

The Toronto Platoon



In the heart of downtown Toronto, four scientists battle their way each day to the Food Research Laboratory at Ryerson University. For what reasons do they daily brave this urban battlefield? Is it their unwavering devotion to their fearless leader, D errick Rousseau? Is it the honey crullers and medium double-doubles at the campus Tim Hortons? Well, yes, and yes, but more than this it is also their quest to elucidate the structural complexities of phase-separated hydrogels.

Shane Hodge is the munitions expert. He keeps the lab's arsenal of instruments fully locked and loaded, while also being the resident microscopist and "go-to" guy. Shane completed his M.A.Sc. at Ryerson University and thus knows the lay of the land quite well.

Simon Vieth has been with the platoon since being drafted in the fall of 2004. He comes to the group from the engineering corps of Ryerson University (B.Eng. 2004) and brings with him cool-headed, methodical research tactics. His project is focussed on understanding the phase-separation mechanism so as to achieve control over the hydrogel microstructure.

Rizwan Khan is the Platoon's intelligence operative. He was assigned to the platoon after completing the multidisciplinary Chemistry & Biology training program at Ryerson University (B.Sc. 2004). Rizwan brings his seemingly in-exhaustive insights into biological and chemical considerations to the hydrogels project. His mission is to coordinate and monitor the controlled evacuation of marker molecules from various hydrogel entrapment facilities.

Alireza Abbasi is the most recent recruit in the platoon. He just enlisted this September. He was decorated with a bachelor's degree in Iran (B.A.Sc. 1994). Being now in the early stages of his Master's program he is currently working on a directed studies course and is preparing his strategy of attack for his thesis mission. While the details of his mission are top secret at this time, it is known that he will be looking at cross-linking in hydrogels.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill: "We shall gel on the beaches, we shall phase-separate in the fields and in the streets, we shall analyze in the hills; we shall never have our claims repudiated!"

Text: Shane Hodge

Photo: Ludivine Leverre