



Rick Loughran — The Province

**Grad student Brent Stafford thinks some video games breed violence.**

# Hooked on video games

**By John Bermingham**  
Education Reporter

Teen 'gamers' are so absorbed in their video game universe, parents don't know the half of it.

Young video game players — especially boys aged 11 to 17 — are being increasingly numbed to the effects of violence.

They are also getting so hooked to the point where the kids freely admit they are addicted.

Brent Stafford, a 29-year-old Simon Fraser University communications grad student, has produced a new documentary on this form of play called *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Play*.

Video games have replaced other forms of play, he said.

A former CBC TV reporter in Kelowna, Stafford says video

games are designed to capture a child's attention with what he calls 'ingredients of compulsion'.

"They design a video game to integrate the kid's imagination in with the game," he said.

"It's all structured around keeping the kids playing."

The video-game industry is estimated to be worth \$17 billion U.S. a year worldwide.

Stafford says that heavy gamers become isolated and give up other activities.

"It's very difficult for them to realize that maybe their video-game playing has become a problem in their life," he said.

"They make friends around the games, but when they're together, the interaction-level is 'usually grunts and groans and, 'hey, I killed you'."

"Video-games are playing a large role in desensitizing children to violence," said Stafford, especially the 'shooter' games when the player has a physical gun in their hand.

"With a video-game, you are actually pulling the trigger yourself. So as the kid, you decide to kill. You are an active participant in the violence."

A heavy gamer can kill 1,000 people a week, said Stafford.

"There is no doubt that there is training going on."

Evidence shows that recent mass killers in the U.S. have been video addicts.

Stafford found that parents are failing to monitor video-games their kids play.

"It's really key for parents to become active in their children's gaming," he said.