



VIKTOR POPP IS SET TO BEGIN HIS STUDIES IN THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AT THE U OF M THIS FALL. // PHOTOS BY KATIE-CHALMERS BROOKS

EMERGING: Meet Viktor Popp

One of two incoming U of M students awarded the prestigious Schulich scholarship

JULY 5, 2016 — *Every student comes to campus with a story. In UM Today's EMERGING, we spotlight incoming and undergrad students beginning their U of M journey.*

The prestigious Schulich Leader Scholarships go to a mere 50 incoming university students across the country. Among the 2016 recipients to receive an \$80,000 award: Viktor Popp, who is set to begin his studies in the Faculty of Engineering at the U of M this fall.

Growing up on a farm near Erickson, Man., Popp trained prized steers, he'd give names like Maverick and Goose (after *Top Gun* characters) and loved exploring the wide-open prairies.





The aspiring biosystems engineer maintains high grades while doing volunteer work that builds a sense of community in his hometown. He helped run a 4-H Fun Day, teaching kids about animals and agriculture. And he co-organized Pink the Rink, decking out his entire varsity hockey team in jerseys, socks and tape the colour of bubble gum in honour of those fighting cancer.

His teachers say he's an exceptional student, one who's not afraid to step outside his comfort zone. (For a Grade 11 biology project Popp sang a song about the respiratory system to the tune of Pink Floyd's *Money*.) *UM Today* caught up with the 18-year-old, who reveals his secret talent, the dangers of horseback riding and the truth about hockey goalies.

Why farm life is great:

Being on the farm, you're kind of separate from the hustle—whether that be traffic or all the buildings and concrete. If a cow is calving at one o'clock in the morning and having problems you have to deal with it right now. It's an around-the-clock job. The biggest thing I've learned living on the farm is to be diligent and do a job correctly the first time. Don't rush things. Take it slow. Be methodical.

Why he won't ride a horse:

I fell off a horse one time, going quite fast. I wasn't hurt but it rattled me. I want to say I was 6 or 7. Maybe I'm not a true cowboy because I didn't get back on. That's not really a cool moment ... A cool moment for me was breaking my first 4-H animal. Breaking means you have to teach them to lead. Being only eight years old, the animal is quite a lot bigger than you. They're scary; they move around. My first steer was named Pirate cause it had a goggle—the face was white and he had a red circle around his eyes. And I was really into Pirates of the Caribbean at the time too.



POPP AND HIS DAD FISHING IN STUART LAKE. "THAT WAS A JACK. OR A NORTHERN PIKE IF YOU WANT TO SOUND MORE FANCY. IT'S GOING TO BE TOUGH MOVING AWAY FROM HOME NEXT YEAR." // PHOTO BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS

Why he wants to be an engineer:

I'm very analytical. I love math. I love physics.

His first design project:

When I was around 10, my dad ran over my sister's bike. It was busted and we turned it into a unicycle. I like to create things. You have to see beyond the facts and try to find—I don't want to sound cheesy—but find the beauty in things that can be fixed and made into something else.

His special talent:

I can solve the Rubik's cube but I think a lot of people can solve the Rubik's cube and I'm not even that fast.

What people say about him being a hockey goalie:

There is a stigma that goalies are a little weird and when you get to the heart of it—this is me going on a rant—everybody's weird. You can't really say, 'Well, *they* are normal.' What is normal?



His nickname:

A couple of kids on my hockey team call me 'Mom' because I'm always the reasonable one. I'm always the one that says: 'Don't say that. Don't do that. We need to be on time. Just settle.'

Good advice he's received:

Now that I'm going into university, a lot of people have told me to take my time. Don't rush through. It's not about finishing as fast as you can.





FOR THE PINK THE RINK, POPP PLAYED IN HONOUR OF HIS AUNT, A BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR. "SHE THOUGHT IT WAS COOL." □
PHOTO BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS

Why he's a clean freak:

I like things to be organized. Like, when I work I first make sure my laptop is not at an angle with the table. I know that sounds weird. I like things to be square maybe. And my room is neat. I can't work in an environment that is cluttered.

Who he looks up to:

Both my parents. Everyday when I came home from school, they were both home. My parents have always been there, supporting me. I don't want to say they didn't push me but they weren't the parents that would ever tell me I need to play really well at a hockey game or I need to do really well on a test.

It's odd for an older sibling to say but I definitely look up to my younger sister. She is very calm with everything she does. She is very good with animals—maybe that's where it comes from.





How he sees himself:

Responsible. Reliable. Punctual—it sounds like I'm bragging. Analytical, I guess. And someone who tries hard at what they do. I don't really take things on if I know I can't commit to them. But don't quote me on that, I'm still learning.



This year, more than 1,500 students from across Canada competed for a Schulich Leader Scholarship. Philanthropist and business leader Seymour Schulich launched the \$100 million program in 2012 to support incoming undergraduate students pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and math. To date, 10 Schulich scholars have enrolled at the University of Manitoba.



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