

STUDYING
IN ASIAAwards
make it
possible

WILLIAM MBAHO

A growing number of Canadians are coalescing around the need to be more proactive in preparing our young people to be effective and successful in dealing with Asia, says an expert at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

"Asia is home to 60 per cent of global population and two of the world's three largest economies (China and Japan)," said Erin Williams, a manager responsible for education programming.

"Less than one per cent of Canada's post-secondary students do some kind of for-credit program in Asia, and while a high percentage say funding is a big challenge, our non-scientific feedback from B.C. students suggests that when it comes to Asia, there are other barriers, including a lack of language skills, the 'foreignness' of the place, and nobody is really encouraging them to study in Asia."

There is progress being made, she added.

The Student Exchange and Mobility Award encourages B.C. public and independent school students to go abroad and to develop intercultural skills and competencies in support of the B.C. curriculum. There are 14 to 28 awards offered annually, and each award is \$5,000 to \$10,000.

"Programs like this help get Asia on the mental maps of Canadians at a much younger age," said Williams.

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REACHING FOR
THE STARS

British Columbia's technical schools are producing alumni who are doing remarkable things, *Robin Brunet* writes.

Creating special sports gear for wheelchair athletes and building a functional lunar lander seem like projects best suited for high-tech engineers.

In fact, they are the handiwork of technical school alumni and just two examples of the innovative spirit that B.C.'s learning institutions can be credited for fostering.

Although Laura Hutchison, a fashion and technology graduate from Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), says she isn't a big sports fan, meeting with wheelchair athletes compelled her and KPU products design graduate Jayme Williams to create special cooling vests used by Canada's national wheelchair rugby team during the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio this past summer.

Williams, 27, explains that athletes with spinal cord injuries often overheat because they have difficulty controlling their body temperature.

"We were motivated to improve the design of ice vests currently available for other sports," he says. "My strength is product design — firefighter harnesses, stretchers, and such — and Laura's is garment manufacturing, so it was a great fit."

Hutchison, also 27, adds, "We could have easily been intimidated, but the encouragement we received from the athletes made us confident we could push through the challenges."

The work wasn't easy: Williams and Hutchison spent two years developing eight vests that would cool the paraplegic athletes as they competed for Canada. This included studying the athletes at the 2015 Parapan Am Games in Toronto, and even flying to Vietnam to see how cooling technology was developed.

That trip led them to create a vest with product phase change materials that absorb and release thermal energy during the process of melting and freezing, specifically tailored for wheelchair use.

Williams, who recently launched a design consultancy, foresees unlimited opportunities for the vest.

"We're hoping that other adaptive sports organizations will be interested in using them," he says.

Over at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, Sergei Dobrianski and his brother Andrei are building a spacecraft that will journey to the moon and back. The



Alex Dobrianski and his son Sergei set their sights on outer space. Sergei and brother Andrei Dobrianski are working at the BCIT Applied Research facility as part of a team involved in the \$30-million Google Lunar Xprize.

team is currently working out of the BCIT Applied Research facility.

Sergei, who studied computer systems technology in 2011 and 2012, and Andrei, who earned an electrical and computer engineering diploma in 2006, are the only Canadian members of the 16 teams still in the running for the \$30-million Google Lunar Xprize, a contest that challenges privately funded innovators to build a robotic spacecraft, launch it to the moon, land it, have it travel 500 metres, and transmit high-definition video and images back to earth.

The team started work in their father's Vancouver home and has since built a two-wheeled rover with a communications system.

They have until the end of this year to announce a verified launch contract, which will signify they're ready to launch.

Sergei, a computer programmer and space enthusiast, recently told sfuhockey.com, "Our intentions are not for the prize, our intentions are to get a foothold and make sure that Canada has that foothold for generations."

While the Dobrianskis aim for the stars, another KPU graduate is finding fortune right here on earth.

Harpreet Bains is one of three alumni behind My Green Space, which recently became available in the Canadian and U.S. App Store.

Developed by Michael Moll, Harp Dhinsa and Bains, My Green Space

is a free digital garden planner that helps people create their own garden anywhere, from an urban community garden plot to the window ledge of a 20-storey highrise.

Bains, who graduated from KPU with a degree in psychology, says, "I believe that every garden makes a difference; it brings us one step closer to creating a sustainable local food system."

Like the Dobrianskis and Williams and Hutchison, Bains hopes her innovative spirit will make a long-lasting positive impact.

"Urban gardening is already on the rise, people want to be connected to their food, eating real fresh food again, knowing where it comes from," she says.

Reduce school stress by setting up a budget



Creating a budget is as simple as tracking money coming in and going out.

Going to university or college is an exciting time. It's also expensive, especially if you're living on your own for the first time.

Managing studies and your money at the same time can be overwhelming. But the best thing to do is make a budget and stick to it.

As a student, you might be adjusting to a new city.

You have exams, roommates, and a social life to juggle. Maybe you have a part-time job. No matter how busy it gets, make time to create a budget. It will reduce your stress in the long run and start you on a good financial path. In 2013 and 2014, the average annual cost of tuition at a Canadian university

was \$5,772, according to Statistics Canada. Books and materials can add as much as \$800 to \$1,000 per year.

It's a big investment, but research shows that students who organize their spending are more likely to avoid a heavy debt load.

If you don't have a budget, you're not alone.

In fact, Canadians aged 18 to 24 are the least likely to have one. Yet 93 per cent of people with a budget stay with it most of the time.

Creating a budget is as simple as tracking money coming in and going out. It will help you to figure out the difference between what you need versus what you want — and

what you can afford. The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada has online tools like a budget tool, tips, and a student worksheet that's easy to use.

"A budget is the best way to deal with the No. 1 stressor: money," advises Jane Rooney, Canada's financial literacy leader.

Her top tips include reviewing it regularly as life changes, setting up a spending plan for student loan money over the semester, and planning for unexpected costs such as computer repairs or buying books that weren't on the list.

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