

THE UNITER

30



Two of my friends, both 27, were recently discussing how much people accomplish by the time they're 30 years old.

Because of things like job-hopping, delayed marriage and loan debt, it's taking longer than ever for young people to transition to adulthood and "the real world."

Often, if you're doing big things in life, you're only getting started when you hit 30, they concluded.

But if the people included in *The Uniter 30* are any indication, you can accomplish a lot in your first three decades of life.

The goal for this piece was to feature, in no particular order, 30 Manitobans who are 30 years old or younger who are making a difference and impacting their community in some way, or who are outstanding in their field – whatever that field may be.

There are some people on this list that you will have read about before in *The Uniter* or another publication, but our hope is that the majority of these faces will be new to you.

We want to showcase the good work a variety of young people are doing in this province.

The list includes activists, entrepreneurs, community workers, visual artists, athletes, musicians, journalists, bloggers, farmers, actors, comedians, aspiring politicians and more. They are native Manitobans or people who have decided to call the province home.

They were chosen by *Uniter* staff based on conversations with friends, family and various community organizations.

If the list shows anything, it's that good things can happen when you follow your passions and live out your beliefs.

The people on the list have affected governmental legislation and policy for the better, created successful businesses and respected blogs, made important films, written hit songs and more – and they're just like you and me.

And that's why they're *The Uniter 30*.

AARON EPP
MANAGING EDITOR



This issue of *The Uniter* has four different covers, each photographed by photo editor Cindy Titus. Clockwise from top left, they feature: Robert Galston, Shaneen Robinson, Channing Lavallee, Dan Huen, Tim Gray, Anneliese Schoppe, Jeffrey Vallis, Jamil Mahmood, Alexa Dirks, Jamie Suppes and Muuxi Adam.



COURTESY J. NEUFELD

The Activist for Africa

At only 29 years old, Josiah Neufeld is making a huge impact on the lives of children in the Eastern Africa republic of Burundi.

Born in Burkina Faso, today Neufeld works in Winnipeg as a journalist. In 2008, he founded Canadians Enabling the Education and Development of African Youth (CEEDAY).

CEEDAY is partnered with BEEDAY (Burundians Enabling the Education and Development of African Youth), located in Mugimbu, Burundi. The two groups collaborate to address issues in Mugimbu as they struggle to recover from Burundi's recent war.

Their partnership is directed at orphans and war-affected children under the premise that helping an entire community, rather than an individual, is the best way to effect change.

"We talked to the community in Burundi, found out what their needs were ... and made a plan of action for what the community needed and how we were going to develop it," he says.

Under Neufeld's direction, CEEDAY has provided funding for families who take children in need into their homes to cover food, medical and school expenses.

A resource centre is currently under

Josiah Neufeld

construction to house children who have not yet been placed in a home. Neufeld recently traveled to Burundi and saw incredible progress.

Having a project like the resource centre has encouraged members of the community to choose proactive projects over a life of violence, which makes Neufeld hopeful for Burundi's future.

"Community transformation is a long process ... I think there's a lot of positive momentum in the community," he says. "There's hope that things will improve."

-CHLOE REW

Tim Gray and Dan Huen

Dan Huen says comedy excites him like a woman's touch – that's how he knows he has found his passion in life.

If you've ever sauntered down to Comedy at the Cavern on a Sunday night or ventured to Stand-up at the Standard on a Thursday, you've probably seen Huen and Tim Gray perform a gig or two. And you've probably taken notice – together, the 23-year-olds light up the crowd.

"I met Dan in 2006 when we were both cast in the Black Hole Theatre Company mainstage show," Gray says. "He'd always be entertaining the cast backstage during the show and our similar comedic instincts binded our friendship."

It was Gray who convinced Huen to try stand-up for the very first time.

"One night ... Tim Gray put me on the bill for a stand-up show he wanted to host and I ended up putting together a story about how I drank paint by accident as a kid," Huen remembers. "The show was fun and nerve-wracking, but

ended up igniting the inner comic in me. I've been doing regular stand-up and improv since."

The pair teamed up to create The Gray Area of Comedy, a radio comedy show by comedians for fellow comedy enthusiasts.

Together they wrote, recorded and edited 30 half-hour episodes, two one-hour specials and ended the run with a three-and-a-half hour New Year's Eve special.

The show was cancelled, but their comedy is constantly expanding.

Gray says that in the near future you can expect to see collaborations with other sketch artists in Winnipeg and a new sketch, Baby Diaper Models.

As for Huen, he is excited to announce a television contract with Shaw TV for a sketch comedy show called WTF – a.k.a. the Week Thus Far – a late-night show featuring guests and comedy.

-LAUREN PARSONS

The Comedic Bromance



COURTESY GRAY & HUEN

The Nightlife Connoisseur



HANNAH PRATT

Stephen Hua

Flashing lights, pulsing beats and thousands of bodies moving on the dance floor: this is the atmosphere Stephen Hua continues to create for Winnipeg's nightlife.

Owner of Soundwave Entertainment and Sound Republic, the man is known for promoting events and bringing world famous party-starters like DJ Armin Van Buuren, Flo Rida, MSTRKRFT and DJ Tiësto to Winnipeg.

But the 30-year-old is just getting started.

"I'm working on doing more large-scale concerts and events all across Canada," he says. "In 2011, outside of promoting events, people can expect me to get more involved with restaurants and lounges, as well as at least one more nightclub project."

Aside from just promoting, Hua also owns three nightclubs in the city: Republic, Mystique and RockBar. He will also be the owner of the forthcoming Fame, Winnipeg's largest LGBT* night club.

Outside of the club scene, Hua recently opened IFUKU, a clothing boutique in Osborne Village, and will soon be opening a 24-hour restaurant in the Exchange District.

With a solid resumé and great connections, Hua has done it all – almost.

"I'm definitely considering politics if I know I can make more of a difference as mayor than being an entrepreneur," he says. "I guess I can be both, but I still have to take much more serious look into everything."

-LAUREN PARSONS

Joel Marion

The Globe-Trotter

After travelling the world, Joel Marion is now helping other youth do the same.

At 29, he is the executive coordinator of the University of Winnipeg's Global College, which runs the human rights and global studies program.

Marion also sits on the board of the Winnipeg branch of the Canadian International Council, a non-partisan nationwide research council established to strengthen Canada's foreign policy.

After he graduated from the University of Winnipeg with a double honours degree in conflict resolution and politics, human rights work was a natural fit.

However, it was his participation in 24 Hour Exile, an event that aimed to recreate the experiences of refugees, that spurred his interest into action. In 2006, he traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo as an election observer in their first democratic election, an experience that gave him a new appreciation of the process of democratic development.

Marion's firsthand experience is extensive, having traveled internationally with Canada World Youth and again after receiving the Douglas W. Leatherdale Global Citizen Internship.

He also received the Simons Foundation Internship and the Lloyd Axworthy Scholarship in politics.

Additionally, Marion earned a Masters certificate in project management from the Schulich Executive Education Centre at York University.

Passionate and committed to the Global College's work, this year he helped send 15 students to Ottawa and to the United Nations in New York City to "expose students to the inner workings of Canadian foreign policy and the UN," he explains.

In the upcoming year, he will be working to solidify the Global College's academic programs, aiming to create, in his words, "the best possible experience for students."

-STUART MCLAREN



AARON EPP



The Filmmaking Visionary

When Muuxi Adam arrived in Winnipeg from his native Somalia in 2004, he couldn't speak English. By 2005, Adam – now 23 – could speak it fluently and had written and directed an acclaimed film.

According to Adam, many newcomers to Canada initially have a lot of time to reflect. He used much of that time to write his first movie script, a continuation of the storytelling passion he has held since childhood.

With little previous filmmaking experience, and with valued technical help provided by the National Film Board of Canada, Adam released his first film, *Ray of Hope*, in 2005. The

film was the first to feature Canada's burgeoning Somali community. It has since been shown all over Canada, including in many grade schools.

Today, the international development studies and economics student splits his time between the University of Winnipeg and his job at Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (N.E.E.D.S.) Inc., where he continues his work with Winnipeg's newcomer community.

When asked how this community has provided motivation for what he does, Adam says that newcomers to Canada often lack role models.

"What I'm trying to show young

people is that there are options in Winnipeg, and we can do better," he says.

Along with filmmaking, Adam plans to continue his activism by working with marginalized and isolated communities.

"I came from a very poor community and my goal in life is just to go back in those places and help them improve their livelihoods," he says.

Adam has already begun doing just that. In mid-December, he will travel to the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya to conduct a feasibility study towards building a school he and friends will sponsor there.

-ANDREW TOD

Ariana Chia

The Equestrienne

When asked how she got into horseback riding, Ariana Chia's answer is simple: "Every little girl wants to ride ponies!"

Unlike every other little girl, however, she has become one of the country's best young equestrians.

"I rode in my first regional competition in Saskatoon at (age) 10," the 19-year-old explains. "That was my first taste of 'I want to do this.'"

Chia competes in the highly technical discipline of dressage, sometimes described as "ballet on horseback." When she was approached at age 12 to train with an Olympian, she jumped at the chance to show around North

America.

She first rode for the Canadian Junior team in 2008, a spot well-earned after months of living "like a gypsy" on the road collecting qualifying scores – many on a borrowed horse after her own was injured.

In 2009, Chia won the Canadian Junior Technical Championships, also placing fourth and fifth at NAJYRC in Kentucky aboard the stallion Odilon.

The first-year University of Manitoba student has Pan-American and Olympic ambitions, but acknowledges a lot depends on the other half of her team. At a level where horses cost well into six-figures, "it's an ongoing quest" to find

the perfect match, she says.

Her hopes lie with her seven-year-old mare, Wishtadanz, which she is training over the winter in Wellington, Florida, for next year's Young Rider Team.

Chia also champions horse conservation efforts across the globe, a cause she adopted after learning of the culling of Australia's wild "brumbies."

"Being such a horse lover I was so shocked I wouldn't know about something so severe," she says. "(Horses are) so innocent and so useful, we could be doing more to help protect them."

-ALEX KROSNEY



COURTESY A. CHIA



MARK REIMER/UNITER ARCHIVES

The Farmer

"My goals right now are to survive the apocalypse and teach people the difference between brown and white eggs," laughs Anneliese Schoppe, a 22-year-old organic farmer.

(Hint: just because eggs are brown doesn't mean they're organic.)

Schoppe delivers fresh organic beef and eggs to customers on her bike under the business name Pennyfarthing Produce.

The produce is grown on her parents' farm, near Poplar Point, Man. The farm doesn't use any pesticides or herbicides and uses only natural fertilizers.

Schoppe, a member of the National Farmer's Union, believes in the impor-

tance of educating people about the advantages of organic food, as well as the disadvantages of genetically modified organisms.

"We don't know the long-term effects (GMOs) have on our complicated ecosystems. They manipulate the environment," she says.

Schoppe has also worked with the Bike Cage and the Bike Dump in Winnipeg, volunteer community bicycle shops, and has recently volunteered at a bike shop in Guatemala, where she taught a workshop on how to build a bicycle-powered well.

Her main focus now is to do more work with food security and greenhouse

operations in Manitoba, as well as taking a business course in green housing.

She's also currently working on a way to start a therapeutic gardening program for the women's prison in Headingly.

Schoppe's motivation for working in organic farming and bicycle shops, aside from being able to survive the apocalypse, comes from the empowering feeling of helping people and sharing knowledge.

"It's something that's commonly engaging," she says. "You teach people a couple of things and they can take off from there."

-CATHERINE VAN REENEN

Anneliese Schoppe

Rod Beilfuss

The Thespian

Here on an exchange program from Brazil, Rod Beilfuss thought he would only be in Winnipeg for five months. But after igniting a passion for theatre, his initial trip has now lasted nine years.

He decided to try theatre for something fun to do while in town and after only his first month landed a scholarship from the Manitoba Theatre Centre (MTC), which prompted him to stay awhile.

The 27-year-old believes that most Winnipeggers are "oblivious" to what Winnipeg's theatre scene has to offer.

"I would like to make people aware that there is independent arts happening

all the time in Winnipeg," Beilfuss says.

Graduating with a B.A. Honours in Theatre and Film from the University of Winnipeg, Beilfuss was also the president of the International Student Centre on campus.

In this position he worked with Child and Family Services to help change the laws on international students getting work permits.

As a Shakespeare fanatic he has appeared in numerous productions including *The Merchant of Venice* and *Macbeth*. He plans to attend a summer intensive next year at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in England.

With an eagerness to bring new life and a fresh perspective to the stage, he felt a natural progression into directing. So far, he has directed MTC playwright festivals and the one-man musical *Billy Bishop Goes to War*.

Beilfuss was married last year and he and his wife Elizabeth have plans to go back to his native Brazil in 2012.

There, he will finish his Master of Fine Arts, majoring in directing with a focus in Shakespeare.

The avid soccer fan will also prepare to take in some games at the 2014 World Cup.

-ARLEN KASDORF



ARLEN KASDORF



CINDY TITUS

The Hockey Humanitarian

Kalen Qually

Canada's favourite sport is woven through Kalen Qually's life accomplishments.

Playing hockey since he was five, he has a championship to his name, has coached a team and works as the communications coordinator for the Manitoba Moose.

But he knows he wouldn't have had the chance to start playing and get to where he is without the help of others.

"I remember my first set of equipment was hand-me-down stuff from relatives and people in the area," says Qually, 24, a former *Uniter* sports editor. "I realize when I first started playing, it was by the help of

other people passing on their equipment their kid couldn't use anymore."

So in 2009, Qually created Pass It Forward, a program aimed at outfitting young hockey players whose families can't afford regular, often expensive equipment.

Since 2009, the upstart philanthropist has collected over 200 pairs of skates and over 250 garbage bags of used hockey gear.

The first donation went to support the little Moose hockey program out of the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre. This year, Qually partnered with Hockey Manitoba to support the North

End Minor Hockey Program.

"(Hockey) is arguably the most popular for kids to play when they're young but it's the least accessible because of the costs involved. If there's a way to alleviate that cost and give them a chance to play, it's important and I think it should be done," he says.

"I'm basically running the program with the help of hockey parents being able to relate to other hockey parents," he says.

Find out how to donate your old gear at www.passitforward.ca.

-MATT PREPOST



TIMOTHY DYCK/UNITER ARCHIVES

The Collaborator

"I'm not 100 per cent sure what drives me," says 30-year-old Steinbach native Matt Peters. "It's just this insatiable urge to stay creative."

Peters certainly stayed creative in 2010. Perhaps best known as one of the singer-guitarists in pop-rock wizards The Waking Eyes, Peters used the time afforded him by that band's hiatus to emerge as a key contributor to Winnipeg's music community.

Royal Canoe, the other band Peters fronts, officially released its debut album, *Co-Op Mode*, and toured Western Canada twice.

Peters also produced records released in 2010 by Tom Keenan, The Bokononists, Salinas, Flying Fox and the Hunter-Gatherers and Slattern, as well as forthcoming releases from The Liptonians, Demetra Penner, This Hisses and Triunfo do Gato.

Peters co-wrote, sang and played on the Ruth Moody song *We Can Only Listen*, and played a Canada Day show at the Forks with The Waking Eyes that featured the Winnipeg

Symphony Orchestra on three songs.

He also worked as a freelance recording engineer at Private Ear, the studio owned by John Paul Peters.

"Two years ago I said, OK, I really want to start producing and engineering and working with other bands and artists," Peters says. "Almost all of those people were at the top of my list of Winnipeg acts that I wanted to work with. I was really lucky that somehow this year I got to work with almost all of them."

The plan for 2011 is to focus on a project with Tom Keenan called Lockhart, and work on the next Royal Canoe record.

"I don't want to just write another pop song," Peters says. "I think that our music will always have pop elements in it, but I think at this point ... we're trying to be a little bit more experimental and just push some boundaries within ourselves."

-AARON EPP

Channing Lavallée

The Culture Preserver

For 23-year-old, multiple award-winning youth coordinator Channing Lavallée, promoting and preserving Métis culture goes beyond bannock and jigging.

"It's about bridging the gap between the elders and the youth," says Lavallée of the elders baking program she started at her home community's St. Ambroise Manitoba Métis Federation Youth Centre.

"The kids love having the elders come in and share stories about what it was like to live in the community in their time," she says. "It helps the kids learn about their culture."

Graduates of the jigging program started by Lavallée in 2007 are

now part of the older St. Ambroise Steppers group and taking part in community festivals and events.

In April 2010, she won the youth leadership category of the Manitoba Premier's Volunteer Service Award for her work. The National Aboriginal Health Organization, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and Manitoba Hydro have also recognized her efforts.

As a youth delegate to the Manitoba Métis Federation annual general meetings since 2005, Lavallée also gets an inside look at the decisions that impact Métis culture in Manitoba.

She continues to showcase Métis

culture and youth through annual fundraisers for organizations like the Children's Wish Foundation and CancerCare Manitoba, as well as volunteering for community events in St. Ambroise, such as the Saskatoon and Métis festivals.

A graduate of the University of Manitoba's social work program, Lavallée hopes to bring her Métis principles to a career in working with children diagnosed with cancer.

"My Métis values and traditions are a part of me, and I bring them with me wherever I go," she says.

-SONYA HOWARD



COURTESY C. LAVALLEE



CINDY TITUS

The Skateboarder

Less than a year ago, Jamie Suppes was another 21-year-old hooligan skateboarding around the city. Today he's a national champion and world-class skater who has competed against the best in the world.

Born and raised in Winnipeg, the Windsor Park Collegiate grad never took skateboarding seriously before he entered the Winnipeg leg of the 2010 The Red Bull Manny Mania competition.

Encouraged to enter by his friends, Suppes easily beat out the 48 other competitors and qualified for the national event in Vancouver.

That's pretty good for his first competition ever.

In Vancouver, Suppes joined seven other skaters from across Canada for a chance to represent their country in the Red Bull Manny Mania World Championships in New York.

Jamie Suppes

Skaters were judged on the complexity of their manual tricks and overall consistency. At the end of the day, Suppes reigned supreme and proved to be the best Canada has to offer.

A month later he was being flown to New York City to compete in the World Finals. With an entourage of six friends supporting him, Suppes claimed the 11th spot in the international competition.

Suppes began skating in Grade 8, influenced by friends. He claims nerves prevented him from entering competitions before, but now he deals with the pressure by listening to music while skating.

"I try to do different tricks than whatever everyone else is doing, to use the course more creatively," he says. "It gives me an advantage over others."

-KARLENE OOTO-STUBBS

Jeffrey Vallis and Braden Alexander

The Media Moguls

Just over a year ago, Jeffrey Vallis and Braden Alexander, both 23, were sitting on Alexander's deck, drinking wine and discussing what they should call their brainchild that would become *Sandbox*, the fashion, lifestyle and culture magazine "from the gays to the girls" — a magazine that is currently on everyone's lips and coffee tables.

Since then, the magazine that launched on Nov. 27, 2009, has blown up — big time. With nearly 6,000 "likes" on Facebook and over 50,000 visits to *sandbox-mag.com* in only the first three months, distribution has recently expanded from Osborne Village and Exchange District shops to all Chapters Indigo Books and Music stores across Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in stores in Toronto.

Initially drawing on their con-

nections from their education in Red River College's Creative Communications program, the boys established a solid base of writers, models, photographers and stylists to produce entertaining articles with stunning photographs about incredible locals doing remarkable things.

"We were even surprised at how much the creative collective grew and how much our knowledge about Winnipeg grew," says Vallis, editor-in-chief, looking back on an entire year of monthly online issues and quarterly print copies.

Staffing has shifted since the magazine's inception with creative director Alexander exiting his role to travel the world for the next 10 months, leaving the position in the hands of former editorial assistant Suzy Bodirolga.

According to Alexander, the project that started with two nerds in their basements is a testament to the beautiful things that happen in their own backyards.

"To me, *Sandbox* represents the life and heart of Winnipeg," Alexander says via email from his whirl around the world. "It's a reflection of the kind of lives young people in the city are leading, the kind of amazing things they're achieving. It's just a space for fun and beauty and creativity. A space for stories, a glimpse into prairie life."

Sandbox's more than 100-page anniversary issue will be on stands Wednesday, Dec. 15 with a new website and blog coming soon.

-KRISTY RYDZ



BLF STUDIOS



COURTESY OF RUTH BONNEVILLE/WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

The Journalist

It was a running joke in the *Winnipeg Free Press* newsroom that 28-year-old Jen Skerritt was in “quarantine” during the summer of 2009 after she returned from trips across northern Manitoba tracking the scourge of tuberculosis on Manitoba reserves.

Skerritt worked in a secluded office in a barely visited corner of the building for nearly five months, hammering out a six-part feature that ran in the *Free Press* in November 2009.

“I don’t do very well in isolation, so I kind of went a little nuts because you sit there and it’s like, ‘Today, I’m going to try to get someone to return my call,’” she says. “I

had a breakdown, thinking no one is ever going to talk to me about this. It was completely ridiculous, because I couldn’t do it with any kind of access request, I got denied and the Ombudsman supported it,” she says.

“I got lucky that I did end up meeting the right people who helped me get the information and connect with people who were most affected (by TB), but it was by far the most difficult story I’ve had to do and the most rewarding.”

For Skerritt, it’s paid off. The series has won her a growing list of national and international awards. She recently returned from Berlin after

accepting another award from the Stop TB Partnership.

Skerritt is humble about the accolades she’s amassed. Still, she remains the province’s only full-time public health reporter, tasked with keeping tabs on the province’s \$5-billion health budget.

“The beat is so big, when people say, ‘I’m doing this story,’ I’m like ‘Awesome,’” says Skerritt. “I think you could have multiple reporters doing the beat and still not touch on everything.”

To read Skerritt’s feature on tuberculosis, visit www.winnipegfreepress.com/tb.

-MATT PREPOST

Michael Dudeck

There has always been a very thin divide between life and art for Winnipeg artist Michael Dudeck.

The 26-year-old lives and breathes his work as a visual and performance artist.

Many of Dudeck’s creations use the human form – specifically his own.

“(It) defies the normal boundaries of public imagery,” he says about using his body as the main showpiece of his art.

Unlike most historical views of the style, Dudeck adds an intoxicating twist and sends the viewer on a religious, and eye opening, experience.

With a Bachelor of Fine Arts from

the University of Manitoba and a double major in video and drawing, Dudeck often twists and moulds archaic forms and symbols to fit the modern environment of his work.

The nomadic, self-described cultural engineer is often found moving from one place to another, including exhibiting work and performances in Winnipeg, New York, Nevada and Toronto, following his flow of creativity.

“I am happiest in motion, when I am surrounded by new things I have to unravel and discover,” he says.

The self-published author and former artist-in-residence for numer-

ous organizations has been honoured with grants and scholarships from the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, Winnipeg and Manitoba Arts Council, as well as U of M and the Canadian Millennium Foundation.

Dudeck is currently working on an exhibition at Ace Art Inc. in Winnipeg that will feature installation, drawing, sculpture, photography, a live performance, a sound score, a cast of 15-20 naked performers, and, of course, Dudeck himself.

The exhibition opens Friday, Jan. 14, 2011.

-ALEX TORCOLACCI

The Body Artist



M. DUDECK



CINDY TITUS

The Community Worker

“I’ll be happy if I’ve helped empower people in the Spence community and provided them with options to continue developing their community.”

These are the passionate words of Jamil Mahmood, the 28-year-old community development worker with the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) and graduate of the University of Winnipeg’s international development studies program.

Five and a half years ago when Winnipegger Mahmood first started working with the SNA as the youth coordinator, the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre only saw 20 neigh-

bourhood kids per night. Now, there are eight different programs for youth and the recreation centre sees at least 100 kids per night.

Mahmood notes that kids he worked with are now staff at the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre. Furthermore, community members are moving into roles at the SNA, allowing the community to control the work that SNA does.

Mahmood continues to meet regularly with the City of Winnipeg to help determine how the city’s youth programming can be changed to reach more youth effectively, using SNA’s

successes as an example.

In his recently announced move to the co-executive director position of the SNA, Mahmood hopes to extend his advocacy for youth across the broader poverty and housing work of the SNA.

“This new role is exciting because I’m now in a position to start changing public policy through advocacy,” he says.

“I’m particularly interested in looking at the Young Offenders Act and focusing investments on prevention, not just correction.”

-SONYA HOWARD

Jamil Mahmood

Mike Lawson

“Some of my colleagues (on the school board) have kids that are twice my age,” says Mike Lawson, 18, a recently elected school trustee for the Sunrise School Division, which oversees schools in rural eastern Manitoba.

Lawson, who grew up in the rural municipality of Springfield, is widely believed to be the youngest public official in Manitoba and the youngest school trustee ever to be elected in the province.

He recently graduated from Springfield Collegiate Institute in the community of Oakbank, where he served as student council vice-president,

student liaison for the parent advisory council and eventually president of the student body.

“I really like schools and I really like politics, so I put the two together and decided to run,” he says.

“I’m a young person fresh out of high school – who better to be a school trustee?”

Over the next four years, Lawson wants to make long-term technological advancements in schools across the division, including replacing textbooks with Kindles and iPads.

He also favours simple changes, such as regularly emailing newsletters to par-

The Aspiring Politician

ents and others within the community. “Communication (can be improved) division-wide,” he says.

Lawson maintains a full-time job for the Canadian Wheat Board in Winnipeg and commutes to the city from his home in Hazelridge, a community within Springfield, five days a week.

Although his first year out of high school will be spent hard at work, Lawson plans to eventually pursue an education in politics and human resources.

“I definitely want a political career,” he says.

-ETHAN CABEL



COURTESY JONATHAN HUTTON



COURTESY D. BICKEL

The Music Maven

Darrelyne Bickel, a Métis singer-songwriter from The Pas, Man., has a lot under her belt for being only 17.

“I’ve pretty much been singing all my life,” says Bickel. “When I was around eight years old, I decided to enter a talent competition here in The Pas that was part of the Trappers Festival here and I ended up winning first place.”

“I think winning was my encouragement to keep pursuing music.”

Bickel released the EP *M.I.A.* in 2008 when she was just 15. The EP

spawned three No. 1 singles on Native Communication Inc.’s Aboriginal Top 30 Countdown.

The following year, Bickel took home Minister Eric Robinson’s Most Outstanding Aboriginal Manitoban Award at the Aboriginal People’s Choice Music Awards. That year also saw her reach the top six on YTV’s *The Next Star*.

Her well-known single *Eddie’s Got A Mustang* appears in the movie *Casino Jack*, starring Kevin Spacey and Kelly Preston, which was released on

Dec. 1.

Now, Bickel is in the process of writing her first full-length album, which will be in stores within the next year. The album will pair her with producer and co-writer Dave Thomson, who helped pen her single *Solitude of Sunday*.

“Over the years, I’ve learned that if you want something, you have to work for it,” she says. “I’ve worked hard to get where I am today and I’m still not done working – not even close.”

-ROBIN DUDGEON

Darrelyne Bickel



COURTESY S. ROBINSON

The Jill-of-All-Trades

Radio and TV reporter, community activist, communications professional, role model and aspiring politician.

For most people, if they're lucky, these roles are maybe accomplished in a lifetime. For Shaneen Robinson, it's only taken 30 years.

The former NCI, CTV and APTN reporter recently ran for Winnipeg city councillor with the NDP's endorsement in the Elmwood-East Kildonan ward where she grew up – she wanted to help curb gangs and address social issues surrounding youth. Though she lost to former Winnipeg Jet Thomas Steen by 219 votes, Robinson is confident leadership is in her blood.

"I've been raised in a family where the women are the ones who hold a lot of the responsibility for our people and that we are life-givers. The women are the ones responsible for keeping our communities strong," notes the member of the Cree and Gitksan Nations.

If she had won, Robinson would have been the first aboriginal female councillor in Winnipeg.

Shaneen Robinson

Before running for council, the daughter of deputy premier for Manitoba Eric Robinson was a communications officer for Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), a non-profit representing over 30 northern Manitoba First Nations.

Her strong presence in the aboriginal community garnered her a spot among 11 others who were awarded the National Aboriginal Role Model honour from the National Aboriginal Health Organization.

"As far as being a role model, I don't think that it's something that I've ever thought about – it's just in my genetic makeup," she says.

In the coming months, Robinson plans to look for radio work while spending time advocating for aboriginal youth and women by emceeing events, as well as continuing to sit on the boards for CancerCare Manitoba, Canadian Blood Services and the Lord Selkirk Women's Group.

-KRISTY RYDZ

Gareth du Plooy

The App Aficionado

Twenty-nine-year-old Gareth du Plooy builds iPhone applications and is a devout Winnipegger.

Born in South Africa, du Plooy moved to Manitoba when he was five, eventually landing in this city.

The University of Manitoba computer science grad has been building apps through his company, Great Big Apps, for roughly two years.

A couple of his apps have proven popular. Sneaker Junkie (\$1.99) has been downloaded about 5,000 times since its release in 2009. The hefty Wikipedia Offline (\$9.99), which allows consumers to download the entire Wikipedia database onto their iPhone or iPad, is his bestseller.

"There are two other programs that do this," du Plooy says. "But mine is better."

The company has developed about a dozen apps so far and has corporate customers in Canada, the United States and the Middle East for whom they develop apps.

Recently, he has been interviewing for a job in New York City that would relocate him for two years. But he's not turning his back on Winnipeg – he intends to return afterward.

"I wouldn't go if it weren't for this particular magazine," he says, declining to name the publication.

Winnipeg is his home, and his friends and family keep him coming back.

"Your city is what you make of it," he says, adding that while there isn't much industry in Winnipeg, he is happy living here and building apps.

-ANDREW MCMONAGLE



ANDREW MCMONAGLE



TIMOTHY DYCK

The Professor

Gábor Lukács

You may have heard the name Gábor Lukács in the media a lot lately, but the 29-year-old University of Manitoba assistant professor is a lot more than the sum of his complaints.

Born in Budapest, he studied in Israel and received his master's degree at the age of 16.

He moved to Toronto and graduated from York's PhD program in math at age 20. He worked in Germany and Halifax before accepting a job in Winnipeg.

Currently on unpaid suspension for his lawsuit against the university for challenging their decision to award a PhD to a student who failed the formal requirements, he misses his students most.

"You fall in love with your class," he says, adding that St. John's College feels like a community.

His effect on students is apparent.

When he was suspended, his students created an online petition to keep him in his job.

Lukács has experienced an unexpected, growing connection with Winnipeg through his lawsuit; many people have come out to support him.

"I feel more like a Winnipegger now," he says.

He wants to keep working with the community, even if he's not currently at his job. Were he to win the lottery, he said he would keep teaching, doing research and improving the student experience.

"(Students) come to university with skills that severely undermine their abilities," he says, adding that he will do anything he can to make the campus a better place – even if he has to fight for it.

-ANDREW MCMONAGLE

Kristel Jax and Mark Wohlgemuth

The Artists

Kristel Jax, 23, and Mark Wohlgemuth, 26, proprietors of Freud's Bathhouse and Diner, kept themselves busy this year.

Situated in the heart of the Exchange District, the quaint art gallery and live music venue opened this past April. Since then, Freud's has displayed a number of art exhibitions and hosted several musical performances.

The gallery showcases creatively themed exhibitions. The themes are chosen only after much thought and deliberation, says co-owner Wohlgemuth.

The gallery opened with *The Ghost Show* – featuring some pieces by Jax herself – with "ghostly" decor to suit. One of their more recent exhibitions, *I Know My Weaknesses Better Than You*, showcased the illustrations of William Schaff (Rhode Island), Beth Frey (Toronto) and Ramsey Beyer (Chicago).

Wohlgemuth, who books the music acts, brought in performers such as Wave Hands Like Clouds (Austin, Texas), The

Dead Letters (Winnipeg/Montreal) and his own solo project, Kram Ran.

When Jax and Wohlgemuth aren't co-running the gallery, they can be found working on their collaborative music project, Alpha Couple.

Recently, the two released their first single, *Edna Pontellier*, a collage of sounds blended with sweet sounding melodies. It's available for free download off their website, imtrying.net.

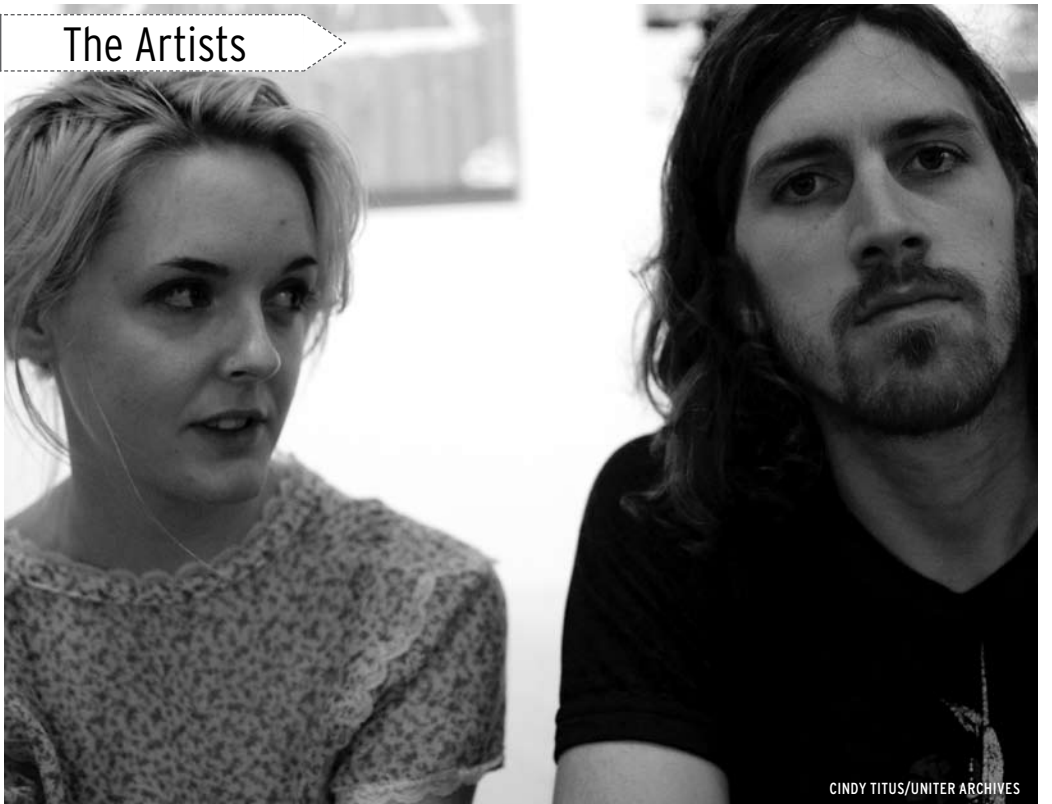
Like what you hear? Alpha Couple will perform on Saturday, Dec. 11 at the Graffiti Gallery located at 109 Higgins Ave.

What does 2011 bring for the dynamic duo?

Speaking like a true artist, Wohlgemuth responds: "We have a million ideas, but no idea what to pursue."

"We are definitely planning a tour across Eastern Canada and releasing a full-length album," Jax adds.

-TARA MEDWID



CINDY TITUS/UNITER ARCHIVES



COURTESY A. DIRKS

The Voice

At 23, Alexa Dirks has made quite a name for herself in the Winnipeg music scene.

She's best known for her role in Chic Gamine, the Juno award-winning Winnipeg – and Montreal-based vocal quintet. With the release of *City, City* (Chic Gamine's latest album) and another in the works, Dirks is poised to become a Winnipeg music staple.

Growing up in East Kildonan, Dirks had an intriguing personality.

"I was such a clean little Mennonite girl ... but at the same time I was really loud, so I confused people with my weird balance," says Dirks.

Musically inclined from a young

age, Dirks began singing with her church choir, receiving encouragement from teachers to pursue her passion. By 17, she was touring with Jon Buller and meeting local musicians who would eventually introduce her to the Winnipeg scene.

When she's not busy with Chic Gamine, Dirks fronts the bands Little Boy Boom and The New Lightweights.

This past year, she also released an EP with Matt Schellenberg of The Liptonians under the moniker Courier News, and provided the background vocals for the Les Jupes single *If This Is The Light*.

Each project has a distinctly dif-

ferent sound wherein Dirks is able to flex her vocal chops.

Although not professionally trained, Dirks's voice contains aspects of Janis Joplin's soul and Joni Mitchell's delicacy, delivering a punch to listeners.

Some of her influences include Stevie Wonder and Paul Simon. She cites the latter's *One Trick Pony* album as a major source of inspiration for her songwriting.

Despite the appeal of moving to a larger city, Dirks finds Winnipeg comforting and doesn't plan on leaving anytime soon. We're grateful for that.

-KARLENE OOTO-STUBBS

Raezavel Argulla

The Feisty Fashionista

Local fashion blogger Raezavel Argulla has been getting lots of attention with her trendy blog Cheap Thrills, including profiles in local magazines *Fokal* and *Sandbox*.

The 17-year-old native of Manila, Philippines, who currently lives in Winnipeg, has been operating cheapthrillsss.com since 2008 and gets anywhere from 850 to 1000 unique visitors daily.

"I started blogging when I was almost 15," Argulla says. "At first, my blog was under a completely different name and I only posted about my favourite and least fa-

vourite trends, but eventually, after seeing other blogs, I began to post my own outfits.

"I discovered vintage stores and thrifting around that time as well, and that was when I decided to change my blog title to 'Cheap Thrills' as a tribute to my newly found hobby!"

The blog features not only Argulla's own fashion combinations, but also her own unique photography.

"I feel so grateful to be where I am today and doing what I like to do, that I try not to think too much about (my accomplish-

ments), you know? It's humbling to have been recognized for my passion of fashion and photography, and to be able to represent for both the Filipino (and) Winnipeg communities makes me feel so proud!"

Argulla says in the future fans can expect more fashion, photography and more attitude.

She says she wants to stay in Winnipeg for the next year to study photography, but after that she wants to move to Toronto to study fashion communications at Ryerson University.

-ROBIN DUDGEON



COURTESY R. ARGULLA



ARLEN KASDORF

The Blogger

When Robert Galston started to write about urban issues in January 2005, he just wanted to rant. Now his blog *Rise and Sprawl* is one of the top rated active Winnipeg blogs.

With the tagline of *Abattoir for Sacred Cows*, Galston considers his blog a place where city issues are dissected and trigger discussion on topics like bus rapid transit, urban renewal and governmental micro-management.

"In the last few years I've focused more on downtown, neighbourhood revitalization and heritage issues," Galston says of his blog. "It

just seems that our priorities are backwards a little bit as a city."

As city planners are focusing on making the newer developments more walkable and environmentally sustainable, Galston feels that the older neighbourhoods are being neglected.

Galston takes a more organic economic approach and maintains that businesses should drive development. The micro-managing of city officials is stagnating growth in Winnipeg.

His enthusiasm for these city issues spawned the urge to run for

city council back in 2006 with the backing of the Winnipeg Green Party.

Even though he did not have much experience, he says that it was an attempt to raise public awareness on issues that were not being addressed.

Galston's plans for the future are to acquire his master's degree in city planning and to take part in a Canada-wide think tank that concentrates on "green and fresh" city planning.

-ARLEN KASDORF

Robin Bryan

The Environmental Activist

The task of changing the human impact on the environment is daunting.

Given this, it's good to know that there are people like 23-year-old Robin Bryan, international development studies and politics student at the University of Winnipeg, outreach coordinator for the Wilderness Committee of Manitoba and founder of the U of W's Ice Riders.

Bryan's interest in the environment dates back to his upbringing in the hamlet of Prawda, Manitoba, a rural area that gave him a certain sensibility about the value of land.

He has spent half his life in Winnipeg, but his passion for environmental activism continues.

Bryan's list of achievements is impressive. He won a provincial Sustainable Development Scholarship in 2007, followed by a prestigious 2009 Brower Youth Award, given to young environmental leaders. Bryan is only the second Canadian to win the award.

Most impressive is the fact that Bryan and the Wilderness Committee were instrumental in influencing the provincial government's 2008 decision to ban new logging in provincial parks.

Bryan notes the commitment it took to achieve this policy victory.

"You kind of have to live in a fantasy land where you actually think it's possible to change archaic legislation and the actions of

logging corporations," he says.

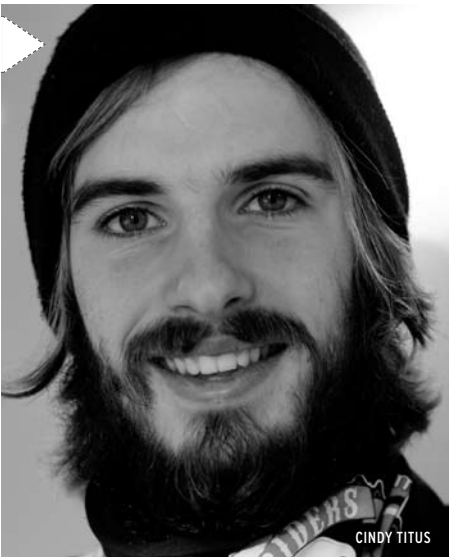
Dreaming big is useful, and Bryan says that living for what he believes in is more important than living for comfort or convenience.

That said, he understands the challenges involved in changing people's attitudes toward the environment. The fact that cities are so far removed from nature means that warnings about environmental catastrophe will fail to cause change.

Instead, Bryan believes the key is to overcome this disconnect.

"I'd like to focus on getting more people out on the land for more experiential and tangible learning," he says.

-ANDREW TOD



CINDY TITUS



COURTESY R. POWELL

The Socially Conscious Chef

Revanna Powell doesn't dance to anybody else's tune.

She recently graduated with a diploma from Prince Edward Island's Culinary Institute of Canada (CIC), but rather than take a position in a fine dining restaurant, the 20-year-old Manitoban has decided to live and work on the outskirts of one of the largest aboriginal reserves in the province.

"I wanted to do something that could actually make a difference," Powell says of her job at Jack River elementary school, located in Norway House, a community eight hours north of Winnipeg.

Powell administers the life skills program at the school, which she has changed from a lacklustre lunch initiative into an informative course on nutritious eating habits for youth with disabilities.

"Just last week they all learned their food groups," she says of the 20 kids she has been teaching (and feeding) since early September.

"Every day we spend about two hours ... we do nutrition and we make lunch together."

Powell, who entered the CIC at 18, was one of four students selected by her school to cook at the 2010 Vancouver

Olympics.

"It was just amazing to be a part of it," she says about cooking for the Atlantic Canada pavilion, where she served appetizers to 600 tourists and visitors nearly every day during the 16-day event.

When Powell returned to Manitoba after experiencing the Olympics and an education at the CIC, many suggested she get a job at a "fancy restaurant," which would involve long, gruelling hours in the kitchen.

"(That's) not even close to the lifestyle that I ever want to live," she says.

-ETHAN CABEL

Revanna Powell