

The Daily News (Kamloops)

Homegrown boy 'playing around' at math with world's best

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A graduate of Kamloops secondary school is among 30 math whizzes from around the world attending a one-month camp at Simon Fraser University to solve real-world problems.

Robert Kehoe grew up in the city and attended the University of British Columbia after graduation.

He was accepted to the MITACS (Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems) program at SFU, along with students from institutions that include University of California-Berkeley, Harvard University as well as Canadian universities and others overseas.

"The idea of the program is we get to work and play around," said Kehoe, who just graduated from UBC with a bachelor of applied science degree in engineering and physics.

"We're free to experiment and come up with ideas."

Kehoe's group of five students will spend the month working on a program posed by Sky Research involving detection of unexploded military ordinance.

Students will use high-level mathematics and physics to solve a problem that may save lives at former war zones and military artillery testing areas.

"These rounds have inherent magnetic properties," the 24-year-old said in a telephone interview from SFU's Burnaby Mountain campus.

"They want us to find out what happens to the magnetic properties when it hits the ground."

Other problems posed by B.C. companies being studied by students at the MITACS camp are modelling energy consumption of buildings and developing a queuing theory model for hospital beds.

Each group is overseen by an SFU graduate student.

Kehoe said he is unsure of his future following the math camp, including whether he'll continue his studies in graduate school or enter the labour force.

KEHOE

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