

CBC journalist lives in the present but is informed by the past



By Lisa Arsenault

Broadcast journalist Ian Hanoomansingh ('83; honorary degree '03) lives in the present, delivering the latest in national and international news nightly as host of CBC's *Canada Now*. But it was his past experience at Mount A and radio stations in Amherst and Moncton that allowed him to combine a passion for journalism with studies in sociology and political science leading him to where he is today. "Back when I was on campus, there didn't seem to be an obvious path to the career I dreamt of, but when I look back, it is clear there has been a direct link from what I did at Mount A and the jobs that came afterward."

Having grown up in Sackville, Ian says attending Mount Allison was a natural choice. "I came very close to going to a university with a formal journalism program, but my parents convinced me that Mount A was the better choice. Not because they are alumni, but because they — quite correctly, it turns out — said a broad education in a variety of topics would serve me better than focusing on journalism,

which I was going to study and develop on my own anyway. Staying in Sackville, on a campus I knew well, was a bonus."

While nurturing a love for broadcast journalism by starting out at CKDH, Ian was originally interested in Mount Allison's history and political science programs, though it was sociology that he ultimately connected with. "The sociology department allowed me to study the things I was interested in," he said. "I have to admit in the first year at Mount A, my courses seemed just like courses — something to study and learn, but when I took my first sociology course, in second year, everything clicked." Ian graduated in '83 as his class valedictorian and went on to get a law degree. "As with my BA, I went to law school not to be a lawyer, but to get a broader background for a career as a reporter."

This year, he marks his twentieth year as a full-time journalist. "I know it seems like a cliché, but I really do love my job. Not every minute of every day, of course. But, overall, every day has something very interesting. Add assignments like the Turin Olympics or the LA riots and how can you not love a job like this?" Ian often gives speeches to audiences, which, he says, tend to be very cynical about journalism. "I think they are surprised when I suggest to them how well served they are by the news media. Yes, there is bad reporting. Yes, sound bites are just a few seconds long. But when you think about it, a wide variety of viewpoints get articulated in this country. We deliver information quickly and, generally, accurately about a lot of events every day. Nothing makes you appreciate this more than going to a country where censorship or overly cautious media allow rumour and innuendo to fuel public debate and public policy."

Ian spends his free time with his wife and two sons and has recently seen one of his teenage ideas come to fruition — a hockey board game he designed called *Big League Manager*. "It's funny to see something that began on poster board and recipe cards in our kitchen in Sackville 30 years ago on store shelves in Vancouver!"

Is this a new career direction? "This is definitely just a hobby but there are some similarities with my day job. I know about as much now about the board game business as I did back in '79 about broadcast journalism, which is virtually nothing. But it sure is fun learning." ■