

It’s clear the successes are many, for both Liang and Luxy Hair. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, business has boomed, she says, and she expects more growth for Luxy within the \$5-billion global hair-extension industry. Future plans include more investment in building the company’s international presence, broadening Luxy’s appeal to an older market (currently, millennials drive sales), and working on an expansion into the broad hair category, which includes hot tools and hair care.

But, this doesn’t mean it all comes easy. There have been challenges along the way.

Working at Accenture and dealing with disillusionment plagued Liang. And in 2018, when the Beauty Industry Group acquired Luxy, she struggled with balance, essentially putting aside her own life and working long hours to complete the sale and to keep expanding the business. She had moments, she says, when she wanted to escape and leave it all behind.

“I struggle with being present and with anxiety,” Liang says. “I didn’t experience it at Queen’s, but as soon as I was thrown into the work world, it was there, and there were strange physical symptoms that doctors couldn’t figure out and which I eventually attributed to stress and anxiety.”

Over the years, Liang says journaling has been an important tool for her. She makes a point of working through her thoughts on

a regular basis, and writing out her weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly plans and visions. This is part of her self-growth philosophy—a conscious and deliberate effort to become more self-aware in order to live intentionally and improve in all areas of her life.

True to this effort, she used the stress of 2018, and her interest in mindfulness and journaling, to spearhead another big endeavour: starting Evergreen Journals, with her close friend, Allie Mastoras. Together, they launched the company's first product, the Habit Journal, in May of this year.

Made in Germany, the journal helps people observe their habits and achieve their goals with simple, daily affirmations and tracking exercises. In the journal's introduction, Liang and Mastoras detail the science behind habit-tracking and then provide a road map for users, which includes defining a vision, breaking that vision down into goals and habits, and then setting three habits per month. Tracking is the next step, asking users to spend five minutes a day reflecting on their progress, expressing gratitude, and planning for the next day. They then encourage monthly and quarterly reviews.



“When you are able to make things a habit, so you do things unconsciously, that’s when the real magic happens. There’s the exponential effect of making a few little changes—like meditation and journaling, for me. It’s just so automatic for me now, and it makes a huge difference in my life,” says Liang.

A side benefit of launching a company while also running one, says Liang, is that she appreciates even more what her staff at Luxy do for her each day, all the small and big things that contribute to smooth operations. She also knows that launching Evergreen is part of her bigger picture, a future that will, of course, include a life of learning, and likely more leaps into entrepreneurship. ■

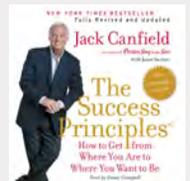
LULU LIANG:

MY 5 FAV BUSINESS BOOKS EVER

Lulu Liang gets through a book a week. As a busy CEO, how does she find the time? “I take advantage of the NET (No Extra Time) concept,” she explains. “We all spend hours every week commuting, getting ready and doing errands like dishes and laundry. You can always find me listening to Audible during these times. Books are on average six hours long on Audible, and it’s super easy to find an hour a day when you can listen while doing your daily errands.” Here, she tells us about her favourite all-time biz books.

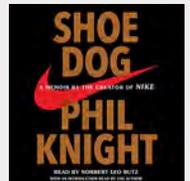
1. The Success Principles

(Jack Canfield) My favourite book of all time. It’s a great summary of all self-growth books. If you just did 20 per cent of what the book suggests, you’d be far ahead of the curve.



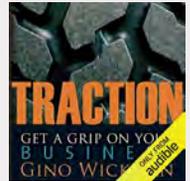
2. Shoe Dog

(Phil Knight) Not sure if this is considered a business book, but it’s the story of Nike told in such a captivating way. I couldn’t put it down.



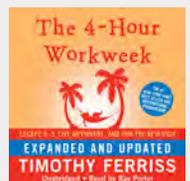
3. Traction

(Gino Wickman) A step-by-step guide on how to scale your business and create seamless operations. All of Gino’s books are great for entrepreneurs and leaders.



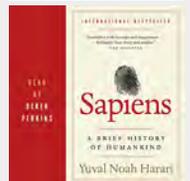
4. The 4-Hour Workweek

(Tim Ferriss) A cult classic that definitely changed my perspective on business and work.



5. Sapiens

(Yuval Harari) An incredible insight into human psychology and storytelling. Mindset is the most important thing in business, and understanding how everything is made up will lift your limiting beliefs.



Coming Full Circle

A broken suitcase led Kristi Soomer, AMBA'og, to launch Encircled, a versatile clothing brand that's good for the planet, and society, too.

By Brenda Bouw



Growing up in Toronto, Kristi Soomer had a keen interest in the environment. At 11, to her parents' surprise, she became a vegetarian. In high school, she joined the recycling club. Business also caught her eye, thanks to a high school economics teacher, who, she says, "lit me up to the idea of how business works."

Yet it wasn't until Soomer was well into her career, working as a management consultant, that she combined sustainability with business (and a lifelong love of fashion) to create Encircled, a now-thriving ethically run, Toronto-based women's clothing brand.

The name Encircled comes from the company's original garment, a circle scarf. "Circles to me represent wholeness, connectedness and karma," Soomer says. "The idea that it's possible to have a business that does it—makes high-quality clothing, protects the environment, values human rights, and does it at an accessible price point for consumers. It's full-circle fashion."

Encircled is a certified B Corporation. That means it follows rigorous and verified social and environmental performance standards. Well-known B Corps include Patagonia, Ben & Jerry's, Seventh Generation and Method. Certification is overseen by B Labs, a non-profit near Philadelphia.

Encircled makes sweatshop-free clothing in Toronto using fairly paid labour and sustainable fabrics. The clothes are also versatile. They can be worn in different ways and for multiple occasions, inspiring a "less is more" approach to reduce clothing waste. For Soomer, Encircled weaves together all her passions to make herself and her immigrant parents—who helped shape her career choices—proud.

FASHION FORWARD

Soomer's mom and dad came to Canada separately from Estonia and met while studying at the University of Toronto. Her father was a corporate lawyer, while her mother, a teacher, has a knack for sewing. "She's very creative and artistic," Soomer says of her mom. Together they'd often visit fabric shops, looking for the right prints and patterns. Influenced by her athletic older brother, she also played hockey, soccer, tennis and golf. "He didn't want to play Barbies, so I had to learn hockey," she says with a laugh.

After earning her business degree at Huron University, a college at Western University in London, Ont., she got a job as a business analyst at lingerie company La Senza. After a couple of years, Soomer went to work in business development at Voxcom Security Systems. Her goal, though, was to be a management consultant, which is why she came to Smith to earn her Accelerated MBA.

She graduated in 2009, smack-dab in the Great Recession. Management consulting opportunities were few, so Soomer went to Colgate-Palmolive Canada instead. There, as a brand

manager, she led the relaunch of Colgate Total. Two-and-a-half years later, her former boss at La Senza was working at PwC and looking for someone to work in the firm's retail consulting business. Was Kristi interested? It was the management consulting career she'd long dreamed of. She jumped at the chance.

"I love consulting," Soomer says. "It plays into everything I love about business, which is the ability to work on different products and projects all the time, seeing inside different businesses and working with high-level executives. I'm such a business geek. I really love that kind of stuff."

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

One day, Soomer decided to go on a last-minute yoga retreat with a friend to Costa Rica. While packing the night before, she broke her suitcase attempting to stuff in too many items. A light bulb went on. Women's fashions, she realized, aren't versatile enough for different occasions and purposes. As a consultant, Soomer was constantly travelling, bringing along multiple outfits for every occasion on her trips. What if there was a line of women's clothing that offered greater flexibility, with each item adaptable enough that it could be used in a number of outfits?

That was in 2012, and soon Soomer was spending her evenings and weekends developing what would become Encircled. "I knew nothing about the garment industry or how to make a product," she recalls. "I just fumbled my way through it by researching, asking questions and piecing things together bit by bit. It was a slow launch to the business."

Encircled's first product was the Chrysalis Cardie. An ingenious piece of apparel, it can be worn eight different ways, such as a cardigan, scarf or one-shoulder gown. In December 2013, about a year after launching it online, the Chrysalis Cardie was included in a *Globe and Mail* gift guide. Overnight, orders skyrocketed from around 100 a month to 100 a day.

Not the type to take huge risks, Soomer stuck with her full-time job for another year (first at PwC and then as a retail consultant at ThoughtWorks) before finally leaving to run Encircled full time in late 2014. The following April, she landed a spot on the CBC TV business pitch show *Dragons' Den*. She got two offers and one deal, which later fell through. The episode never aired.

Fortunately, a few weeks later, an investor (who she wants to keep anonymous) with an eye for social-purpose companies came to her wanting to invest in Encircled. The money (the sum she's also keeping to herself) helped Soomer hire more staff and expand her product line to include dresses, pants, tops and accessories. Sales doubled year-over-year for the first few years, enabling the company to expand while sticking to its sustainability purpose.

Today, Encircled is a multimillion-dollar business by sales, with about 40 products, around a dozen employees and a

2,500-square-foot space in the Junction Triangle neighbourhood in Toronto's west end. About 92 per cent of the business is e-commerce, with the rest in-person sales. Remaining a B Corporation, which often comes at a higher cost for supplies and labour, is a challenge, but it's important to Soomer.

The pandemic has been good for business, too, as more consumers seem interested now in locally made, sustainable goods. "When I started in 2012, nobody cared about sustainable products or where the product was made," she says. "It takes a lot of integrity, persistence and stubbornness to stay within your values . . . I am proud of the fact that I've been able to grow and scale to the size I have in one of the most difficult industries, with one of the highest failure rates."

Having steered her own company's growth, Soomer is now helping others do the same. She has launched Retail Bliss Consulting to advise startup e-commerce Shopify retailers. And three years ago, she began a podcast, *Brave + Boss*, for women e-commerce entrepreneurs.

But Soomer is far from done and remains keen to mix her love of sustainability and business. Next up: start an angel investment fund that supports minority- and women-led businesses. "I want to help other purpose-driven businesses make a difference." ■

GETTING STARTED

KRISTI SOOMER'S 3 HELPFUL HINTS FOR STARTUPS

- 1. Market fit matters.** Spend time up front perfecting your product, Soomer says. "Too often, entrepreneurs launch too quickly. Quality matters. Research what you are doing and why it matters to a customer."
- 2. Don't rush it.** "I'm a proponent of starting slow, testing and learning," she says. "Start with one or two products, see if there's a fit, and if you can get traction then double down on what's working."
- 3. Stay close to your customers.** Put customers at the centre of everything you do, she advises. "Talk to them. They're the most valuable source of information, not just from a product development standpoint but on how you can improve operations and be a better brand."

Alumni Notes

1940s/1950s

1946

Donald Cameron, BCom, died on June 25 at age 97. Don spent his career working at Jones Heward and Company in Montreal, serving as president and deputy chairman. He was a director on many boards in Canada and the U.S., as well as a member of the Investment Committee at Queen's. Don is survived by his children, Donald, Bruce, and Jean, as well as his grandchildren and extended family.

1951

John "Jack" Carter, BCom, died on Oct. 6, 2019, at age 98. Born in China, to British expatriates, Jack attended boarding school and college in China before going on to serve in the Second World War with the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles in the Indian Army, before settling in Canada. After graduation, Jack joined Ford Motor Company, where he worked until his retirement. A devoted husband to Ruth (Switzer) for 70 years, Jack was a loving father and grandfather. In 2000, while recovering from a stroke, he wrote a book about his early days in China.

1960s

1963

David Ray Fairbairn, MBA, died on July 19 at age 82. Upon graduation, David became a stockbroker. Eventually his career led him to work in real estate and property management. He loved spending time on his family farm near Charlevoix, Que. David was a supporter of the arts and adored classical music and jazz. He played varsity hockey and football, and he coached the Queen's women's squash team. David is survived by his wife, Elizabeth; children Heather, John and Sarah; and his extended family.

1967

Thomas O'Neill, BCom, LLD'05, died on April 3 at the age of 75. Tom sat on Smith's Advisory Board and the Queen's University Board of Trustees. Beyond the university, Tom had an illustrious career, serving as CEO and chair of PwC Consulting, board chair for Scotiabank and Chair of BCE Inc. Tom was known for his longstanding efforts to advance women in the workplace. At PwC, he was responsible for corporate policy changes to benefit women, many of which were put in place long before being considered by other organizations.

1970s

1971

Doug Jordan, MBA, has shifted his career from executive coach and strategic consultant at AFS Consulting, to writing and publishing his own books through AFS Publishing. His latest book, *Travels With Myself, a Journal of Discovery and Transition*, narrates his struggles with grief, love and mental health following his wife Marlene's diagnosis with breast cancer and her passing in 2017. He hopes others will find meaning and understanding in the book for themselves.

1972



Ronald De Ré, BCom, died on Oct. 7, 2019, in Oshawa, Ont. Ron is survived by his longtime partner, Donna Warwick, and two sons, Jamie and

Lee. At a final gathering before his death, Ron's broad smile warmed the hearts of everyone present, just as it did throughout his life. Ron had a varied career but one constant was his love of music. This was evident at Queen's, where for two years he was the director of the Queen's brass band that enlivened Golden Gaels games at halftime.



Smith alumni elected to University Council

In July, five Smith alumni were elected to the University Council of Queen's.



Richard Baugh, MBA'14, senior manager, investments at Reserve Properties. As a member of the University Council, he says he wants to bring forward ideas “that can hopefully enhance the student body, the reputation of the school and strengthen the Queen's brand as one of inclusion.”



Abdul-Aziz Garuba, AMBA'12, director, cost transformation at RBC Capital Markets. He is also an advisory board member of the Queen's Black Alumni Chapter, president emeritus of the Association of Urban Financial Professionals and host of the Made To Lead podcast.



Kasmet Niyongabo, EMBA'20, Sc'11, manager, integrated planning and dynamic scheduling at Nutrien. Bursaries helped Kasmet obtain his engineering degree at Queen's. Today, as donors to the university, he and his wife help ensure others have the opportunity to enjoy the Queen's experience.



Precious Nyarko-Antwi, MIB'18, customer experience associate at TD. A fascination with cultural diversity spurred Precious to pursue her education in four different countries. These experiences gave her the opportunity to interact with people from different cultures and appreciate the beauty of what it means to be a global citizen.



Kofi Adow, EMBA'17, executive consultant, organizational development and change management at Plaster Group. On the University Council, he hopes to use his experience “to help grow our financial standing through local partnerships, quality, relevant thought leadership, and high alumni engagement.”

1973

Clare Dowson, BCom, died on June 19 in Oakwood, Ont., at age 70. Clare was a chartered accountant in Toronto for over 30 years before returning to Oakwood for retirement. He is survived by his nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

1976

Graham Gunter, BCom, died on June 13 in Napanee, Ont., at age 68. Graham was the owner of the Home Hardware in downtown Napanee for several years; he enjoyed serving customers at the store and the community. Graham is survived by children Karen, Michael and Kerriane Gunter, grandchildren and his extended family.

Dan O'Neill, MBA, died on May 17 at age 68. Dan spent his career working in the consumer packaged goods industry with SC Johnson, HJ Heinz and Campbell Soup. His career culminated when he became CEO of Molson Breweries, where he helped with the creation of the famous “My name is Joe, and I am Canadian” ad. He was a generous philanthropist as a donor to Canadian women's hockey, hospitals, Covenant House and more. He is survived by his wife, Lise; his children, D'Arcy, Patrick, and Jennifer; and grandchildren.

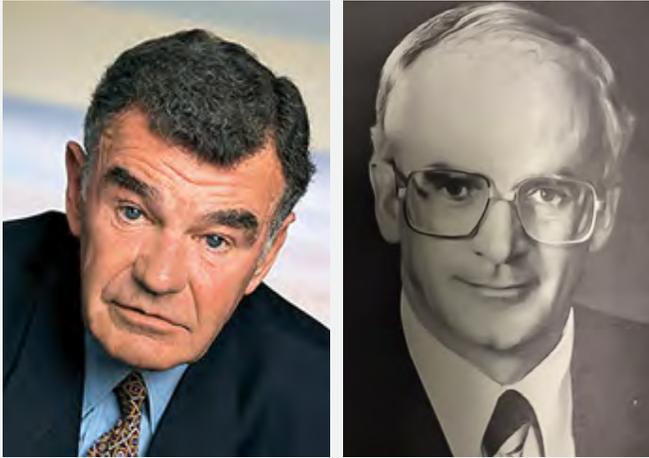


1978

Gia Steffensen, BCom, died on Jan. 21 at the age of 65. After immigrating to Canada from Denmark with his family as a child, Gia met his high school sweetheart, Jean (Kinney) Artsci'78, in Kingston. Gia and Jean raised two daughters, Karla and Britt. He was a loving “farfar” (Danish for grandpa) to his two grandchildren. Gia had a successful career in capital markets and pension management. He started work in Waterloo, Ont., and moved to Toronto after Legg Mason acquired his firm, where Gia took on the role of chief investment officer until his retirement. Gia had a passion for golf, travel and his Danish heritage. He will be remembered

for his dry sense of humour, quick wit and his generous and compassionate spirit. Gia volunteered at Smith and Queen's. He lent his money management expertise as a member of the Queen's Pension Plan Committee, QUIC Advisory Board and Campaign Cabinet. He was a Dare to Dream donor and co-led two historical class campaigns for his 30th and 40th reunions. During his class 40th reunion, he helped raise a total of more than \$1.7 million to support student financial aid, specifically supporting students who are the first of their family to attend a post-secondary institution.

Remembering John Gordon and Bruce Buchan



John Gordon (left) and Bruce Buchan.

The Smith community lost two important members this past spring: former dean **John Gordon** and **Bruce Buchan**, a professor who co-wrote the definitive history of the school.

John Gordon, MBA'63, died in April at the age of 85. He led the school from 1978 to 1988. During that time, he revived Smith's Advisory Council, made up of CEOs and top leaders from business and government to advise the school. He also laid the groundwork for what would become the Executive MBA programs.

As dean, Gordon made relationships with the wider business community a priority (seeing it as a win-win for business and education) and encouraged students inside the classroom and beyond it. Two longstanding institutions run by the Commerce Society started under Gordon: QBET (the Queen's Conference on the Business Environment Today) and ICBC (the Inter-Collegiate Business Competition).

William Cannon, a fellow faculty member, remembers Gordon as someone continuously positive and a "cheerleader" for the business school and Queen's. "He was always upbeat and optimistic about the future and always expected to find a solution."

Bruce Buchan, professor emeritus, died in June at the age of 87. An outgoing and friendly personality known for his winning smile, Buchan was a favourite with students. In 1988, he received the Commerce Society's Teaching Excellence Award, and in 2009 he was honoured for his 40 years of teaching.

Buchan had a passion for Golden Gaels football and business history. In 1999, he and Merv Daub (also a professor emeritus at Smith), published *Getting Down to Business*, an in-depth history of Queen's School of Business.

"Bruce Buchan's courses appealed to a lot of business students," recalls professor emeritus and former associate dean, Brent Gallupe. "He taught them that business is about more than just accounting and marketing—it's about history and the lessons to be learned from it. The students who took his courses really enjoyed them."

1979

Marabeth Sharp, BCom, died on Feb. 22 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., at age 63. After graduating, Marabeth began a career in accounting, but stepped away once her daughter Laura was born. Marabeth used her accounting skills as a board member and treasurer of the Art Gallery of Algoma and as a board member, treasurer and president of the YMCA. She is survived by her husband, Daniel, and her children Laura and Michael.

J. Douglas Smith, MBA, let us know that he retired from being a professional engineer and is now relaxing and living in Palm Desert, Calif.



1980s

1980

Nancy Powis, BCom, died on June 10 in Port Moody, B.C., at age 62. She moved from Toronto to Tofino, B.C., a decade ago. She spent her summers at a family compound in Knowlton, Que., and at her island on Georgian Bay in Ontario, where she enjoyed painting. Nancy is survived by her brothers, Tim and Charles, her many cousins, nieces, nephews and godchildren.

1981

Jeffrey Anderson, BCom, died on Jan. 25. After graduation, Jeff embarked on a career in finance in Toronto and Pittsburgh, eventually moving to Chicago and reinventing his career as a senior solutions engineer in the telecom industry. Jeff enjoyed a full life filled with family, friends, travel, sport and a love of the outdoors. Jeff was an avid antique enthusiast. He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Alisa, and children Meredith, Ben and Mac.



1982

Eric Windeler, BCom, and his organization Jack.org, have received global recognition for their work in youth mental health. Be There, an initiative of Jack.org, won two Webby Awards, recognizing it as the top health website in the world. Hosted at BeThere.org, the educational tool helps young people recognize when a peer is struggling with mental health and shows how to provide support. Be There was created after a survey of Canadian youth showed that while 83 per cent said they have supported a friend struggling with mental health, only 39 per cent felt they were confident to offer the support needed. "We set about creating an evidence-based, interactive resource that was easy to understand and truly engaging" says Eric. Jack.org, a national charity with 46 staff, 3,000 youth volunteers, and activities all across Canada, was founded by Eric and his wife, Sandra Hanington, after losing their son Jack, a Queen's student, to suicide.

1987

James Duncan Sergeant, BCom, died on April 6 in Yellowknife at age 55. After graduating, James began a career in accounting in Kingston. He then moved to the Canadian North where he worked in Yellowknife, Fort Chipewyan, Alta., Wrigley and Fort Simpson, NWT. He retired after working for the Northwest Territories government. James is survived by his wife, Kathleen; siblings Tom and Jessica; and his extended family.

Wendy Rintoul, BCom

has launched Welcome Home Transitions where she guides families and seniors to better retirement living decisions in Oakville, Burlington and Mississauga in Ontario. Her company is focused on senior housing and home-care search services as well as senior relocation management. Welcome Home Transitions was a finalist in the Halton Region small business startup competition in February. welcomehometransitions.ca



Walter Speckert, MBA, died on July 24 at age 60 from cancer. After graduating, Walter spent 25 years at the Bank of Canada. He was a devoted volunteer with Cystic Fibrosis Canada. He is survived by his wife, Mary-Judith; his children, Tom and Kaitlyn; brother Erwin; and his extended family members.

1990s

1991

Graham Bennett, MBA, let us know that he has moved from North Carolina to Southsea on the U.K.'s south coast. He continues to remotely manage business and professional-services contracts for Avaya Inc. He is excited to be working in the U.K. and can be contacted at bennettgts@aol.com.

1992

Frances McDonald, BCom, died on May 26 in Toronto at age 49 from cancer. After graduation, Frances began a career in human resources, working for Rogers, TD Canada Trust, Manulife, Ontario Lottery and Gaming and Canadian Tire. Frances had a passion for connecting with people, often paddleboarding from cottage to cottage to say hello to her friends on Mazinaw Lake in Eastern Ontario. Frances is survived by her husband, Jay Howard; children, Christopher, Andrew and Erin; and siblings Sarah and Heather.

1995



George Rossolatos, BCom, has been named Fellow of CPA Ontario (FCPA). George leads the Canadian Business Growth

Fund (CBGF), a \$545-million fund that invests in growing Canadian companies.

Chris Gear, BCom, Law'98, was promoted to assistant general manager and chief legal officer of the Vancouver Canucks. Chris has spent the past 10 years on the organization's executive team, having joined the NHL team first as general counsel. He is responsible for player contract negotiations, the club's AHL affiliation with the Utica Comets and the team's business operations.

1996



Michelle Dunstan, BCom, was appointed global head of responsible investing for AllianceBernstein LP, a global investment-management firm, in February. Michelle

joined the firm in 2004 as a portfolio manager and research analyst. In her new role, Michelle works to integrate responsible investing into all portfolio decisions while building AB's platform of "Portfolios with Purpose", which has explicit ESG mandates and goals. Michelle lives in New York City with her husband, **Steven Goldbach, BCom'96**, and six-year old daughter Grayson.

Valerie Gillis, BCom, was named Fellow of CPA Ontario (FCPA). As SVP finance, controller and chief accountant at TD Bank Group, Valerie is responsible for



a number of impactful change projects, specialty accounting, the global controls office and Women in Leadership initiatives. Outside of work, one of Valerie's passions is sailing. Last year, she and her daughter visited Queen's and Kingston for the Fall CORK Regatta.

1997

Aisha Umar, EMBA, died on Nov. 23, 2019, in Toronto after a battle with cancer. She is survived by her daughter, Yasmin, and parents, Kishwar and Pervez. After immigrating with her family to Canada at the age of three, Aisha lived in Montreal, Calgary and Toronto. Aisha spent her career as a technology executive, at IBM, Microsoft, AT&T and D2L. Aisha will be remembered for her zest for life and the encouragement and support she provided to those around her.

1998

Jeremy Estabrooks, BCom, and his wife, Amanda, are thrilled to announce the birth of their son, Julian Thomas, on July 30 in New York City. Jeremy says that Julian is already much adored by his sisters, Amelia and Rosie.



1999

Christine Keeling, EMBA, launched Long Haul Spa in 2018 in Brisbane, Australia after spending five years commuting between Canada and Australia as a technology executive. A year later, Long Haul Spa was listed with Singapore Airlines and won best beauty product in the DFNI Asia Pacific Awards for Travel Retail Excellence. It's also shortlisted for the 2020 Travel Retail Awards and the 2020 Frontier Awards for Best New Beauty Brand. While COVID-19 has created challenges, Chris told us that she has used the time to re-evaluate and identify new products to bring to the market, including luxury PPE kits and home-use sizes of her travel skincare range. She adds that she looks forward to the day she can get on a flight back to Canada to see family and friends.



Live around the world!

Coronavirus may have made social distancing a thing, but our alumni still connected with one another during the pandemic. On June 23, the first-ever virtual SmithConnect Live took place, with students and alumni from around the world getting together for an evening of networking, entertainment and surprise guests. Hosted by bestselling author Neil Pasricha, BCom'02, and Associate Dean Elspeth Murray, the interactive event included a live performance by Joel Plaskett, cocktail-making and Q&A sessions with Stephen Smith and Olympian Erica Wiebe, EMBAA'22, plus over 60 breakout rooms, experiences and more, creating an unforgettable evening for all.



Top 25 Inspirational Women

Two Smith alumni were named to *Canadian SME* magazine's list of Top 25 Inspirational Women. **Eva Wong, BCom'00**, and **Michele Romanow, MBA'08**, were both recognized for their entrepreneurial success and for empowering women to follow in their footsteps. Eva is co-founder and COO at fintech Borrowell. Michele is one of the stars of CBC's *Dragons' Den*, co-founded Snapsaves and Buytopia, and today runs the venture-capital firm Clearbanc.

2000s

2004

Mika (Reeve) Bathurst, BCom, and her husband, Jonathan, welcomed their son, Jake William, on January 3. Big sister Norah was delighted with his arrival. The family lives in Ottawa.



Hayley (Millard) Becker, BCom, recently launched her own business, Mirams Becker, a retained health-care executive-search firm, following a successful career building a health-care practice within a global firm. She is dedicated to partnering with clients to recruit top talent for both board and executive-level positions. Hayley lives in Toronto with her husband, Jamie Becker, Artsci'04, and their two children, Addison and Finley. Hayley looks forward to connecting with fellow alumni and can be reached at hayley@miramsbecker.com

2005

Joanna Griffiths, BCom, was named to the Top 25 Women of Influence list for 2020. The founder and CEO of Knixwear was recognized for creating the Life After Birth project, a travelling gallery that highlights women's postpartum journeys. The initiative was designed to change the narrative of the postpartum experience, encouraging honesty, acknowledgement and support. The resulting photo exhibit first opened in New York in August 2019, and subsequently visited Toronto and Los Angeles.

2010s

2010

Mustafa Khan, MBA, and his family of five recently moved to Dubai to be closer to their extended family, after 12 years in Canada. Having been in investment consulting, initially with BNY Mellon and then Mercer, Mustafa is now with a local bank and enjoying the warmer climate of Dubai.

Manny Padda, AMBA, joined Junior Achievement of B.C. (JABC) in a volunteer capacity as the new JABC ambassador in March. In this role, Manny represents JABC across the province, increasing awareness of the organization and advocating for the educational needs of youth in British Columbia.

2011



Roland Walters, AMBA, was appointed global director, pricing and revenue strategy, at Finning International.

Roland manages a team focused on driving gross profit, financial analytics, corporate strategy, business transformation and data-driven decision-making.



Arthur Liu and **Travis Ratnam**, both **MBA**, founders of edtech-provider Knowledgehook, partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Education in May, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, to deploy the company's remote-learning platform across all 72 school districts in the province. The platform, called Knowledgehook Open Access, helped students from grades 3 through 10 to continue their math education while at home.

Sahar Jamal, BCom, let us know that she has started a social enterprise called Maziwa, based in Nairobi, Kenya. She says that Maziwa has designed the only breast pump specifically tailored to working mothers in developing markets.



Student-alumni connections

The tenth annual Student Alumni Meet-Ups event took place Feb. 28 in Toronto. Led by student alumni ambassadors Michaela Bodis, BCom'20, and Angelina Tang, Comm'22, it was a chance for students to network with prominent Smith alumni from various industries.

2012

Thomas (Tom) Rutherford, EMBA, died on August 2 at age 62 of cancer. Tom grew up, in Ottawa and had a long career in banking, working at Canada Trust, Canada Permanent, and Royal Trust. He was proud of returning to school for his EMBA at Smith. In 2013, he moved to Vancouver. He is survived by his sister, Jane, and brother, Kelly, as well as nephews and nieces.

— **JP Gladu, EMBA**, began his new role as CEO of Fort McMurray, Alta.-based Bouchier Group, Alberta's largest Indigenous-owned, integrated site-service company, in April. JP brings extensive experience in the natural resource sector to the role, and most recently served as CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

2013

Alex Cardenas, EMBA, was elected president of the Northwest chapter of the American Association of Physicians in Medicine. The chapter covers six states: Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alaska and Hawaii. Alex's term as president runs to 2024.

Ainos Ngadya, MFin, moved to Africa on an assignment to build solar farms across Zimbabwe, Botswana and Swaziland. He has since constructed 25-megawatt solar plants such as the one below. "Such initiatives help to provide clean-energy access to millions of rural Africans who are [currently] relying on firewood and health-hazardous paraffin," Ainos says.



2014

Devon Bolton, EMBA, died in December 2019. As a gifted young filmmaker, he directed several acclaimed short films alongside his sister Kirsten. Devon continued his career as a commercial director, working with agencies in Canada and the U.S., before becoming a creative and marketing adviser. After he, **Laurel Walzak, EMBA'14**, and **Ron Bettin, EMBA'14**, met in the EMBA program, they became colleagues, co-founding FitNeff.

Bhairav Mehta, EMBA, joined Microsoft as the director of data science in the Azure operating system and security organization. He also continues to work at Erudition Inc., a company he founded in 2018, which offers training and consulting in cloud computing, big data, data science, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

Jordan Speakman, AMBA, has rejoined the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, where he is helping Canadian companies pursue global opportunities. He's based in Calgary.



2015

Connie Lo, BCom, recently launched a rebranding of her natural skincare company to Three Ships. The company's mission "is

to make beauty products 100 per cent natural and 100 per cent affordable," Connie says. Three Ships is carried in 400-plus stores across North America and will soon launch in another 450 stores in the U.S. threeshipsbeauty.com



Mathew Duffy, MMA, reports that he recently joined Hitachi Solutions to lead the data and analytics consulting

practice for Canada. He is responsible for bringing the best data engineering, business intelligence, machine learning and analytics strategy capabilities to his clients.

2016

Stephanie McCall, BCom, and **Jeffrey McFarland, BCom'14**, were married on Sept. 28, 2019. They met on Homecoming weekend in 2014. The McFarlands let us know that there were many fellow Queen's alumni in their wedding party and among the guests.

Women in Capital Markets

In September, four alumni were selected to take part in a prestigious annual leadership program run by Women in Capital Markets—the 2020 Emerging Leaders Award Program, an eight-month initiative designed to support the professional development and retention of mid-career women with five to 10 years of capital markets experience.

The Smith alumni taking part in the program are:

Jenna Dicks, BCom'12, GDA'12

Associate director, Scotiabank Global Banking Markets

Brittany Owens, BCom'08, MFin'20

Associate director, Scotiabank Global Banking Markets

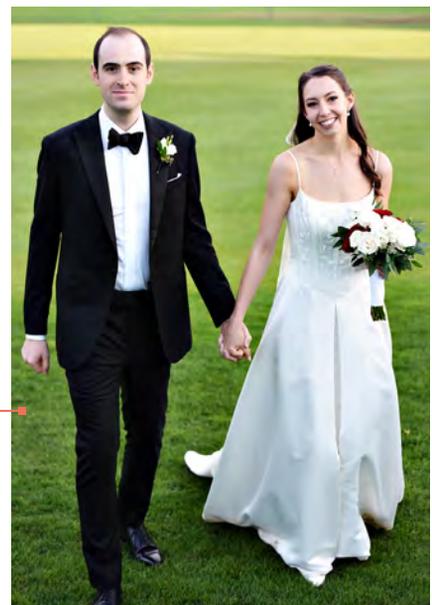
Christiane (Tia) Peric, BCom'15,

Artsci'15

Director, debt capital markets, global investment banking, CIBC Capital Markets

Farnaz Shahed, MBA'09

Vice-president, institutional derivative solutions, RBC Capital Markets



Jenelle Peterson, AMBA, has launched The Wild | Life Outdoor Adventures. The company delivers monthly themed kits that contain tools and toys, activity cards, a nature-inspired craft, and a custom merit pin. With a range of age-appropriate activities designed in partnership with academic subject-matter experts to mirror Canadian curricula, The Wild | Life kits teach real-life skills, challenge kids, and allow them to build confidence and a lifelong relationship with nature. Since launching in March, kits have been shipped across seven provinces in Canada, and the company continues to grow. jointhewildlife.ca

2017

Malay Upadhyay, BCom, recently authored the AI textbook, *Artificial Intelligence Management: Your go-to guide to successfully use & manage AI at work without having to code*. The book offers a crash course of essential STEM skills and prepares students to use artificial intelligence at work.

Alumni Awards 2020

Two Smith alumni who have made significant contributions to the alumni community were recognized by the Queen's University Alumni Association.

2018

Viktória Csánicz, MMIE, has joined tourism organization Attractions Victoria as executive director. Having moved west from Toronto, Viktória's focus is on re-invigorating the organization's brand, as well as promoting the city itself to locals and tourists. In May, she also launched her own videography company, the Coast Break Collective, alongside two other videographers. "We focus on creating an impact on our clients' businesses and innovation through storytelling," she says. "We're primarily in B.C., but quickly growing." Viktória says she started her videography career as a drone pilot a year ago "as a side hustle and quickly learned to love all aspects of creating a video."

Orley Pacheco, EMBAA, was recently honoured by the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA) with the Top Leader Under 40 Award. Orley is a wealth manager at ARS Capital Advisors in New York. He served with the United States Marine Corps and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Orley is a volunteer with ALPFA and with the Financial Planning Association. He says that he lives in New York City with his beloved Maggie and their daughter, Maia. orleypacheco.com



2019

Marina Di Pancrazio, EMBA, has joined the Just for Laughs Group as its first chief content revenue officer, after spending over a decade at Disney. In her new role, Marina is in charge of expanding the TV-content business worldwide through strategic alliances and partnerships with bands, producers, streaming platforms and broadcasters. Marina is shown in this photo on a trip that she took to Fogo Island in Newfoundland last year.

Allan McGavin, BCom'08, Law'12, was the recipient of the 2020 Marsha Lampman Volunteer Award. Since 2013, Allan has volunteered on the executive committee of the Vancouver Alumni Branch, serving four years as branch president. Under his leadership, the Vancouver Branch launched a mentorship program, in 2017, connecting recent graduates with Queen's alumni who are established in their fields.

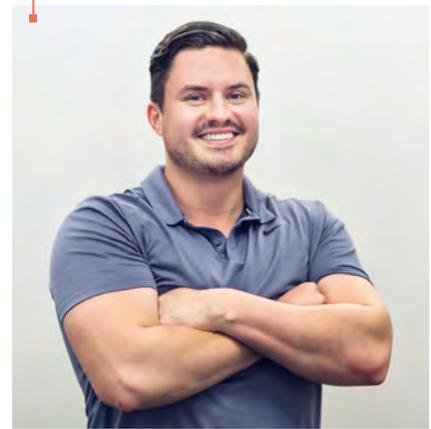
Idrees Ali, BCom'13, received the One to Watch Award, presented annually to a graduate of the past 10 years who is making significant contributions to their field of endeavour, setting an example for future Queen's alumni to follow. Since graduating, Idrees has reported on issues such as the death threats faced by journalists in Pakistan. Ali is currently the national security correspondent covering the Pentagon at the Reuters News Agency in Washington, D.C.

Graduates of the last decade

GOLD is a unique event that brings together Commerce alumni who graduated in the last 10 years. This year's event, held virtually on June 18, featured a panel of alumni discussing their moments of pivot, patience, and perseverance: Clockwise from top: Alexandra Sifton, BCom'09; Matthew Price, BCom'09; Cyrus Symoom, BCom'15 (the moderator); Jeffrey Fenton, BCom'13; and Lulu Liang, BCom'14, Artsci'14.



Chipewyan “Chip” McCrimmon, MMIE, was accepted into NEXT Canada’s Next 36 program in Toronto. The program is comprised of 36 entrepreneurs mentored by successful business leaders. Chip’s company, HeroHub, is a charitable ecosystem that connects individuals to charities and non-profits in order to create greater social impact. He also recently launched Falc0n-X, which helps landfills reduce their pollution by providing an add-on technology that helps capture, separate, and purify their greenhouse-gas emissions.



Mustafa Ansari, MMIE, launched a non-profit called The Expats Pakistan, which raises funds in Canada and directs them

into projects in rural Pakistan that he says empower local people and provide them with financial independence. The organization also provides COVID relief packages. “This pandemic presented a huge challenge,” he says. “But thankfully, with everyone’s support, I converted it into an opportunity for us, the expats of Pakistan, to give back, do our part and help our community back home.” www.expatspakistan.org.

Dan Gallagher, EMBA, has been promoted to COO of Mikisew Group of Companies. In this role, he works to increase awareness of Indigenous participation in the responsible development of Alberta’s resources, including the need to create opportunity, employment, and wealth for the Indigenous and local community.

Mohamad Sibai, MMIE, is the founder and CEO of Autoly Inc. Autoly is a mobile app for car dealers, private vehicle buyers and sellers as well as owners. “It’s the single app that any buyer,



seller or owner needs,” Mohamad says. With over 20 years of global experience in the information technology industry, Mohamad founded Autoly in 2018 during his time at Smith. Much of Autoly’s development happened with support from the MMIE program. Autoly secured its first seed funding in April, and Mohamad says the firm is growing rapidly, with an official launch later this year.





School of Rock

Justin Tessier, MMIE'20, had a big year. He earned his master's degree, of course. Then came that Juno Award nomination.

By Chris Powell

It might not be Phil Collins crossing the Atlantic in one day, performing in London and Philadelphia for Live Aid, but The Blue Stones' March 12 gig in Winnipeg might set an informal Canadian touring record for most travel for a single gig.

Following a two-day, 2,228-kilometre trek from Kingston, band members Tarek Jafar and Justin Tessier had just finished sound check at The Park Theatre in Winnipeg when they got a message from their manager. COVID-19 had officially arrived in North America, and just like that, a planned run of Western Canada dates was over.

"We had to tuck tail and drive two days back [to Ontario]," says Tessier, who recently completed his Master of Management Innovation & Entrepreneurship (MMIE) degree. "Four days driving for one show."

In truth, it was a rare bit of bad luck in what had been an otherwise charmed year for The Blue Stones. The 10-year-old Windsor, Ont. band had just completed a successful run of dates in Europe and the U.S., while also picking up a Juno Award nomination for Breakthrough Group of the Year. (The award ultimately went to Halifax alt-pop band Neon Dreams.)

The band had also finished the followup to their 2018 debut LP *Black Holes* in January, with Tessier describing the latest effort as "a lot more in your face and punchy" when compared with the "spacier vibe" of their earlier release.

Aided by a quirky video, their single "Shakin' Off the Rust" garnered significant airplay (No. 1 and No. 5 on the Canadian and American Active Rock radio charts, respectively, and nearly

eight million streams on Spotify). Guitar-based alt-rock might have lost some of its cultural cachet in recent years, but the song's snarling central riff is a testament to the still-formidable power of amplified wood and wires aided by the steady thump of a bass drum.

The Blue Stones' guitar-and-drums configuration has drawn inevitable comparisons to other bass-less duos like The Black Keys and White Stripes. But Tessier (on drums, with Jafar on guitar) says it wasn't those bands' sound as much as their composition that inspired the Canadian duo. "Part of the big thing with [those bands] is that they proved that it was possible to just do it with two people," he says.

For Tessier, one of the positive results of the unplanned break from the road was that it gave him extra time to concentrate on his studies at Smith. While many people think that being a recording artist is an instant path to wealth and fame, Tessier knows all too well that the day-to-day life of a working band is not a road to riches. Artists only see a paltry amount of the billions of dollars generated each year by the music industry. Inspired by an MMIE program lesson—"to build ventures as solutions to deep problems"—Tessier has decided to develop a solution to low artist income. His venture, called Outpost, aims to provide fair funding for musicians. A launch is planned this fall.

"You always have one foot out the door, just waiting to go on to the next thing," he says of the life of a touring musician. "This is the longest number of consecutive nights I've slept in my own bed in five years."

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A close-up portrait of Mark Saldanha, a young man with dark, curly hair and a beard, smiling warmly. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a red and black striped tie. The background is a dark, textured grey.

MY SMITH EXPERIENCE

MARK SALDANHA MBA'21

Hometown: Halifax

Current job: Neuroscience student/researcher, founder of Greater Love Canada, a non-profit that helps the homeless.

I enrolled in the MBA program because there is a great overlap between social impact and business. The two are not mutually exclusive. I want to use the skills I've gained to drive impact on a global level.

One thing that challenged me at Smith: You won't be good at everything. You will have bad coffee chats, bad interviews. It's easy to compare yourself to your classmates. Pushing through this will make you stronger.

An MBA highlight was working late nights with my incredible team on a significant deliverable. Amidst the panic and stress, there was profound beauty in playing off each other's strengths to create a masterpiece.

A Smith professor who inspired me: Len Anderson (financial accounting). He went above and beyond to engage his students and teach us the beauty of a sometimes easily dismissed subject.

My fav business book: *The Ideal Team Player* by Patrick Lencioni

The best business advice I ever got: Comparison is the thief of joy. Do what makes you come alive, and don't worry about what others are doing.