Editor@YorkU: Women lead the undergrad achievers. By Berton Woodward

Leading Edge: York prides itself on being open to all. By Lorna R. Marsden

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Best In Class: Meet seven of York’s smartest undergrads – and discover some of the intriguing similarities they share. By Martha Tancock

Testing Einstein: Norbert Bartel and his Gravity Probe B team are using signals from deep space to help answer a $700-million question. By David Fuller

Hot Coffee: Our intrepid tasters assess the atmosphere, and the java, at key campus coffee spots.

Newton’s Law: World-ranked ultimate fighter Carlos Newton likes to slam his opponents into submission – when not sewing or studying quietly at Glendon. By Michael Todd

Native Rites: Photographer Valerie Burton gets inside cultural festivals in Mexico and Canada.

Too Perfect: It’s one thing to want to do well, but psychologist Gordon Flett shows how bad perfectionism can be, especially for students. By Cathy Carlyle

York People: Debating champs Omar Fairclough and Emily Cohen...Designer and flamenco artist Roger Scannura...Chinese music specialist Kim Chow-Morris

Back Talk: How dogs help bring out our humanity. By Richard Teleky
This year, women make a comeback. BY BERTON WOODWARD

Class Acts

A YEAR AGO, we put a group of students on the cover beside the line, Top of the Class. Profiled in all their high-achieving glory were seven top-ranking students, one from each undergraduate Faculty, selected by accumulated grade point average (GPA) at the end of second year. Even before we went to press, we thought we were onto a story that didn’t have to end with that issue. York students, it appeared, had the same sort of – the copies flew off the campus stands. And so was born what we hope will be a continuing feature. In this issue, you’ll find the second annual listing of York’s top students at the middle point of their undergrad careers.

Why did we choose the end of second year? Obviously, you have to choose some point in time to take the sounding. This one, we feel, shows how these students are doing when they are well established in university, not high school or their transitional first year. Moreover, we wanted to profile students who are still at York, so grad year was out – and some programs only last three years. That settled, we went with GPA ranking as the arbiter of “top” (the precise numbers, kept confidential by the University, were provided by the students themselves), as there just isn’t any other measure or evaluation across more for this purpose. And I must say, the people who emerged in our profiles, both last year and this, show that character, talent and flair seem to go hand in hand with great marks.

I’m giving you some of this back- ground because, as you might imagine, our feature and its assumptions did raise some controversy last year. An official of the Engineering Society wrote us complaining that the engineers’ course load might be too heavy for them to qualify on GPA. “Your article had a lot of smart people in it, but I believe you overlooked some even smarter and more well-rounded people in York’s engineering program,” he said. A department Chair noted that only two of the seven were women: “How far did you guys look?” Well, the numbers were the numbers, I replied – “I’m sure the women will come roaring back next year.” And they have – five out of seven this year. I also told the engineers it was up to them to get a female engineer into this year’s science standings, but they’ll have to settle for a male biologist.

There are other intriguing threads: two members of the Bahá’í faith, two people born outside Canada, three first-generation Canadians. And that’s the beauty of this survey. Balance such as men and women, migrant and native-born, religious and non-religious, PlayStation and Xbox lover, will shift each year. Feel free to draw conclusions if you wish about why these people excel. All I know is that their bright faces shine a whole lot of glory on their university.

Send letters, submissions, comments and ideas to editor@yorku.ca.
To see world-champion trampolinist Karen Cockburn bounce two storeys into the air, then tuck and twist and dip and dive, is like watching a swallow fly. Her coach calls her style “elegant”. Sports writers call it “flawless” and “perfect”. This 24-year-old’s aeronautic grace and skill have reaped the world’s biggest awards: Olympic silver in Athens this August, Olympic bronze in Sydney four years ago and World Cup gold in 2003 – all firsts for Canada.

Cockburn took up trampoline at age 11 to improve her diving. A year later she won the provincial juniors. By 14, she held the Canadian senior title and was competing internationally. At five-foot-three, she is tall for a jumping gymnast. Knee injuries have not weakened an explosive kick that can launch her 24 feet into the air. But the secret to her success, says her long-term coach Dave Ross, is her quiet determination. “She’s had it from the get-go. I call her the silent warrior. She just decides what she wants to do and works at it.” Ross, who is national team coach, has trained hundreds. “Everybody has the will to win, but how many people will sacrifice everything to do it?” Cockburn will. In 2001, she quit York halfway through her third year in economics to train full-time for Athens. She’s back now and focused on graduating. She still practises, determined to qualify for the 2008 Olympics. “I want to be sure I don’t have regrets.” But in two years, BA in hand, she may just run away with Cirque du Soleil. Whatever she chooses, she can’t imagine giving up her sport. Since she joined the national team at 15, it has opened up whole new worlds to her. Her friends are trampolinites; her boyfriend is a trampolinites. “I love my life, I love it.”
There’s a recipe for happy preschoolers: throw away the clock, discard rigid rules and let them play when and for as long as they please. Early childhood education expert Carol Anne Wien guarantees the little ones will be calmer, quieter and more cooperative. Since 1995, she’s advocated “letting time go” in daycare settings. That doesn’t mean a free-for-all, but respecting the complex rhythms of childhood, says Wien. She’s recently documented and published the effect of doing just that on children and their caretakers at three non-profit child care centres in Hamilton, Ont.

Taking their cue from Italy’s Reggio Emilia approach, where children set their own creative agendas, staff at the centres scrapped an excess of silly rules – no door licking, no blowing on food. They abandoned timetables, except for basics like lunch, and let children choose when and where they wanted to play. After a few months, children concentrated longer and were generating their own games and rules. Their confidence grew because they realized adults thought they were capable. And teachers, no longer exhausted by enforcing the rules, enjoyed more positive relationships with the children. It all goes to show, concludes Wien, that rigidly structured activities are “so contradictory to how children want to learn.”

In terms of mismanagement, hockey has some of the worst owners in the history of professional sports. Now the owners are asking the players to agree to a salary cap to protect themselves from themselves. It’s preposterous.”

Julian Ammante, PhD candidate in political science who researches major-league sports, in Canadian Business

Kwik Kwiz

Think you know York? Take the test.

1. Approximately how many newlyweds have their pictures taken on the Glendon campus each year? a. 15 b. 52 c. 75 d. 132

2. Glendon has more than 100 varieties of what on campus? a. worms b. domestic flowers c. trees d. butterflies

3. How many student-written newspapers are there at York (most of the time)? a. 1 b. 5 c. 9 d. 13

4. How many reference questions do York librarians answer annually? a. 185,000 b. 155,000 c. 85,000 d. 55,000

5. Calumet College was named after…? a. Calumet Farm in northern Ontario b. Sir Winston Calumet c. a former governor general of Canada d. a native ceremonial pipe

6. What is the estimated number of cups of coffee sold on campus each day? a. more than 6,000 b. more than 10,000 c. more than 20,000 d. more than 20,000

Answers: 1-d; 2-c; 3-d; 4-b; 5-d; 6-a
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Good things grow in Ontario – and on the Keele campus too. In fact, apples, nuts and flowers flourish right in York’s backyard in a campus community garden that has official University club status. The 6,000-square-foot Maloca Garden, situated west of the Assiniboine Road residences, was established six years ago by a coalition of Faculty of Environmental Studies students and local community gardening and organic food organizations. It serves all sorts of people, from students, staff and faculty to alumni, says Shantia Calasta, a York student and gardener. Not everyone who enjoys Maloca is a gardener though.

York biology Professor Laurence Packer, who specializes in bee research, and doctoral biology candidate Amro Zayed are using genetic methods to track how apparently healthy bee populations may, in fact, be on the brink of collapse. Genetic problems – likely due to environmental stress – are rendering many male bees sterile. Packer calls it “mutational meltdown.”

“Just because there appear to be a lot of bees in one spot on one given day doesn’t mean much,” says Packer. “Numbers are no indication of healthy, sustainable populations. Bees move around, populations fluctuate. One year you could have thousands and the next, none.”

The genetic methods Packer and Zayed used demonstrated that the number of effectively reproducing bees in the picture at left is approximately 15. They believe their methods can reveal information about the reproductive health of all bee populations and predict their future success or demise, says Zayed.

Zayed and Packer’s research on orchid bees – funded by NSERC and the American Orchid Society, and published in the prestigious Proceedings of the Royal Society – may one day help conservationists find ways to protect nature’s premier insect workers (worth an estimated $782 million to Canadian agriculture in 2001).

“Without bees there would be no apples, no plums, no showy wildflowers. The world as we know it would look totally different,” says Packer. “Just because there appear to be a lot of bees in one spot on one given day doesn’t mean much,” says Packer. “Numbers are no indication of healthy, sustainable populations. Bees move around, populations fluctuate. One year you could have thousands and the next, none.”

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“Without bees there would be no apples, no plums, no showy wildflowers. The world as we know it would look totally different,” says Packer. “There’d be no coffee,” adds Zayed. That’s enough to keep anyone awake.

For more information, visit www.yorku.ca/maloca.

It’s not good news. York researchers have worries about the health of our most important pollinators – bees.

In his new book, How History Made the Mind: The Cultural Origins of Objective Thinking, philosopher David Martel Johnson challenges a prevailing assumption among philosophers and psychologists that “reason” or “objective thinking” is an innate, natural product of an enlarged brain, something we are born with. Reason, argues the York professor, is not genetically endowed but is the product of two cultural revolutions – the development of language and symbolic thinking during the Upper Paleolithic era, 60,000 to 40,000 years ago, and the Greek Revolution of Thought 3,000 years ago. Historians, anthropologists and archeologists have understood this for years, he insists, even if behavioural determinists and cognitive scientists have not.

The Greeks invented – yes, invented – objective thinking, which spawned the Western mind as we know it today, Johnson argues. Between 1100 and 750 BCE, a few daring Greeks began to step back, observe and record the world around them. They made impersonal generalizations and came up with natural laws in a way that runs counter to how other animals – concerned with their immediate survival – relate to their environment. This reasoned approach to everything from strategic warfare to democratic government quickly spread as other cultures perceived, or were forced to acknowledge, its advantages. Concludes Johnson: “We have good reason to believe that the sort of rational, objective, scientifically useful thinking employed by the overwhelming majority of people today would have been different if history had followed another course.”
They are seven of York’s smartest undergrads – and they have intriguing similarities.

BY MARTHA TANCOCK
More than anything, Hoda Paripoush wanted to be a surgeon. But her math tutors doubted her ability to pass medical entrance exams; besides, hospitals smell. “The air is not fresh,” remembers the 22-year-old psychology major who used to volunteer on the chronic care ward in Brockville, Ont., where she grew up. But she clung to her dream – until she discovered naturopathic medicine. Its holistic approach to healing appealed to Paripoush as a Bahá’í. “A life well lived is a life well balanced” is one tenet of a faith that propels Paripoush to strive for excellence, do her best and serve humanity. Like her refugee parents, who fled religious persecution in Iran and started all over again in Canada, she values persistence and hard work. Still, chemistry-based naturopathy will be a challenge. So Paripoush is doggedly taking one chemistry course after another along with courses on abnormal behaviour and the meaning of life. “I’m not that smart,” says the student who consistently came top in her class. “I study hard.” Her husband has learned to cook so Paripoush can study. After York, she plans four years at naturopathy college. “If you want something so much and you’re willing to work hard enough, nothing can stand in your way of achieving that goal, no matter what people say.”

For an aspiring chartered accountant, Andrew Rashidi shows an odd penchant for risk and uncertainty. He loves the systems, structures and sheer mathematicality of accountancy, his major, but when it comes to his personal life, the Mississauga-bred student rejects five-year plans and daily routine. He doesn’t study at a set time every day and will drop his books anytime to shoot hoops with brother Matt, play Beethoven on the piano or swim laps. If not for stock investment challenges he aced in high school, the 21-year-old former math champ would be on his way to becoming a computer engineer. “But the thought of working out algorithms every day didn’t really appeal to me. With investment, there’s mystery, there’s intrigue, nothing is really black and white.” The Canadian-born son of followers of the Bahá’í faith, who fled an intolerant Iran in the 1970s, strives for personal excellence and doesn’t feel compelled by wealth, status or power. A business degree may lead to law studies and expanding the family’s CA firm, where he works. “I’m still not sure that accounting will be for me. But I’m not one to close doors. I like to feel things out, see where they take me.” Whatever he does, Bahá’ís ideals – hard work, honesty, trustworthiness, kindness and service to others – will guide him.

Habibah Ahmad grew up in Toronto, the third of six children of Pakistani immigrants and devoted Muslims. “Islam is very central to everything I do,” says the 24-year-old student, who still lives at home and teaches Arabic to Muslim children. Islam set Ahmad’s intellectual sails from an early age. Always inquisitive, she was fond of quizzing her father, a respected Muslim scholar, about the Qur’an. Her inquiry might have ended there. After high school, Ahmad followed her older siblings into the workplace, bound for marriage and marriage. But two years later, the restless A student used her savings to enroll at York. “I am not conventional,” she says. “I don’t do things by the book.” The high-school science whiz dropped plans to study medicine and signed up instead for religion, humanities and women’s studies courses. Ahmad, now a feminist, is deeply curious about the religion and Islamic traditions that shaped her. “I need to look at my religion well to see what it really says.” Her journey could lead to a PhD. The part-time library clerk saved enough money this year to travel to Spain, a crossroads for Christianity, Judaism and Islam. “It’s an excellent place for me to start,” says Ahmad, who sees herself as a “product of East and West.” She dreams of teaching abroad and building bridges of understanding between the two cultures.
As a child summering at her grandparents' cottage in Muskoka, Aileen Rapson trapped bugs in jars and hunted frogs. "I never had a typical fear of insects. And I remember always being fascinated by dangerous animals like snakes and sharks and tarantulas," says the 21-year-old future environmental educator from Etobicoke. She spent hours watching National Geographic nature programs and reading violent-weather books. She found her calling in a Grade 11 leadership and environmental geography workshop. "I just had no idea how badly humans were degrading Earth. I thought, 'Oh, my god, we can't let this happen. We're going to lose our natural heritage.'" The soft-spoken, studious teenager -- who breaks loose by dancing to Aretha Franklin, playing Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata or watching reruns of "The Simpsons" -- took to publishing rants in her high-school newspaper against littering. Within a month he was flying across the Pacific, determined to pass required language tests and gain admission to university. Canada had granted him a student visa and he didn't hesitate to accept the uncle's offer to live in Toronto and study. Now, she's on the editorial board of FES's academic journal Undercurrents. Soon, with environmental and education degrees, she'll drop her part-time cashier job at a local pharmacy and begin teaching high school or working at other living creatures."

If Xin Wang had stayed in China, he would have a degree in environmental engineering by now. But he quit university after three months, bored with compulsory military training and leaden lectures. Canada had granted him a student visa and he didn't hesitate to accept the uncle's offer to live in Toronto and study. Within a month he was flying across the Pacific, determined to pass required language tests and gain admission to university. Canada had granted him a student visa and he didn't hesitate to accept the uncle's offer to live in Toronto and study. Xin Wang -- took to publishing rants in his high-school newspaper against littering. Now, she's on the editorial board of FES's academic journal Undercurrents. Soon, with environmental and education degrees, he'll drop his part-time cashier job at a local pharmacy and begin teaching high school or working for non-profits. The recycling crusader and public transit advocate could never have sold cars or tubes of lipstick. "I wanted to do something positive to improve the quality of life not just for humans but for other living creatures."

High school was more than a proving ground for Kristyn McGuire. It was a career lab. "Ever since Grade 9, I always knew I wanted to teach," says the 22-year-old visual arts student from Ottawa. So, while acing her lessons -- she earned almost nothing but 90s -- competing in sports and acting in plays, she also analyzed her teachers' classroom techniques. At York, she deliberately crams her day with classes, intramural sports, part-time jobs and volunteer work. "If you stay busy, you end up budgeting your time better and working more effectively." The Salvador Dali fan hurled herself into art and post-colonial English literature. "I've always been interested in people who are on the sidelines, in minorities and social justice. Perhaps it comes from being part of the queer community as I grew up." While the girl who read Plato's Republic in high school may veer into philosophy for her master's degree, teaching remains her compass. It has steered her into jobs as camp counselor, tutor, classroom volunteer and, this summer, helping people with intellectual disabilities. As much as she loves ideas, she's "always loved being around kids. And I personally love learning and taking on new challenges. This is going to sound really idealistic, but I want to be able to help other kids learn and have the passion for learning that I have."

The walls of Ilil Naveh's residence room are plastered with poems, inked in her own calligraphy. One in particular, William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"-- "And I have felt/A presence that disturbs me with the joy/Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused..." -- moves her to tears with its capture at divine nature. Raised a staunch atheist in Israel, the 21-year-old daughter of two professors says she is now on a quest for meaning. "I'm always looking for it, always looking for greater self-knowledge and deeper emotional bonds with other people." Studying psychology, Naveh hopes, will help her unravel the tangled web of human motivation and feelings, to comprehending those "raging, passionate, wild emotions" that hold her in thrall and draw her to 18th-century Romantic poetry. As a child, Naveh wouldn't play chess (too rational) with her brothers and resisted strict piano lessons, fearing a pleasure could turn into a duty. Now the Glenn Gould fan taps into deep wells of joy by playing -- by ear -- Bach's Goldberg Variations. Ever an A student, Naveh speaks four languages, including Russian, German and Hebrew, and juggles studies with work for a computer help desk. One day, she hopes to do research in social psychology and teach at university with the "humility, knowledge and passion" she so admires in many of her professors. "It's a dream."
THE 700 MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

Norbert Bartel and his team are using signals from deep space to help test Einstein’s theory of relativity.

BY DAVID FULLER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERRY GEORGE
Students, coffee, studying, writing papers. They’re inextricably linked. Let’s face it, it’s pretty hard to write a 2,000-word essay on Shakespeare’s sonnets without caffeine. Not to mention teach the course. That’s why we decided, with the help of YorkU design assistant Cameron Browning (left), a fourth-year design student, and second-year political science student Robert Renouf (below), to give new students and old-timers alike a wake-up call about what’s brewing at various campus coffee hot spots.

MICHELANGELO’S CAFETERIA
Location: Atkinson Bldg.
Price range: $1.35 (reg.) to $3.00 (latte)
Ambience: Cafeteria/dining hall/70s rec room
Notable: First-rate cappuccino/espresso, served in proper china cups. Nice outdoor patio.

SECOND CUP
Location: York Lanes
Price range: $1.45 (small reg.) to $4.48 (chillatte)
Ambience: Upscale and busy.
Notable: Tables good for reading.

TIM HORTONS
Location: William Small Centre
Price range: $1.03 (small reg.) to $2.99 (cappucino)
Notable: Several locations on campus. Less busy (and warmer) one in TEL Bldg.

TIMOTHY’S WORLD COFFEE
Location: Seymour Schulich Bldg.
Price range: $1.45 (reg.) to $3.99 (iced café mocha)
Ambience: Sleek and very Schulich.
Notable: Perfect place for future MBAs to grab a fast latte – or York’s Las Nubes brand – while taking care of business.

TREATS COFFEE EMPORIUM
Location: Student Centre
Price range: $1.17 (small reg.) to $3.04 (iced moccacino)
Ambience: Ranges from tranquil to hectic. Outdoor tables. No music.
Notable: Also serves “fair trade” coffee (more expensive than regular). Coffee always fresh. Comfiest chairs on campus.

FALAFEL HUT VILLAGE
Location: York Lanes
Price range: $1.10 (small reg.) to $1.25 (large)
Ambience: Utilitarian. TV showing sports programs.
Notable: Known mostly for its food, but coffee is outstanding.
When he’s not sewing or studying, ultimate fighter Carlos Newton likes to chop, kick and slam opponents into submission. His fans around the world love it.

BY MICHAEL TODD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDSAY LOZON

Newton, a welterweight (155-170 lbs.), whose Japanese moniker is “The Ronin” (meaning wanderer), practises a form of martial arts he calls Dragonball Z jiu-jitsu and studies at the Warrior Martial Arts Centre in Newmarket (he’s three-time Canadian jiu-jitsu champ). Newton started his fighting career at the age of four. “My dad taught me. He was a black belt,” he says. The Ronin’s first fight came at school over lunch money when he was a kid living in the British Virgin Islands. Then, at 10, Newton suddenly found himself in Canada, alone, without family. “We didn’t have a lot of money and I was the one getting good marks so my parents decided to send me to Canada for an education.”

Although he doesn’t elaborate, it seems those were hard years for Newton, who grew up in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community. He boarded with one of his public school teachers for a time and continued his martial arts studies. “The whole experience toughened me, I suppose,” says Newton. “You had to survive. It was just me.”

The Wanderer is an apt nickname for Newton, who at 21 went to Japan for two years to immerse himself in the culture and language. He likes to spend as much time there as he can when not training or working on his York degree. Indeed, ultimate fighting has taken him all over the world, from the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas to “The Brawl at the Hall” (Royal Albert Hall, London), and Hungary, Thailand, Australia, Greece, Hong Kong and China. Even George W. Bush’s stomping grounds – Texas.

Is UF dangerous? In Newton’s opinion, it’s “far safer” than football or hockey. “You’d never catch me playing football,” he says. “I’d be scared to death.” Nevertheless, reading down a list of dos and don’ts in the UF rule book doesn’t exactly instill a sense of personal well-being. Foul play includes the use of any kind of eye gouging, groin attacks, stomping a grounded opponent, spitting, kidney kicks, throat strikes, clawing or pinching of the flesh, hair pulling, head butts and biting. In its promotion materials, the Ultimate Fighting Championship organization claims no one has ever been seriously injured in a UFC event.

“Actually the refs are pretty strict,” says Newton. “If there’s any sign that you’re wobbly after taking a hit, it’s over.” Fights are also governed by height and weight class (from lightweight to heavyweight), standardized boxing gloves etc. The main way to win is through your opponent’s submission, signalled by a physical or verbal “tap out”. Refs can also declare a technical knockout at any time, or judges can award a win based on scorecards.

For now, Newton is Canada’s only reigning UF star. Sadly, he’s better known in Japan than at home. In fact, it’s not uncommon for him to draw crowds of 40,000-plus in the Land of the Rising Sun. Crowds that pay. And Newton has a special love for all things Japanese that perhaps explains why he’s minoring in the language while majoring in psychology.

Newton already owns his own home. Not bad for a soft-spoken tough guy who claims he’s really still a “Jedi in training”, and likes to sew for relaxation. And, as if a brutally time-consuming regimen of training and studies isn’t enough, Newton also somehow finds the energy to volunteer at Toronto’s Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care twice a week. “I got the job through one of my York professors. He knew I was interested in behavioural neurology,” he confides. “I find working with old people really fascinating. I enjoy their company. They’ve got a very different perspective on the world.”

How long can Newton keep kicking butt, living the good life, and hanging out post-fight with celebs like Carmen Electra? “Probably until I’m 38,” he says. “First I want to finish my BA. After that a PhD maybe. Then I want to continue working with seniors. I plan to open my own senior’s residence this year as a business.”

Thoughts to live by? “Life is really training for the martial arts, not vice versa,” says Newton. “You have to learn respect for your opponent and yourself.” For now, Newton is concentrating on being the best fighter in the world in his class – and maybe getting in a little stitching.
A globe-trotting photographer Valerie Burton (BA ‘75, MFA ’77) it all started on a vacation to Mexico 10 years ago. “I kind of got hooked on the Maya,” she says. Her visits to local Mayan pueblos sparked a broader fascination with the native cultural festivals of Mexico – from masked processions to modern influences such as, yes, Halloween. Her work caught the attention of Canadian diplomats in Mexico, who helped her make an odyssey across Canada to do a similar series on native festivals in this country. The result is a series of shows of her photography from both nations, which went on display at the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg, Ont., in September, and opened in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City on Nov. 4, where it will help commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Canada and Mexico. She is also taking part in a fall show about the Day of the Dead at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago.

In travelling around Mexico and Canada – where she gained access to ceremonies rarely seen by outsiders – Burton found some similarities between the nations. The festivals usually had a religious context, and they often blended traditional and modern elements. More importantly, she notes, “the festivals strengthen the cultures.” But Burton is quick to note that she is an artist, not an anthropologist. “My primary objective is to make visually arresting images that stand on their own,” she says.

For an academic view, she turned to another York alumna, University of Calgary anthropologist Julia Murphy, who wrote background text to accompany Burton’s exhibits. The two met while Murphy was doing research in Mexico. Murphy, who has three post graduate degrees from York (MES ’91, MA ’93, PhD ’03), wrote that “Burton’s photographic work testifies to the cultural creativity of the indigenous peoples of Canada and Mexico.”

What’s next for Burton? The Ottawa-based freelancer, who often works for international non-profit organizations such as CARE USA and Foster Parents Plan, is likely to be on a plane to somewhere. She’s never short of willing clients. “Basically,” she says, “I decide to go to a place and then start phoning people.”
Native Rites

Celebrate: Clockwise from top left, vendor at Noongam powwow, Ottawa; parade of chiefs, Calgary Stampede; Pikani boy at Calgary Stampede’s Indian Village; Canada Day grass dance, Ottawa

Little Devil: All ready for Jardín de Niños (Nursery School) procession for the Day of the Dead, Oaxaca, Mexico
‘They cannot accomplish anything, because they don’t think what they’re working on is good enough – even when they are getting excellent marks’
If you’re a politician looking for future speech writers, you might want to call Omar Fairclough, a fourth-year double major in history and social and political thought, or fourth-year Glendon international studies student Emily Cohen. Fairclough and Cohen beat 69 other Canadian university teams last March to clinch first prize for York at the Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate’s national championship held at McGill.

Fairclough, who lives in Pickering, Ont., says he comes from a family that “definitely likes to talk” and that in public school he was voted “kid most likely to become a lawyer.” Cohen, a Victoria, BC, native, says she’s always talked a lot too. “I started really early. Apparently around age one.”

Debates are run according to formal parliamentary rules and teams usually debate serious topics, but not every issue is heavy-duty. Says Fairclough, “Our first debate in the national championship was, Should Wile E. Coyote Stop Chasing the Road Runner?”
Roger Scannura became hooked on the sorrowful melodies and complex rhythms of flamenco after hearing virtuoso guitarist Pepe Habichuela in a Toronto bar 30 years ago. The Roots Canada art director still makes annual pilgrimages to Spain to study the gypsy music that possesses his Maltese soul. “To the people at Roots, my music has been a sideline,” he says. “But it’s always been my mainline.” Last year, when York invited him to teach flamenco guitar, Scannura hesitated, despite 30 years’ practice and four CDs. He’d try one day a week. “I loved it. I couldn’t wait for Mondays.” Now, after an intense year developing Olympic team uniforms for four countries, including Canada, he’s teaching three days a week – and handling Roots clients such as Ferrari and actor Russell Crowe the other two. At 52, Scannura will finally have time to finish composing an ambitious guitar concerto – “my work of a lifetime” – and perform more with his band Ritmo Flamenco. “Flamenco,” says the son of a Spaniard, “is in my blood.”

Silken Sounds

Kim Chow-Morris
Chinese music specialist

You don’t have to travel thousands of miles to hear an ancient Chinese folk music tradition known as “silk and bamboo”, thanks to Kim Chow-Morris, a PhD music grad (’04) who developed and directs the faculty of Fine Arts’ course in Chinese music you can enjoy right here in Toronto. Morris heads up the Yellow River Ensemble, whose specialty is Jiangnan sizhu, a home-grown style of music from the populous region south of the Yangzi River. She is an international dizi (bamboo flute) virtuoso and one of the leading Chinese music performers in Canada. She spent more than six years studying Jiangnan sizhu with leading masters in China. Yellow River members (CD in the works) have performed across Canada, the US, Britain and China, playing tunes like Rosy Clouds Chasing After the Moon, Purple Bamboo and Cowboy Song. The usual silk and bamboo ensemble consists of instruments like the dizi (bamboo flute), along with “soft” silk string instruments such as the erhu (python-skin bowed lute). Do western ears like silk and bamboo? “It can take adults a while to understand, but kids intuitively enjoy the music,” think, says Morris. “They especially like the strange sounds the instruments make. It’s always a big hit in schools.”

Photography by John Menberg

Photography by Paul Pacey
Our canine companions help bring out our humanity.  

**Talking Dogs**

**A** LARELLA, BISGROVE, MORGAN AND ZOLI — these are only a few of the faculty dogs who have spent part of their lives at York, growing up, attending literary readings, getting old, moving away and even dying. At a time when narrative theory fascinates scholars, dogs are of particular importance. Why? Because they’re agents of narration, they prompt stories and often make it possible for strangers to tell them to each other.

Think of those old definitions of human beings — we’re “tool-bearing”, “language-using”, “pot-making” creatures. To this list I’d like to add “dog-owning”, because as far back as we go, dogs were beside us, helping define our humanity by the way we treated them. University campuses that allow their presence are more congenial places for them. Students at York have sat in my office laughing while they petted my pug, Zoli, or taken consolation from him while telling an upsetting story; they’ve sketched him, written poems for him, and even made pocket money for dog-sitting. Often students I’d never taught came up to me to ask, “Is that Zoli?” and then spoke of a family dog back home. Zoli always greeted them gaily, as if exclaiming, “Hey, a new friend.” Dogs change public space, making it more liveable.

In late August 2003, Zoli, then eight-and-a-half, was diagnosed with mast-cell tumors, stage one, the least lethal. It’s worth noting that veterinarians across North America are seeing an increase in cancer in younger dogs. From our environment? Who can say? But we ought to pay attention. After three surgeries, he began chemotherapy. I decided not to bring Zoli to campus any longer, although he’d come since he was a puppy and year after year charmed students who always wanted to know about his name (it’s Hungarian). So Zoli spent my campus days at his vet’s, now charming the young assistants and even befriending a small gray rabbit. Meanwhile, anyone who asked me about Zoli would learn a little about cancer and dogs.

My Toronto neighborhood is a cliché of impersonal city living. Yet in no time people were asking why, after surgery, Zoli wore a large plastic collar. My explanation was met with their stories. One man told about a Wheaten terrier stolen from his home, a dignified woman in her 70s told of a dog lost, years ago, to divorce; another nodding acquaintance spoke of her own recent cancer diagnosis. Over the Christmas holiday, my mother was hospitalized for several weeks. Zoli accompanied me to our daily visits and slept on the bed beside her as patients, nurses and even a few doctors stopped to pet him and tell their stories.

Public space was transformed again. This tells us a lot about the emotions below the surface of our alienated society. It’s a truism that a dog owner’s blood pressure slows down when he pets a beloved animal. More impressive is that a stranger’s dog can have a similar effect on a community.

Zoli died on March 31, 2004, the last day of classes. He had pancreaticitis and his cancer had spread. The thought of this remains painful, but I wouldn’t want it any other way — I have little use for the language of our culture that speaks of “healing” or “closure”. As the American poet May Sarton wrote of her own dog’s death, “there are some losses you can’t absorb.” But I can say that Zoli continued to affect public space. People in my neighbourhood, still really strangers, left notes and flowers, or phoned with kind words and more stories.

Recently, while buying a newspaper, I heard from one of the local dog people about a young woman who was at the corner parkette, grieving over a cancer diagnosis for her golden retriever. I stopped to talk with her and even recommended an excellent book I’d found after Zoli died, *The Loss of a Pet* by Wallace Sife. Though I’m not a fan of self-help books, I was glad to know this one. And I was glad to tell this stranger about my brave companion Zoli. She and I smiled tentatively, and she asked about the pug puppy at my side. I introduced Rennie. He will never replace Zoli, but he’ll be himself while drawing out new stories from strangers.

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**BY RICHARD TELEKY**