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# Local teacher wins provincial scholarship

Nanaimo teacher and Vancouver Island University student Laura Tait has received a \$10,000 provincial scholarship from the New Relationship Trust (NRT), an independent non-profit organization dedicated to supporting First Nations in BC.



**Local teacher and VIU Master of Education student  
Laura Tait**

Tait, currently enrolled in VIU's Master of Education in Educational Leadership, also received \$1,500 from the Chief Joe Mathias BC Aboriginal Scholarship Fund and \$3,200 from the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

"Laura Tait is an outstanding teacher and scholar," said Dr. Harry Janzen, VIU's Dean of Education. "She brings great intellectual curiosity and incisive thinking to her masters work. She is very deserving of this scholarship. We hope Laura will carry on with doctoral studies after completing her current studies."

Tait wears many hats. She is a student, wife, mother and full-time district Aboriginal education teacher for the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District. Last year, she enrolled in VIU's new Master of Education program aimed at working teachers on Vancouver Island who want to increase their leadership skills and upgrade their education. Classes are offered on weekends and during the summer at the Nanaimo campus.

Earlier this semester, Tait completed classes on Friday and Saturday, and gave birth to her second child Eli. Two weeks later, she was back in the classroom. "As a mother and working professional, I couldn't do this any other way," said Tait. "I could not leave my family and job to pursue my education in Vancouver or Victoria. I'm grateful to have this opportunity close to home."

It's her second stint at VIU. Tait graduated from the post-baccalaureate Education program in 1998 after earning an undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria. While completing her degree, Tait took time to travel the world and meet interesting people including a snake wrangler, a river guide in the Himalayas, basketball-playing Buddhist monks and ambassadors. "I admired each person I met for being totally unique," she said. "They didn't limit their imaginations in choosing their work."

Tait said VIU's teacher training program prepared her professionally, intellectually and emotionally to tackle the huge challenge of teaching kids. She moved overseas to travel and teach in Taiwan. Four years later, she returned to her Vancouver Island roots, going from a city of five million in Asia to teaching in a village of 500 in Bella Coola.

Tait joined the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District in 2004. She looks forward to being amongst the first graduates from VIU's master's program in June 2010. "Education, whatever form it takes, has a profound effect on your adult life," she said. "I tell my students to get an education, take risks and do the unexpected. That's how I try to live my life."

**VIU Writing Team**  
[Marilyn.Assaf@viu.ca](mailto:Marilyn.Assaf@viu.ca)  
[Bruce.Patterson@viu.ca](mailto:Bruce.Patterson@viu.ca)

