

## FUN FACTS

### The AMS Name

AMS stands for Alma Mater Society, an unusual name for a student society because the term “alma mater” is usually associated with alumni, not current students. Queen's is the only other Canadian university that uses that name for its current students, and that's only because their AMS originally included alumni. When McGill University's students started up a student society, they copied the Queen's name, and we copied McGill (because we used to be associated with McGill). McGill's students changed their name, but we never did. And that's why we have our unusual name.



Left to Right: UBC, Queen's and McGill student society logos.

### Short But Sweet

The AMS's first president was also one of its shortest serving. Sherwood Lett, who had been involved with drafting the first constitution for UBC's new Alma Mater Society and who had been president of the Alma Mater Society at UBC's predecessor, McGill University College of British Columbia, was elected president in October 1915. However, later that fall he enlisted to fight in World War I and left for Europe, being replaced as president by John Mulhern.



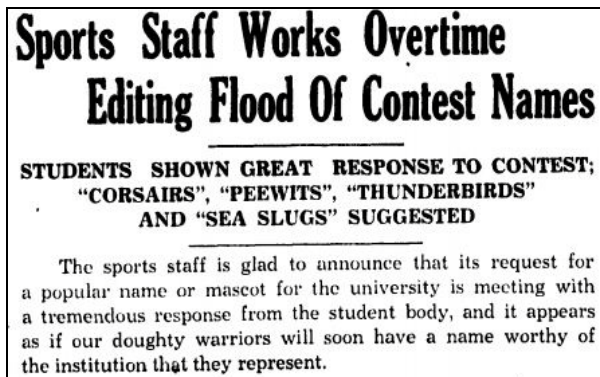
Sherwood Lett, photo available online [here](#).

## Give Me a U

The earliest cheerleaders at UBC were all male and were known as yell leaders. The chief yell leader was the Yell King.

## Thunderbirds versus Seagulls

Did you know that the UBC Thunderbird sports teams were nearly called the Seagulls? Back in 1933, when UBC's teams still had no name, the student paper, the *Ubyyssey*, ran a name-the-team contest and the winner, as voted on by the students, was Seagulls! The paper's sports editor decided this was a ridiculous name (though there are lots of seagulls in Vancouver) and so another contest was held. The premise seems to have been that the students should keep voting until they picked the right candidate.



Ubyyssey article about the contest from Friday, December 1, 1933.

In the second election, Thunderbird won, and the name (which refers to a legendary First Nations creature) was later officially approved for use by William Scow, a First Nations chief, at halftime ceremonies at at 1948 football game. At the same time, the AMS received a specially carved totem pole containing an image of the Thunderbird.



Which mascot is better? Left: UBC Thunderbird. Right: Seagull.

View the full-sized photo of the Thunderbird on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).

Seagull mascot costume available [here](#).

## Jokers

Back in the 1940's there was a student Jokers Club on campus. The Jokers ran around in pyjamas and did weird things. In 1947 they organized a frog race, which had several strict rules: (a) No female frogs to be placed near the race as distractions for the male racing frogs; (b) no disguised toads or grasshoppers; (c) no administering of alcoholic or narcotic stimulants to frog contestants.



Photo of the Jokers Club from the 1947 Totem. Example of a frog race. Photo from [here](#).

## Kidnapped!

In the early 1950's Allan Fotheringham, later a noted Canadian journalist, was a columnist and then the editor-in-chief of the *Ubyyssey*. In his column, Campus Chaff, he tended to poke fun at Engineering students, who in revenge kidnapped him three times. One time they left him chained to the Birks Clock downtown. Another time they marooned him at Horseshoe Bay.



Allan Fotheringham being presented with 1988 Great Trekker Award by AMS President Tim Bird. View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).

## Sex

In January 1973 the president of the Arts Undergraduate Society, Brian Loomes, called on students to show up naked on campus to protest plans to restrict student powers and "in order to eroticize the university." The *Ubyyssey* wrote an editorial condemning the idea.

For years the Engineers organized an annual Lady Godiva ride during Engineering Week, parading a naked or semi-naked woman across campus on a horse. After protests, they finally stopped the event in 1989.



Female student on horseback at the Lady Godiva Ride, February 1987. Photograph by Neil Lucente.  
View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).

## Drugs

SAC (the Student Administrative Commission), the AMS body that oversees clubs, used to be called the Literary and Scientific Department, and was referred to as LSD.



Photo of the LSD from the 1923 Totem.

## Rock & Roll

In November 1994 in one of the many attempts to achieve quorum at a general meeting, the AMS threw a free rock concert featuring the band Spirit of the West. It didn't work, though: not enough people showed up to make quorum.



## Violence

In the 1960's, urged on by radical U.S. leader Jerry Rubin, thousands of UBC students occupied the old Faculty Club (now the Sage Bistro), causing much damage.



Jerry Rubin, American protestor, at UBC on Invasion Day October 1968. Photograph by Visser.  
View the fullsize photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).



**STUDENTS LEAVE** faculty club the morning after. Invasion of private prof sanctuary was led by U.S. Yippie Jerry Rubin, Oct. 24, 1968.

From the September 8, 1970 edition of the *Ubyyssey*.

## Elections

In the AMS Executive elections of 1975, the results for one position were a tie. The winner was decided by the toss of a coin.



Photo by Robbie Biller. Fullsized photo available [here](#).

In the same election, pranksters nominated a UBC administrator for an Executive position. The administrator knew nothing about this, and of course did not campaign, but still came second among four candidates.

### Recount nets tie

An official recount of Wednesday's Alma Mater Society election for internal affairs officer has Students' Coalition candidate Tom Manson and Student Unity's Jennifer Fuller tied with 963 votes each.

Returning officer Murray Wynn said what happens next will be decided by the AMS elections committee.

President-elect Jake van der Kamp said he expects the committee will call a new election.

This was the only result affected by the recounts. The others whose elections were confirmed were van der Kamp; David Van Blarcom, vice-president; Dave Theessen, secretary; Lynne Batten, coordinator; Stewart Savard, external affairs; and Ellen Paul, secretary.

Wynn also said the results of the election for ombudsperson would stand, despite the fact that university bursar William White's name had been entered.

Eileen Brown, education 3, was declared winner after White's votes had been removed from the count and redistributed according to preferential votes.

Article on how the prank effected the election from the February 7, 1975 edition of the *Ubyyssey*.

For five years in the late 70's, there were no direct elections for AMS President or other AMS Executives. Instead, Council chose the President and the Executives.

## Resignations

In 1971 the students in a referendum voted down the program of the AMS Executive. The Executive had promised to resign if they lost, and they did. A whole new Executive was elected in by-elections.

## Growth

In UBC's first year (1915-16) there were less than 400 students, and Student Council had eight members. Now there are close to 50,000 students, and Student Council has over 40 members.



Large crowd of students gathered around the Fairview Arts Building in 1920.  
Photograph by George Van Whitby.

View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).



Students enjoying Block Party 2010

View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).

## Beer and David Suzuki

David Suzuki, the noted environmentalist, came up with the name for The Pit. Then a biology professor at UBC, he wrote an article called "What This Campus Needs is a Pub" and while serving on an AMS committee looking into the idea suggested the name, which was quickly adopted. The Pit opened in temporary quarters in the SUB in 1968. It moved to its current location on the lower level of the SUB in 1973.

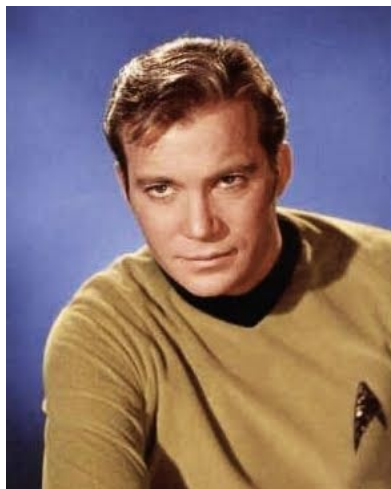
All this marked a big change for the AMS, which until at least the 1940's had prohibited the consumption of alcohol at its events.



David Suzuki giving a lecture at UBC in 1990. Photograph by Calvin Dang.  
View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).

### Star Trek

In commemoration of the Great Trek of 1922, the AMS gives out the Great Trekker award most years, honouring notable alumni. One year the Engineers stole the Great Trekker trophy and had engraved on it, as that year's winner of the award, "James T. Kirk, Great Trekker."



Left: Not really a Great Trekker, William Shatner as Captain James T. Kirk. Image from [here](#).  
Right: The Great Trekker Award.



### All in the Family

There's a picture of Justin Trudeau's grandfather on the walls of the Student Union Building. One of the composite photos of Student Council members displays James Sinclair, whose daughter Margaret later married Pierre Trudeau.



Left: James Sinclair in the 1927 Totem.  
Centre: Margaret and Pierre Trudeau. View original photo [here](#).  
Right: Justin Trudeau. Original photo available online [here](#).

### Prime Ministers

Two student politicians from UBC have gone on to be Prime Minister of Canada: John Turner and Kim Campbell. Turner served on Student Council as the Coordinator of Activities and also was sports editor of the *Ubyyssey*. Campbell was Frosh President and later an AMS Vice-President. In one of her campaigns, her slogan was "Kim is cuddlier."



John Turner reminiscing about his days with the *Ubyyssey* in 1988.  
View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).



Left: Kim Campbell's AMS Vice President photo from 1967.  
View the full-sized photo on the Alma Mater Society Image Collection [here](#).  
Right: Kim Campbell's campaign slogan as pictured in the 1965 Totem.

### The Year of No Ubyyssey

Begun by the AMS in 1918 as the official student newspaper at UBC, the *Ubyyssey* was published continuously from then until 1994, when differences with the AMS (still its publisher at that point) led to its shutdown for the entire 1994-95 year. It was reborn in 1995-96 as an independent publication, separate from the AMS.



We Want Our Babies Back! (San Francisco, June 1993)  
photo ©1993, Ted Younging

The March 31, 1994 cover of the *Ubyyssey*, the last issue from 1994.