

Med student invents game for teaching world affairs to teens

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Listening to David Poon talk about his creation, a game called *Economic Flags*, is a little like listening to children talk about their hopes for Christmas morning: there's a little trepidation, but it's completely overshadowed by excitement.

Poon, a medical student at the University of Alberta, thinks he's found a way to get high-school students interested in global affairs and engaged with the goings-on of global politics and economics by presenting real-world situations that are part economics, part co-operation, and part adversarial tactics.

Poon explained that the game was born from a larger project.

"I started a chapter of a group here, Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), and their goal is to create social change through business education. So my goal was to do something in high schools, and *Economic Flags* came out of that."

But Poon's real interest in developing *Economic Flags*—essentially a card game—stemmed from his own lack of knowledge on international affairs and the fact that the opportunity to learn about them never arose during his own high-school years.

"Admittedly, I have an interest in multiculturalism, and I'm interested in economics," he explains. "These are two aspects that were not taught to me in high school. I didn't know very much about the world; I still don't know why my Canadian dollar is worth more on eBay now, and that's a big deal."

Economic Flags manages to teach students something very complex in a relatively simple way. A minimum of eight students are broken into eight teams, each representing one of Venezuela, India, China, Japan, the UK, Germany, the US, and Canada. Each team is then given three sets of cards that set out the kind of resources they have, their goals for importing, and cultural aims. The cultural goals are things that affect your economy aside from money. For instance, Poon explains that a



ARE YOU GAME? Poon hopes *Flags* will become part of social studies classes.

cultural goal for team Venezuela is to avoid trading with the US. This is due to the strained real-world relationship between the two countries.

The game consists of three rounds, each representing one year, but only taking roughly ten minutes to play.

In the first round, teams attempt to buy and sell resources at the best possible rates. During the second round, wildcard events are thrown at each team—things such as global warming, stock market crashes, civil war, or even a visit from Bono—that affect how much money they have to work with during the round. The final round has each team investing in other countries in hopes of capitalizing on one another's successes.

Though the game only takes about a half hour to play, teams experience a microcosm of global affairs by the end. Poon says that so far, the reaction has been overwhelming.

"My favourite story is when team China, back in Saskatoon, physically surrounded team Canada to intimidate them into a sale," he grins. "Although, I don't think the image will ever leave my head [of] team

America telling team China that Japanese cars are garbage in order to make their sale. And then they physically jumped on a table to try to push a sale. So I'd say the response has been very positive."

It may seem strange for a med student to invest so much time and energy into such a product, but Poon says that a strong knowledge of economics is important even to those in the medical trade.

"Medicine and economics actually cross quite a bit. For example, did you know that 40 per cent of our provincial budget goes to health care? That's a large chunk. If doctors continue to ignore that connection, it will be very poorly managed money."

While the game is still in its early stages and currently undergoing the patent process, Poon hopes to keep it a part of his life for a while and to help an increasing number of students learn about international affairs in the meantime.

"The goal, still, is high-school students and eventually getting it integrated into a high-school curriculum," he says.

CAMPUS CRIME BEAT

Compiled by Cody Civiero

LAUNDRY MONEY LAUNDERED

At about 4pm on 5 November, an office on the second floor of the General Services Building was broken into. There were signs of forced entry, and a jar of coins was stolen. There are no suspects.

FATHER KNOWS BEST

On 6 November, a vehicle was stopped for several Traffic Safety Act offences, including running a red light. The driver of the vehicle stopped in the area of 115 Street; however, as the officer approached the vehicle, it sped away at a high speed. EPS was advised of the last direction of travel, and CSS contacted the owner of the vehicle by phone. A short time later, the owner of the vehicle attended CSS with his son, who was operating the vehicle at the time of the offence, to "straighten things out." The 17-year-old was issued violation notices for several offences under the Traffic Safety Act.

PARK YOUR ASS SOMEWHERE ELSE

During the early hours of 8 November, there was a report of a male sleeping inside the parking booth in the parkade of the Timms Centre. Officers attended the area and located a male inside the parking booth. He had gained access by climbing through a window. The male had no University affiliation, and was escorted from the building.

A FEW BUTTONS SHORT OF A REMOTE

Around noon on 8 November, staff in the Administration Building reported hearing someone punching buttons on an exterior door on the third-floor stairwell. They opened the door and spoke with an unknown male, who couldn't explain why he was punching buttons on the door. The male was described as being in his 30s, 5'5", with long greasy hair, a black baseball cap, and a rough complexion. The male was last seen walking into SUB, but was not located by CSS.

TWO MINUTES FOR STEALING

At 1pm on 10 November, there was a report of several thefts from the Clare Drake arena change room number six. Person(s) unknown entered the change room while the team was playing hockey.

Property and wallets valued at over \$3000 were stolen. A male was seen in the area at the time that the thefts occurred, and was described as a white male in his 30s, wearing a three-quarter-length jacket and talking on a cell phone. Several wallets were later recovered in nearby garbage cans. CSS is still investigating.

A BAD CASE OF THE MUNCHIES

On 11 November at noon, unknown individuals damaged a concession machine on the first-floor student lounge in St Joseph's College. The bottom-right corner of the glass had been smashed, and it appeared that several snacks had been stolen.

ACCESS DENIED

On 12 November at about noon, there were reports of a suspicious male in the Cameron Library basement study hall trying different computers and asking people for their CCID and passwords. Officers attended to the area and located the male in the basement. The 47-year-old male smelled of liquor and also had open liquor with him. He had no University affiliation, and was charged with trespassing and escorted from campus.

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