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## **Aha! Probe of world's math minds nets top grad award**

Contact: Media & Public Relations, [Phone removed]

May 31, 2004

Peter Liljedahl probed the great mathematical minds of the world to learn more about the actual moment when math suddenly makes sense. His exploration of what is known as the Aha! experience was carried out to determine its relevance for improving the teaching of mathematical problem-solving.

His work has been described as impressive and ground-breaking doctoral research. His thesis passed with no revisions. It also positioned Liljedahl as the top candidate for SFU's highest graduate award, the Governor-General's gold medal.

Liljedahl's efforts have also culminated in a tenure-track assistant professorship in SFU's faculty of education. He plans to both teach and carry on with his research in mathematics education. "I work in the area of how problem-solving and discovery can affect students' cognitive and affective domains; that is, what do they learn, and how does learning through this mode impact on their beliefs and attitudes about mathematics, as well as their ability to do mathematics," says Liljedahl. "By distilling the essence of these experiences we can make use of them in the classroom, creating better mathematical experiences for students," adds the former math teacher, who also competed for Sweden in the one-man canoe race at the 1992 Olympics. "Math is typically perceived as being a highly logical and deductive field of activity, but the truth is, there are all sorts of non-logical processes involved, such as intuition, creativity, insight, and imagination".

The Port Moody father of three says the Aha! experience is more closely linked to those processes and is often described as a moment of significant clarity or insight. Such experiences can have a profound transformative effect on individuals involved in the subject, Liljedahl says.