



Grade 12 student Spencer Hancock sits on the front desk of the Ballenas Secondary School office with principal Rudy Terpstra. Hancock is the school's third winner of a prestigious Schulich Leader Scholarship in seven years — its second winner in two years. His award is for \$100,000 to attend UVic. — Adam Kveton Photo

## Third Ballenas student earns Schulich scholarship

Spencer Hancock headed to UVic with \$100,000 award

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For the second time in two years, and the third time in seven, a Ballenas student has earned a Schulich Leader Scholarship worth tens of thousands of dollars.

This year's recipient is Spencer Hancock, a prolific volunteer and hard-working student who said it's his competitive nature and a few key people in his life that have helped to lead him towards earning a \$100,000 award toward a mechanical engineering degree at the University of Victoria.

He also gives a lot of credit to the educators at Ballenas. "Our school plays a pretty big role," he said.

While good grades and participation in a very wide variety of clubs and extracurricular activities may be what Hancock is known for now, he said he hasn't always been the overachiever he is today.

But he has always been highly competitive.

“This year, I was given the opportunity to help build a 10×23-cm cube satellite, compete in an international rocket competition, write several math competitions, go to provincials in a French speech competition, and much more,” he said. The “much more” includes taking part in and being chosen as Best Delegate at two model UNs, being a leader for local initiatives with the school’s Interact Club, being a member of the jazz band, concert band and concert choir, and taking many pies to the face as a fundraiser at a recent spring carnival.

He credits much of that participation to knowing people who happen to be in those clubs or who run them, and being open to trying out new things.

The drive to get good grades came from his Grade 8 French Immersion teacher, Sophie Preston.

“I owe her all of my motivation, because she really inspired us in French Immersion to excel,” said Hancock. She had high expectations and gave plenty of homework, but would go above and beyond herself, teaching Hancock Latin when he showed an interest in languages.

With a lot of hard work, Hancock said he got reasonable grades that year (a feat as Preston is notoriously difficult to please, he said) and kept up that work ethic.

Going on a variety of exchanges to places such as Quebec and France (arranged with the help of his mom), and then participating in SD69’s Rivers, Oceans, and Mountain School (an outdoor leadership program which focuses on career preparation, work experience, adventure education and community leadership) in Grade 11 were other important points in Hancock’s school career, he said.

“When I came back from ROAMS, I really drove myself to do well,” he said, and began aiming for scholarships.

A Schulich Leader Scholarship was perhaps one of the more remote possibilities, but one that he pursued nonetheless with a nomination from Ballenas counsellor Gregory Meredith.

Finding out on April 12 he’d won the scholarship to UVic was a thrill, both personally and for the school, he said.

"I freaked out a little bit and gave Mr. Meredith a big old hug," said Hancock.

"We were all pretty excited, I think. Two in a row is exciting... and three total," he said, some of that competitive streak showing through.

Those previous winners are Gibson Clark in 2017 and Kyle Wamer in 2012.

Hancock noted that much of his learning is due to taking advantage of what is made available through his school, and the passion of teachers.

"The award shows how students in a public school are provided a rich variety of learning opportunities," said Ballenas principal Rudy Terpstra.

"While the award does consider academic merit, it is the leadership and learning opportunities that make this award that much more prestigious... (Clark and Hancock) have gone well beyond just top grades: they have taken advantage of all the learning and leadership opportunities available to them through the school, the community and beyond."

"We're not the most privileged school by any means," noted Hancock. "But the teachers here wouldn't let you know that... except the track and field teachers. They complain constantly about our track... give our track more funding!"

For others pursuing lofty scholarship goals, or seeking to have a better high school experience in general, Hancock said everyone's educational emphasis is different, but suggested getting involved in clubs and leadership groups to get a broad spectrum of experience.

Clearly, that will remain a focus of his. Hancock said he plans to work as a junior wildfire fighter with the Errington fire base this summer.