

Graffiti

THE VOICE OF NORTH TORONTO C.I.



editorial

COVID-19

Parent-child relationships through the pandemic

NT students struggle to maintain positive relationships with their parents while stuck at home.

Sofiia Savchyn
Emelia Grossman
Senior Advisory Board

Many aspects of regular life have come crumbling down in this pandemic, and alternate ways to learn, work, and interact have been embraced. From tears and screams to hugs and kisses, the last nine months in isolation proved to be one of, if not the most, turbulent periods for family relationships. Between trying to maintain autonomy, managing school, and handling stress, the tensions of the pandemic posed unique challenges for many students. Through our conversations with students at North Toronto, we explored how these obstacles affected teens’ relationships with their parents or guardians.

In the years preceding adulthood, the race to become independent is one that many high school students aim to win, and for various reasons. “To me, autonomy is the freedom to respect yourself, to make your own decisions, accept the consequences, and learn from them,” describes an anonymous grade 11 student at North Toronto. Autonomy builds up gradually and is a sign of natural separation from your parents and the formation of your own identity. It takes many forms and varies from person to person, but independence is crucial to the healthy evolution of the character and familial relationships. However, during the pandemic, the necessary health precautions that are currently in place have collided with the expectations NT students have had for their newfound autonomy. Of course, this has affected their relationships with their parents. “We’re constantly surrounded by our family, and they’re trying to keep tabs and manage everything we’re doing, even though this is a time in our life where we want to be trying things ourselves and learning,” states the grade 11. For many people, it has been a great challenge to reconcile with the notion of their lost freedom.

The striving for independence stretches beyond a primitive rebellious desire, one that is so stigmatized by the media. Forming meaningful friendships, being free to travel, and to express oneself through one’s passion are all positive outcomes of gaining autonomy. Unfortunately, with teenagers’ options greatly limited right now,

searching for a new social outlet can serve as a ground for a conflict between teens and their parents.

Conflicts with parental figures can cause serious adverse effects on the minds of teenagers. In conjunction with the struggles teens are facing these days, such as social isolation, stress from virtual school, and growing responsibilities, fighting with one’s parents can be extremely frustrating and mentally exhausting. In a recent survey, nearly 30% of North Toronto students from grades 9 - 12 rated the frequency of fighting with their parents 8-10 on a 10 point scale, where 10 represented “not a day goes by without a fight.”

It becomes clear that many North Toronto students find themselves in a never-ending battle with their parental figures. Kiara Distin, a grade 11 North Toronto student, says that “All of this fighting because of COVID-19 is extremely draining and brings out a not great side of both of my parents.” These conflicts can affect other aspects of a student’s life, as well as damage how teens view and trust their parents/guardians.

On top of these issues, there are the added pressures of unfamiliar online learning. On its own, the virtual school is hard on students, but then there are the additional challenges of how parents are dealing with it. Of the students surveyed, 55.6% listed school as a factor that has made their relationship with their parents worse over these past months.

As grade 12 student Marina Papachristos states, students are often “cooped up in [their] room[s] doing homework all the time.” In her case, this has possibly prevented some conflicts with her parents, however, this has also been the root cause of many fights for many students. Parents, who are so used to telling their kids to get off devices and interact with people face to face, are now struggling to understand that their whole lives are virtual. “I get in trouble for being on my phone or computer too much, but that’s the only way I have to communicate with people right now,” says the anonymous grade 11.

When parents treat the only way of communication their children have with the outside world as a negative concept, teens feel even more isolated and resentful. Many students encounter difficulties with parents who struggle to grasp the necessity of virtual engagement for their child’s education and get badgered for their poor time management. The

combined effects of these two stressful situations – conflicts with parents and pressure from school – can lead to devastating mental health effects.

The pressures of the pandemic have forced teens to adjust, but for many, it comes with a great deal of stress, mental health decline, and its physical repercussions such as hair loss, nausea, insomnia, headaches, muscle pains, and mood swings. As a primary occupant of students’ time, school has significant power over their stress levels and general wellbeing. “I’m not getting proper sleep. I’m dependent on caffeine. I can’t focus. It’s all of these things that are just accumulating, your body’s telling you this is not right. I’m tired and I’m stressed and I’m just not right,” Marina Papachristos, grade 12 NT student shared.

In these uncertain times, our emotions are like a huge load held up mid-air by a single thread, ready to plummet at any time, and it often does. Our emotional overload is most heavily experienced by the people we trust. “I tend to give the people closest to me the worst parts of me,” says Papachristos, and she is not alone in feeling this way. It is the people we love that we most often take for granted and get frustrated with. However, despite all the negative emotions and obstacles that came between parents and their children during the pandemic, there are moments of intimacy that can not be matched. “They’ve always been there for me when things have gone poorly,” recalls Papachristos.

The pandemic’s unprecedented circumstances have been shown to put immense strain on the already tricky relationships between teenagers and their parents. Through the hardships of school, loss of autonomy, conflicts with their family and friends, and struggles with their wellbeing, this year has changed everyone. As we move into the second year of this pandemic, we have to acknowledge that parents and their children will always go head to head, but addressing the factors discussed in this article is one step towards a healthier parent-child relationship. Even those who feel like their relationship is unsalvageable have to make compromises so both parents and teens can live through these uncertain times. Although we have to sit tight and wait for the pandemic to improve, the same cannot be said for improving our relationships.

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Instagram: @ntcigraffiti
Website: www.ntcigraffiti.com
Email: ntcigraffiti@gmail.com
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SOCIAL MEDIA

The world of social media: Do we really understand it?

Photo courtesy of **Cyberbullying Research Centre**

Julian Lewis
Arisa Roy
Junior Advisory Board

Social media apps like Tik Tok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter and so many more define the parameters of our lives. They connect us to the rest of the world when we feel isolated, bored, or lonely. Our need to bond through social media has become particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis, as more and more people feel isolated from others. But how does the usage of these platforms affect our mental and emotional health?

Within social media and the internet at large, there are several issues that people, teenagers in particular, face. In an anonymous survey con-

ducted about social media use at North Toronto, 60% of the respondents said that they have experienced hate such as racism and homophobia online.

Additionally, almost everybody in our generation has experienced some form of cyberbullying. Besides the fact that it's online, it has one fundamental difference from normal bullying: anonymity. On the internet, you can say and do whatever you want without the fear of real-life consequences. For many internet influencers, cyberbullying is a part of the job. Lilly Singh, a South Asian Canadian YouTuber, among other professions, explained in one video how she chooses to ignore them. She says that what helps is knowing that whoever is writing them is probably not doing so well.

Social media has become a place where perfection is perceived as reality. As explained by an anonymous

respondent on the survey, "social media skews your perspective of the world." People spend hours looking at online feeds and the comparisons made to other people's so-called "perfect" lives become inevitable. "It is toxic to see a fabricated version of everyone's lives," wrote an NT student in response to an anonymous survey. This can often result in depression and anxiety, which can progress to clinical levels. According to the Child Mind Institute, a non-profit organization that supports children with mental illnesses, a study of over half a million eighth through twelfth-graders discovered that the number of teenagers exhibiting high levels of depressive symptoms increased by 33% from 2010 to 2015.

Cyberbullying is not just an issue on social media though; it's also a huge problem in the gaming community. There are billions of re-

ports that gamers have filed claiming verbal harassment from other players. As well, sexism is omnipresent in this community. A study published in the *Frontiers in Psychology* journal demonstrated that general video game exposure was significantly related to sexism irrespective of age or gender. Bullies in online games are commonly referred to as "griefers" and they often express their hate in one of two ways. The first way is when they harass the victim for the duration of the game, then leave the victim alone afterwards. The second is less common but more persistent; the griever will constantly harass the victim with toxic messages and track them down on other games, almost to the point that it can transition into real-life bullying.

"There are only two industries that call their customers 'users:' illegal drugs and social media," as mentioned in Netflix's new hit *The Social Dilemma*. Addiction to these platforms is so extreme, that it has even been compared to drug addiction. According to an article by *Addictioncenter.com*, there are fundamental similarities within the amount of dopamine (defined by *healthline.com* as a neurotransmitter associated with pleasurable sensations) released in the brain when social media addiction occurs, as when you become addicted to drugs. Digital technology is so accessible that it's a go-to when you are feeling down. Children as young as four years old are now using cell phones, and youth as young as seven have apps such as Instagram. If we don't educate people on the dangers of this medium, the rate of severe mental health issues is going to continue to grow.

While much of social media is negative, there are several benefits too. The survey mentioned previously in the article asked students why they use social media and all respondents said, "to stay connected with friends and family." Especially during the pandemic, we turn to technology to maintain connections. Additionally, many students said they use it to keep up with what is going on at school, follow people's work, and share messages. With digital advocacy, figures such as Greta Thunberg, a climate activist from Sweden, turned to social media to continue to fight for climate action. "We'll have to find new ways to create public awareness & advocate for change", says Thunberg in a tweet when the Coronavirus pandemic began.

Balance is key, especially for social media. So in conclusion, our advice is to explore the many options you have for protecting yourself from intrusive or misleading sources and specific messages. Turn off notifications, unfollow people who have nothing useful to contribute to your thoughts and beliefs, and set times to be online and times to be offline. Although social media can negatively impact our moods and sense of wellbeing, it can also mobilize the world and bring us all closer together.



COVID-19

Taking transit during the COVID-19 pandemic

Mikayla Toplis
Photography Editor

Whether it's the bus, subway or streetcar, thousands of people use the TTC every day. Since the start of the pandemic, ridership has decreased as jobs be-

to this policy. When getting on the bus, one can see drivers who have chosen to wear their mask as an ear accessory rather than a shield for their nose and mouth. However, bus drivers are no exception to this policy. "Drivers have to wear a mask at all times while on TTC property, including when they are in their driver area," commented a TTC employee. There are no circumstances when a driver

not have a restriction on the number of passengers permitted per bus, which can lead to overcrowding during rush hours. If a driver feels that the bus is too full, they can contact their supervisors who will look to add more buses to the route, but this is not always possible. Ultimately, the driver does not have the right to turn away passengers, which applies to people who are not wearing masks. The driver can

Jaye Robinson on the TTC website. "By providing opportunities to purchase inexpensive PPE in stations, we can do our part to encourage this continued effort on the part of our customers," said TTC CEO, Rick Leary. He continued, "safety is a core value at the TTC and we want to make sure that our customers feel safe on all our vehicles and in our stations. We are always looking for new ways to enhance safety



Photo by Mikalya Toplis

gan to move online and more people chose to stay home. However, those who don't have that option of working at home had to decide whether to walk, bike, or hop on the TTC to get where they need to be. As the weather changes and temperatures start to drop, more people are likely to choose public transit rather than travelling through the harsh cold and snow. One problem that an increase in passengers may impose is crowded vehicles and therefore less physical distancing. Not only is this a problem in itself, but with people refusing to wear masks the issue increases, putting TTC employees and the public at risk. One change for all TTC employees this year was the requirement to wear a mask while on the job. As of September 17th, all TTC employees were required to wear a mask or face-covering while at work, including bus drivers behind their plexiglass barriers. Throughout this pandemic, many people have noticed both passengers and drivers failing to adhere

may be excused from wearing a mask. In addition to masks, drivers are provided with face shields, gloves, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, and safety goggles; all in an effort to help protect passengers and the drivers' fellow co-workers. For drivers who require glasses, the TTC provides them with anti-fog wipes to help prevent their glasses from fogging up. Passengers who are worried about their TTC driver not properly wearing their personal protective equipment (PPE) can contact the TTC website, TTC Twitter, or call customer service with their concerns. Although bus drivers have been found without masks, one more frequent problem is the passengers themselves. When looking around, one can see people eating food or talking on their phones with their masks resting on their chins. Others decide that their need to sit down and scroll through Instagram is more important than the signs placed on seats to create physical distancing. Currently, the TTC does

advise the passenger that masks are required on TTC property, but because some people may have medical conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask, it is not up to them to decide whether someone boards the bus or not. Additionally, advising the passenger does not always work out well for them. Drivers are often subject to backlash from the riders through insults or dirty looks, with one driver even receiving death threats from a customer. On November 14, the TTC made an effort to help customers gain access to personal protective equipment, by installing 11 PPE vending machines at 10 stations across the city, including one at Eglinton Station. The machines sell single-use as well as multi-use face coverings, gloves, wipes and hand sanitizer and accepts cash and cards. "Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been encouraging to see Torontonians taking measures to protect each other through the observance of mask-wearing and other mitigation strategies," said TTC Chair

and give our customers choices. These vending machines are just one more way we are doing that." Therefore, with easy access to PPE, as well as free masks available at stations across the city, passengers without face-coverings should not continue to be an issue. Ultimately, it is not single-handedly up to just the rider or the operator to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Both the passengers and TTC operators should be wearing a mask or face covering at all times and maintaining physical distancing whenever possible. Whether this means waiting a little longer to eat their chicken sandwich, waiting for a seat to free up rather than sitting in one marked off, or, if possible, waiting five minutes for the next bus, passengers need to do what they can to protect not only themselves but the community around them. So wear your masks, maintain social distancing, and pay respect to those around you, and your fellow riders will thank you.

HEALTH

Period products become free in Scotland

Kiara Distin
Section Editor

On November 24, Scotland became the first country to provide free and universal period products. The Period Products (Free Provision) Act was led by Scottish Labour’s health spokeswoman, Monica Lennon. This means it is now mandatory for all public institutions to provide sanitary products for menstruation. It is a significant step for the country, and brings them one large step closer to ending period poverty in Scotland. With any luck, this will inspire other countries across the globe to follow in their footsteps. According to Shoppers Drug Mart, period poverty is “when a person cannot afford period products, causing them to resort to alternate means to manage their periods.” This results in less participation or missed social activities, leaving early or missing school/work, using period products for longer than the recommended time, or having to use alternate methods entirely, such as toilet paper, socks, newspaper, and others. All of the aforementioned methods bring a high risk of infection, and this poverty prevents menstruating individuals from living their lives. According to Period Aisle, “one-third of Canadians under the age of 25 who menstruate struggle to buy enough products every month.” Additionally, Canadian Public Health



Illustration by Danielle Xin

Association states that “up to 70 per cent say they have missed school or work because of their period.” This is not the first time Scotland has set a groundbreaking precedent for period products. In 2018, Scotland started to provide free period products to students in all schools, colleges, and universities, this service now becoming the law under the Period Products Act. With this, all who menstruate have a right to period products, and must have a variety of menstrual products available to them. COVID-19 has also proven to be difficult for those with periods and has contributed heavily to period poverty across the globe. “About one in four people between 13 to 35 reported that they have found it harder to manage their periods since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a survey done by WASH United, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), and UNICEF. Furthermore, this same survey reported that “47% of people who menstruate have found it more difficult to access menstrual supplies since the pandemic, says Ina Jurga, International Coordinator for the Global Menstrual Hygiene Day.” People who may have been relying on their schools for period

products can’t access that resource when schools are closed. As well, the pandemic has led to the loss of many jobs and the decrease of income around the world. This lost income may have been needed to buy the products necessary to take care of themselves during their periods. “The point I made is that during a pandemic, periods don’t stop, poverty is increasing, this is needed more than ever.” says Lennon, which is why this bill is so necessary, especially now. With this groundbreaking bill, Scotland has set a leading example for the rest of the world, and they’re just waiting for everyone to follow suit.

ENVIRONMENT

Members of the Ontario Green Belt Council Resign in Protest of a New Bill

Sophie Block
Section Editor

Several members of the Ontario Greenbelt Council Resigned the week of December 1st. The resignations were in protest of a new bill, which had a number of potentially harmful changes to the environment. These include changes to the province’s Conservation Authorities Act, an act that was created in part due to Hurricane Hazel in the 1950’s to monitor and protect local populations from environmental hazards. To this day, the Act monitors watershed agencies and works to prevent flooding. This change would scale back the power of Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities and expand ministerial power over development on protected land. It will also make it difficult to block development on flood plains, which are areas that are prone to floods. By doing this, peoples’ lives are being put at risk. The Ford government promised not to touch the Greenbelt, and while the changes don’t directly break this promise, they will change who has the authority to protect na-

ture reserves and natural areas. The council claims that the bill would allow the government to override conservation authorities and give control to those with financial interests. “The Greenbelt is a part of a larger watershed,” explains Peter Tabuns, an NDP MPP, discussing the consequences of these actions. He states “The Ford Government knows that very well. What they’re doing is trying to ensure developers who have parcels of land they couldn’t normally build on are allowed to build ... When you look at the changes that Doug Ford has introduced with regards to the conservation authority, their ability to protect people [from environmental disasters] in the future has been dramatically reduced - has been gutted, in fact.” The development that is expected to now be permitted on the Greenbelt will be harmful to communities and the environment. In fact, wetlands that have been filled in have led to flooding problems in local areas. “And we’re now facing unprecedented growth throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and we’re also staring down the barrel of climate change — both of which require us to look bigger, not smaller,” Kevin Eby, a former member of the council,

added. “The idea that the role of the conservation authorities in watershed planning would be significantly reduced, just quite frankly to me, does not make any sense whatsoever.” Furthermore, when asked by CP24 if he thinks that these changes are being made to help developers, Tabuns said that Ford has been supporting developers building in environmentally sensitive areas, giving an example of a wetland area in Ajax that has recently been issued a ministerial zoning order for construction. David Crombie, the former mayor of Toronto and Conservative cabinet minister, says, “[t]his legislation seriously alters our ability to look after River Valleys, watershed planning and that host of things that we need to protect the public in relation to health ... safety and ... prosperity.” Tabuns expanded, “[what Ford’s] done is a major mistake and has to pull back, abandon this attack on the environment. That’s what he has to do. Whether he’ll do it or not is another matter. We’ll see; but, if he’s sensible, he’ll back off.” “The premier still has time to do the right thing,” Tabuns continued, urging Ford to cut this new bill from the broader legislation. “If

he doesn’t do it, people will understand fully the depth of his commitment to attacking the environment.” Crombie emphasized that he has not given up and will continue to fight for the Greenbelt. “There are thousands of organizations that I’m going to join and help them keep the pressure on the government to rescind those things that we don’t want if they pass the bill and as well oppose projects that are going to come as a consequence,” Crombie declared. “We are going to fight those.” On December 7th, The Ontario Government revealed a \$30 million investment in wetland restoration in the Greenbelt as an attempt to make those who have resigned happy and to prove the Government’s commitment to the environment and wetland conservation. Still, the members of the council are not happy with this, as the original issue of the bill has not been addressed. By resigning, the members of the council hope to show the province the mistakes they have made. Whether or not the province will rescind the bill, make changes, or move on, despite the many claims that this bill will be harmful, is unknown.

HEALTH HERO

Norman Bethune: an international hero



Photo courtesy of Maclean's

Scarlett Yi
Contributor

Did you know that the Canadian doctor who was operating on soldiers in battle volunteered to participate in World War I, the Spanish Civil War, and the War of Resistance against Japan? This brave man is Norman Bethune, a famous Canadian thoracic surgeon, medical innovator, and humanitarian.

Henry Norman Bethune was born to a prominent Scottish family in Gravenhurst, Ontario on March 4, 1880, and died in China on November 12, 1939.

Bethune studied and graduated from the Owen Sound Collegiate Institute in 1907. In 1909, he studied physiology and biochemistry at the University of Toronto. Two years later, he interrupted his studies and became a volunteer teacher for the Reading Camp Association (later the Frontier College) near Whitefish, Sudbury. He returned to the University of Toronto in the fall of 1912. When WW1 was declared in Europe in 1914, Bethune was accepted to the Royal Canadian Medical Corps to become a medic soldier. He joined the No.2 Field Ambulance to serve in France, but he was later wounded by shrapnel and sent to an English hospital to recover. In 1915, he repatriated to Canada.

In 1917, as the war was still going on, Bethune served as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy at Chatham Hospital in England, and in 1919, he started an internship at the Hospital for Sick Children in London. Unfortunately, while he was a teacher at the Detroit College of Medicine and Surgery in 1926, he contracted tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is an infectious disease

of the lungs caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and belongs to the category of infectious diseases. The fatality rate can reach 50%. Because Bethune was a thoracic surgeon, he performed experimental "artificial pneumothorax therapy" on himself, and invented a series of thoracic surgical instruments, such as "Bethune rib shears." In January of 1931, Bethune published an article called "Clearing Private Benefits from Medical Care".

Bethune began to pay attention to the social issues affected by the disease. During the economic downturn in the 1930s, he often sought out the poor and gave them free medical care. Bethune joined the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), a civil war in the Second Spanish Republic (what is now called Spain) that was considered a prelude to World War II. Therefore, Bethune was donating money for the future alliance.

In July of 1936, the year of the Spanish Civil War breakout, Bethune went to Spain voluntarily and worked for the Spanish army. During the war, Bethune could not find a place to practice medicine, so he set up his own mobile blood transfusion service near the front line. He later returned to Canada on June 6, 1937, and made a speech to raise funds for Spaniards.

In the same year, Bethune joined a party in the U.S. called "Friends of the Spanish People" and met Tao Xingzhi, one of the leaders of the National Salvation Federation of China. Tao informed Bethune of the horrific events of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the Nanjing Massacre. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident marked the start of the Chinese Anti-Japanese War. In the Nanjing Massacre, 300,000 people were killed and 30,000 women were raped. After Bethune heard those stories, he said he

would go to China to help. After listening to his plans, his friends were worried about him because they thought China was poor and had inadequate facilities, yet Bethune still decided to go.

In January of 1938, Bethune and two other doctors went on a journey to Wuhan, China under the dispatch of the Canadian and American Communists. Before going, Bethune used his own money and bought a bunch of medical equipment to take to China. When they were waiting for the arrangement of the Chinese military commission, Bethune refused to work in Wuhan -- where the area was under the control of Kuomintang but chose to go to Yan'an -- the area under the control of Chinese Communists. He refused to stay in Wuhan because Kuomintang had American support, but the Chinese Communists were poor and lacked support. They needed help more. Along the way, avoiding the Japanese and the war zone, Bethune finally arrived in Yan'an in April. After speaking with Mao Zedong, Mao was happy with the 75% recovery rate after Bethune's surgery. In early 1939, Bethune founded the Military Medical School.

Chinese soldiers admired Bethune. Everyone who saw Bethune was excited and admired Bethune's medical skills. During the war in Jizhong Qihui, he set a record of operating 115 wounded in 69 hours.

On October 29, 1939, when he was doing an operation, he began to rush because there was another wounded soldier waiting for him. He took off his gloves and put his hand directly into the wounded leg, but a shrapnel scratched his finger and three days later, the wound on his finger was infected. The Chinese Communist Party's top leaders decided to spend a lot of money on medicine to save Bethune.

However, all western medicine at the time, such as penicillin and painkillers, were very expensive and could only be bought in Shanghai which was under Japanese rule and very dangerous to go. It was impossible to ship so much medicine at once. Du Yuesheng and the soldiers from the Communist Party risked their life to transport the medicine out of Shanghai to Bethune. But Bethune refused to use the medicine, and insisted on saving it to help other wounded soldiers.

On the morning of November 12, 1939, he passed away. The death of Bethune touched every Chinese citizen. Mao Zedong, the former Chinese president, wrote an article called "In Memory of Bethune". In this passage, Mao admired Bethune and stated that "every Chinese should learn Bethune's spirit." The article is a staple that every Chinese student should learn. In the GTA, there are three schools named after Bethune such as Bethune International Academy, Bethune Memorial School, and Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute.

Bethune wasn't scared of war and didn't care about race. Norman Bethune is an international hero. Throughout his lifetime, he showed great deals of bravery, selflessness, and creativity. He is an inspiration to people around the world, especially to citizens in Canada and China. Mao Zedong wrote an article for him and had great respect as he states, "I am deeply grieved over his death. Now with this article, we are all commemorating him, which shows how profoundly his spirit inspires everyone. We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness from him. With his spirit, everyone can be very useful to the people."

诺尔曼白求恩：一个国际英雄

你知道那个正在在战地做手术的、曾经主动参加一战、西班牙内战和抗日战争的著名加拿大医生竟然是温哥华前市长罗宾逊的亲戚吗？你可能觉得很震惊，因为对于有着这么好家世的人居然参加这种活动，你是始料未及的。这个勇敢的人就是诺尔曼白求恩，一个加拿大著名的胸外科医生，医疗创新人和人道主义者，也是加拿大共产党的一员。

1980年3月4日，白求恩在格雷文赫斯特呱呱坠地，却于1939年11月2日在中国与世长辞。格雷文赫斯特是一个位于安省北部的宁静、平和的小镇。白求恩这个家族是从苏格兰移民过来的。白求恩的曾曾祖父就是置身于医疗事业的。前温哥华市长罗宾逊是白求恩的远房亲戚。

白求恩就读并于1907年毕业于欧文桑德学院，1909年，他在多伦多大学学习生理学和生物化学。1911年，他中断了一年的学业，并成为萨德伯里怀特菲什附近偏僻木材营地的雷丁营地协会（后来为边疆学院）的一名志愿劳动老师。他于1912年秋回到多伦多大学。1914年，欧洲开启了腥风血雨的一战。加拿大皇家医疗队接纳了他，这个24岁的男孩开始了自己的军医生涯。他加入了第二野战救护车，在法国服役。他被弹片打伤，被送往一家英国医院康复。1915年，他返回加拿大。

1917年，由于战争仍在继续，白求恩在英国查塔姆医院的皇家海军担任中尉。1919年，他在伦敦大奥蒙德街的病童医院开始了专门针对儿童疾病的实习。1923年，他去了底特律并在那里工作。1926年，他患了肺结核。结核是由结核分枝杆菌引

起的肺部传染病，属于传染病类别。病死率可以达到50%。因为白求恩本人是一名胸外科医师，所以他对自己进行了实验性的“人工气胸疗法”，并发明了一系列胸外科器械，例如“白求恩肋骨剪”。白求恩是蒙特利尔麦吉尔大学皇家维多利亚医院的胸外科医师。1931年1月，白求恩在《加拿大医生》上发表了一篇文章“从医疗保健中清除私人利益”：“穷人有穷人的肺结核，富人有富人的肺结核。穷人得了它就会死去，而富人却能活下来。”“让我们从医疗业务中清除利润和私人经济利益，并通过消除永不满足的个人主义来使我们的职业变得纯粹。让我们以同胞的痛苦为基础。致富的方式被认为是一种耻辱。”

白求恩开始越来越关注疾病的社会经济方面。在1930年代的经济衰退期间，白求恩经常寻找穷人，并为他们提供免费医疗服务。

白求恩是社会医学的早期支持者，并成立了蒙特利尔人民健康安全小组。1935年，白求恩去了苏联，见证了他们普遍的免费医疗体系。

1936年西班牙内战爆发后不久，在援助西班牙民主委员会的财政支持下。他于11月3日到达马德里。

当白求恩在西班牙时，因为找不到地方做手术，建立一个移动输血服务站的想法在白求恩心里萌生。于是他在第一线附近建立该服务。1937年6月，他回到加拿大。他还在加拿大进行一次演讲，为西班牙内战筹集资金和志愿者。他还写了一首短诗，这首诗发表在1937年7月的《加拿大论坛》上。

同年7月，白求恩在美国参加了一个名为“西班牙人民之

友”的聚会，并会见了中国救国联合会的领导人之一——陶行知。陶行知给白求恩介绍了七七事变以后的中国。白求恩听到这些故事后，表示要去中国，因为他们需要更多帮助。白求恩的朋友们对于他要去中国一事为他担心。他们认为中国非常贫穷，没有任何便利。但是白求恩决心去帮助中国人。

1938年1月，在加拿大和美国共产党派遣下，白求恩和另外两名医生前往中国。以前，白求恩用自己的钱买了一批医疗设备，并将它们带到中国。最终，在一月份，他们到达了武汉。在等待军事委员会的安排时，白求恩拒绝在国统区工作，坚持去共区。因为他认为国民党已经有美国人支持他们，但共产党却一无所有。一路舟车劳顿，避开日军和战区，终于在四月到达延安。毛泽东见到白求恩后告诉他，他很高兴白求恩的手术后，伤者的康复率达到了75%。

1939年初，白求恩创立了医院学校。在战争期间，他曾创下69小时内给115人做手术的记录。

白求恩原计划于1939年10月20日回到加拿大为华人筹款，但战斗仍未结束。白求恩决定留在中国。

但是谁知道，自从他留下来以后，就再也没能回去。

1939年10月29日，当他给一个战士进行手术时还有另一名受伤的士兵在等他。为了更快做完手术他脱下手套，将手直接伸到伤者的腿里。弹片划破了他的手指。3天后，他在做手术时手指上的伤口被感染了。

中共高层领导决定给白求恩花高价采购药品。但是，当时所有的西药，例如青霉素和止痛药都非常贵，只能在上海购买。

但是在日本统治下的上海非常危险。他们管理非常严格和细致。共产党不可能一次运送这么多药物。他们不得不找到杜月笙（当时和共产党有那么一种敌对关系），冒着生命危险将药物运出上海，并送往白求恩的治疗所。但是白求恩拒绝使用药物，并坚持将药物留给其他受伤的士兵，因为他认为自己时日不多，药物对他没有用。他宁愿将药物留给真正需要帮助的人，也不愿自己使用。

11月12日上午，他永远闭上了自己的眼睛。

白求恩的死，感动了每个中国人。中国前总统毛泽东写了一篇题为《纪念白求恩》的文章。在这篇文章中，毛泽东给白求恩很高的赞扬，每个中国人都应该学习白求恩的精神。现在“纪念白求恩”这篇文章是每个中国学生都需要学习的课文。在大多地区，有三所学校由白求恩命名。

白求恩一生花了很多时间在战争上。我不知道这是什么精神，但我只知道使他放弃加拿大富有而安静的生活，参加第一次世界大战，西班牙内战和抗日战争。也许这种精神就是英雄精神吧。

“我和白求恩同志只见过一面。后来他给我来过许多信。可是因为忙，仅回过他一封信，还不知他收到没有。对于他的死，我是很悲痛的。现在大家纪念他，可见他的精神感人至深。我们大家要学习他毫无自私自利之心的精神。从这点出发，就可以变为大有利于人民的人。一个人能力有大小，但只要有这点精神，就是一个高尚的人，一个纯粹的人，一个有道德的人，一个脱离了低级趣味的人，一个有益于人民的人。”



Photo courtesy of The Globe and Mail

POLITICS

The 2020 U.S. Presidential election



Photo courtesy of **The Lancet**

Cameron Gilliland
Contributor

U.S. contemporary politics has been a rocky and divisive ride ever since the dawn of the century we currently reside in. From the Bush V. Gore U.S. Supreme Court decision, to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been a long and interesting ride to where we are now with the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Before even taking into account the pandemic, social and civil unrest, and economic downturn the U.S. has seen, the 2020 U.S. election has been a problematic and contested issue from the start. From Trump’s war on mail-in voting (proven to be false) to his strangling on the U.S. postal services budget and his stacking of the lower district and the supreme court with conservative judges, it has been a problematic journey to the polls. In this year’s election, incumbent Republican President Donald J. Trump and Democratic Nominee former Vice President Joseph R. Biden squared off in an election no less insane than the year that has come before it. However, in order to fully understand the 2020 US presidential election, we must first understand the key US democratic institutions and their voting process.

The Electoral College

The Electoral College is a group of state-appointed electorates that meet every four years to elect the President and Vice President of the United States. Each state is assigned a number of electoral college votes based upon its number of senators along with its number of congressional representatives. For example, California has two senators (one being the now Vice-President Elect Kamala Harris) and 53 representatives in congress, adding to a total sum of 55 electoral college votes. This, along with all other 49 American states, adds up to a total 538 electoral college votes, with a candidate needing to reach a number of 270 electoral college votes in order to secure the presidency. As nice as the

Electoral College sounds, it has some glaring problems with its system. First, it promotes inequality as the value of a single vote differs between states with a vote in some states, such as Wyoming (three electoral college votes), possibly worth more than a vote in New York (29 electoral college votes) if Wyoming were a swing state in an election. Secondly, and most glaring of all, is its failure to elect the candidate that has won the popular vote, a clear violation of the will of the people. As, in the last twenty years, two presidents, George W. Bush (in office from 2000-2008) and Donald J. Trump (in office from 2016-2020), were both elected by the electoral college but failed to secure the popular vote. This failure to uphold the will of the people is a major reason for the growing call to abolish the electoral college. The abolishment of such an institution is fiercely contested by mainly GOP lawmakers as its fate has continuously become a partisan issue, rather than a matter of what is better for the country.

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States of America. Its job is to interpret the constitution in reference to U.S. law on a nationwide, district, and county level to ensure U.S. law correctly reflects the rights in which the constitution upholds across the nation. The Supreme Court has nine Justices that sit on the court; with one being the Chief Justice (currently John Roberts) and eight associate Justices (currently Clarence Thomas, Stephen G. Breyer, Samuel A. Alito, Sona Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Neil M. Gorsuch, Brett M. Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett). The current Supreme Court lineup has been shrouded in controversy given Donald Trump’s appointments of Justices Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett. Each represents a hard shift to the right in the political alignment of the court with conservative judges now leading a majority on the bench. This threatens many previous Supreme Court decisions like Roe V. Wade (legalized abortion) and Obergefell V. Hodges (legalized same-sex marriage). Along with threats to women’s rights and

the LGBTQ+ community, the current Supreme Court has been of great concern to their possible influence on the election. In 2000, George W. Bush was running against Al Gore in the presidential election. As the night wound down it became very clear the election would come down to who would win Florida. As vote totals were almost 50/50 multiple recounts took place over several weeks. Eventually, Bush and Gore’s case for the presidency was taken to the Supreme Court and in the now infamous Bush V. Gore decision the Supreme Court ordered Florida to stop all recounts, putting Bush ahead in the state, and with Gore conceding, the United States 43rd president. Now, as of the writing of this article, all of Donald Trump’s cases have been thrown out in the Supreme Court. Consecutively, and with former Mayor Rudy Giuliani heading Trump’s legal counsel, he has lost all but one of their legal challenges trying to overturn the election results across the country. Who knows what the future will hold in terms of the Supreme Court and the election, but as of this point, the Supreme Court has yet to strip Joe Biden of his presidential victory.

Congress

The U.S Congress, better known as the House of Representatives, is one of the two major legislative bodies in the U.S. Capitol. As a legislative body, Congress composes and passes laws and legislation for the American people, like Public Law 116-3 which extended Medicaid for home and community-based services against spousal impoverishment. In an election, the House of Representatives meets in a joint session of Congress to officially count and certify the votes of the electoral college. In a session that could be done in under 30 minutes, Republicans have stated their intent to object to the count and claim that the election was rigged and that Trump won (which is false). However, as those claims must be co-sponsored by a U.S. senator, which is unlikely given Mitch McConnell’s recognition to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris’s victory, we can expect a semi-seamless certification of the electoral college’s

choice of Joseph R. Biden and Kamala D. Harris for President and Vice President of the United States of America.

The Senate

The U.S. Senate is the second of the two major U.S. legislative bodies in the U.S. Capitol and arguably the most powerful of the two. The Senate is a group of senators, two from each state, who serve a term of six years, longer than the President and members of the House. The senate handles hearings into impeachments, judicial appointments, and passing legislation, such as when John McCain killed Mitch McConnell’s skinny repeal of Obama Care with a now famous ‘thumbs down’ on the Senate floor. The only major role the Senate has in the Presidential election is its duty to select the Vice President if no presidential candidate reaches the 270 majority in the electoral college.

2020 U.S. Presidential Election Recap

This year’s election, in all its controversy and mayhem, still happened and has passed due to the record of civic participation by U.S. voters and would not have been possible without the hard work of the U.S. Postal Service and the thousands of poll workers across the nation that counted the ballots. With a record number of mail-in ballots being cast this year, the results took longer than expected to come out, making election night turn into an election week. Unique to this year’s election was how sweeping Joe Biden and the Democrat’s campaign for voter turnout affected key Republican strongholds. With Democrats almost flipping Texas and North Carolina, it represented a major shift in nationwide voting for the Democrats and more liberal ideological platforms. Most notable was Biden’s flip of Georgia, and securing key swing states of Nevada, Arizona, Michigan, and Wisconsin. At the end of the week, on Nov. 7th, it was projected that Joseph R. Biden and Kamala D. Harris had secured the White House and defeated Incumbent Republican Donald J. Trump with 306 electoral college votes over the incumbent’s 232 electoral college votes.

GOVERNMENT

Trudeau’s minority government

Yasseen Mobabda
Contributor

Back in October of 2019, what now seems like a lifetime ago, Canadians reduced the incumbent Liberal government from a majority to a minority government. A lack of strong leadership and platform from the Conservative Party prevented a swing in voting in their favour, but disappointment in Trudeau’s government led to a shutout in the Prairies and a surge for the Bloc Quebecois. The message was clear: if the Liberals’ governing got out of hand, the other parties could put them in check or push for an election. To assess the minority government’s performance so far, firstly, let’s take a look at what the Liberals campaigned on in 2019.

Campaign Promises and Achievements

During the campaign, Trudeau released new promises and built on previous ones aimed to appeal primarily to Canada’s middle class, basing the policy on his government’s successes and failures in the last 4 years.

When it comes to family benefits and childcare, the Liberals promised to increase the popular Canada Child Benefit (CCB) by 15% for families with children under the age of one. They also promised to make parental benefits tax-free including maternity leave, offer guaranteed income to parents without paid leave, create 250 000 new child care spaces, and cut fees for those programs by 10%. In July, the government announced an additional \$625 million in federal support for the child care sector on top of its regular spending. However, these funds appear to be for a safe reopening during COVID, indicating this investment is a temporary one. The maximum annual CCB payment increased to up to \$6 765 per child under age 6 and up to \$5 708 per child aged 6 through 17, an overall increase of \$252. This change is in line with their original campaign promise, with a \$300 bonus per child already being distributed in May.

On the topic of climate change, promises were made to phase out coal by 2030, net-zero emissions by 2050, end fossil fuel subsidies, and complete flood maps and funding for areas prone to natural disasters. In November, Environment and Climate Change Minister Wilkinson tabled legislation that would force the federal government to achieve its net-zero carbon promise. The bill would require targets to reduce emissions to be set every 5 years for the next 30 years. This would help Canada meet the Paris climate accord. However, the government has been criticized for not explaining how they will reduce emissions in the upcoming years and not associating penalties with a failure to meet targets. The bill will still be debated and voted on before getting definitive answers.

Regarding post-secondary loans and grants, the government promised to make student loans interest-free for two years after graduation and until graduates earn over \$35,000 yearly, allowing parents to pause loan payments with no interest until their youngest kid turns five, boosting the

maximum Canada Student Grants for full-time students by \$1 200. In April, the government enacted a six-month student loan freeze. In August, the federal government doubled the maximum amount for student grants, paused fixed contributions, and increased the weekly cap on loans by \$140 for a year. Both policies are designed to be a relief to students during COVID, leaving the original promises unfulfilled.

On environmental policies, Liberals pledged to protect a quarter of Canada’s natural land and ocean habitats by 2025, plant two billion trees over ten years, create the Canada Water Agency, and ban some single-use plastics as early as 2021. Although the new regulations won’t come into effect until 2021, the federal government has released a timeline and discussion paper outlining the details of items that would be banned and restricted under a single-use plastics ban.

The Liberals also promised to bring in more gun control laws by banning semi-automatic assault-style rifles and buy back any that were legally purchased as well as giving cities more power to restrict or ban handguns. In the wake of a horrific series of shootings by a gunman in Nova Scotia, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair announced a ban on 1500 makes and models of military-grade assault rifles. The new law gives a two year amnesty period for gun owners to dispose of their guns. The government has said they plan to launch a buyback program to compensate owners but details remain scarce.

Healthcare promises included doubling the child disability benefit, expanding access to medical assistance in dying, and taking “critical next steps” toward a national pharmacare. Bill C-7, an act to expand medically assisted dying, is being debated and will be voted on this month. The federal government aimed to pass it sometime earlier in 2020, but it was delayed due to the pandemic, causing them to request 4 extensions from the Supreme Court of Quebec as it ruled the current access to medically assisted dying unconstitutional. If the federal government fails to meet its latest deadline, Quebec’s supreme court could allow Quebec to fall under a different law than the rest of the country. A bill was also introduced as a framework for a national pharmacare plan in which the federal government would give funding to the provinces and territories if they meet certain requirements. The NDP would like the bill to force provinces to provide pharmacare similarly to other healthcare services, while the Bloc and Conservatives are concerned about provincial jurisdiction. The government would only need the support of one party to pass the bill, but movement on it is slow.

Their housing promises aim to build 100 000 affordable homes over a decade, offer first-time home-buyer 10% subsidies on new home purchases and 5% on resales, loosen restriction in expensive markets, put a surtax on absentee foreign owners, retrofit 1.5 million homes for energy efficiency, and offer interest-free loans up to \$40,000 to make houses weather-resilient. In the latest fiscal update, the Liberals included the revamping of the First-Time Homebuyer Incentive in cities such as Vancouver, Victoria, and Toronto. The changes are planned

to come into effect next spring.

The government’s main immigration promise was to increase numbers, accepting at least 350 000 in 2021. Canada brought in around 282,000 new immigrants into the country this year, falling short of their promise by about 70 000 due to COVID creating significant barriers to accepting a larger number. The government announced it aims to accept another million immigrants by 2023. When it comes to reconciliation, they promised to implement the Indigenous Languages Act and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Earlier this month, the government introduced the UN Declaration on Rights bill as pledged. If passed, it would require the government to consult with Indigenous peoples to ensure all rights detailed in the act are met. On jobs and employment, the Liberals pledge to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, introduce federal rules for those employed on ride-sharing and similar apps, extend Employment Insurance sick benefits by 11 weeks, and ensure reliable benefits for seasonal workers. Employment Insurance was expanded by the government although the changes are only in place for the pandemic.

Regarding manufacturing, they promised to cut taxes by 50% for companies behind zero-emission technology or products. Legislation remains to be seen.

For senior citizens, they promised to boost Old Age Security at age 75 by 10% and increase the Canada Pension Plan by 25% for widows and widowers. Old Age Supplement received an additional one-time \$300 payment due to COVID, with the government maintaining its commitment to boost Old Age Security post-pandemic.

On small businesses, the government pledged cash incentives for startups and to eliminate the fees merchants pay to credit card companies and to cut corporate taxes in half for businesses making zero-emission products or technologies. The government has created dozens of relief programs for small businesses during the pandemic, ranging from wage subsidies to relief funds to credit. There has been no movement on their pre-pandemic promises.

Their main tax promises were to raise the basic personal income tax deduction to \$15 000 for those earning under \$147 000 and tax luxury vehicles and tech giants generating revenue in Canada. There was movement last December and January to amend the tax code but the amendment has been overshadowed by COVID.

Technology promises included a promise to cut cell phone bills by a quarter, create a digital charter to protect data rights and privacy online, and deliver high-speed internet around the country by 2030. The charter has been proposed and is undergoing consultation with experts. In November, Trudeau announced \$1.75 billion in funding to connect 98% of Canada to broadband by 2026 and the rest by 2030.

Finally, their transportation policy promises were to ban the sale of non-zero emission vehicles by 2040 and a \$3 billion investment in public transportation yearly for clean energy vehicles. There has been no commitment made to these promises.

COVID-19

Though more can be expected from the Liberal minority government, it would be unfair to ignore the fact that the government has had its hands full with the ongoing pandemic. The federal government’s handling of this crisis has proven to be popular among voters, allowing Trudeau to rebound in the polls after the WE Charity scandal in the summer. The government has undertaken a variety of measures, restrictions, and programs which it says aim to support and protect Canadians during the pandemic. The feds have provided billions in funding to the provinces and territories for public health. On top of the financial programs mentioned earlier, they have brought in support for specific economic sectors, the education system, the healthcare system, and organizations that offer support for Canadians. They have implemented border and travel restrictions, banning tourists among other measures. The government has also offered emergency loans to Canadians stranded abroad. The Liberal government has also developed the COVID-19 contact tracing app to help notify people who have been potentially exposed to the virus. The military has taken over long-term care homes that were overwhelmed by the coronavirus and are now playing a key role in the delivery of the vaccine in Canada. While many of these measures have garnered criticism from all parties, frequent spending on government programs and relief along with significant political strife south of the border has managed to please voters with the government’s response.

What’s next?

Although the Liberals may be enjoying their current approval ratings, the government will need to actively maintain its position. Recent polls show the pandemic and immunization remains the top concern in the country. A smooth and successful vaccine program will likely solidify Trudeau’s good handling of the pandemic in many Canadian’s minds.

The second priority for many voters is healthcare. Movement on pharmacare will almost certainly reflect well on this government. If the government passes a framework for provinces to receive funding for pharmacare, they will be able to take credit for a policy that has been largely supported by the NDP and their base. This could help the Liberals keep support from the party and avoid a snap election, an election taking place due to a loss of confidence for the House of Commons’ ruling party. It would also give the government bragging rights on their next campaign.

While the pandemic has consumed many Canadians lives, climate change has not slipped their minds. The current situation is being dubbed as a ‘double crisis’, with policies on climate action still being expected by a significant portion of voters. While the Liberals have been able to escape some backlash from their corruption scandals, climate change is a reality many are not willing to let fly under the radar. Without concrete action, the government will pay the price at the polls and in their everyday lives.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A major win towards a world without unethical porn (Trigger Warning: Sexual Abuse)

Nathalie Adriana Funes Serna
Editor in Chief

TraffickingHub is a movement started by Laila Mickelwait to fight for the closure of Pornhub and to hold their managers accountable for the illegal profitable content allowed on the website. Pornhub hides their illegal business side with a facade of good deeds. For example, in response to the economic disruption during the pandemic, they featured a “Big Package” program where they committed to subsidize \$300,000 worth of ads to 100 different small businesses for free. Or when the city of New York had spent their budget for snow removal and Pornhub provided snow removers for free; the Vice President of this company, Corey Price said, “Our fans are important to us and we hope to plow any state in need.” Or during the climax of the BLM movement, Pornhub Aria tweeted: “Pornhub stands in solidarity against racism and social injustice.” They then proceeded to donate \$100,000 to organizations that fight for racial equality. However, Pornhub does not publicly state that they also profit from rape videos, child pornography, revenge porn, and non-consensual videotapes. There is an undefined number of young children who have been kidnapped, recorded as they are raped, and uploaded on to Pornhub, such as a 15 year-old who went missing right after Christmas and was located a year later after her mother found videos of her on Pornhub. According to the police report, they found 58 videos of her on other websites as well, such as Periscope, Modelhub, and Snapchat. This is also exemplified by a case where a substitute teacher was arrested after videos of her raping a 14 year-old student were found on Pornhub. The report was made by a classmate of the survivor, not by the billionaire company. As a matter of fact, this video was in their top 50 videos watched worldwide. Yet another example of this is Rose Kalemba, who was 14 years old when she was kidnapped and raped, her videos also ended up on Pornhub. She begged for six months for the site to take down her videos, but she was ignored until she posed as a lawyer and threatened a lawsuit. Pornhub took down her videos within 48 hours. In all three of these situations, Pornhub faced no legal action. These situations are just the tip of the iceberg. Because of events like these, on February 9, 2020, Laila Mickelwait launched a petition to shut down Pornhub and hold MindGeek, Pornhub’s parent company, accountable. This movement, now called TraffickingHub, has gained tremendous strength, and in December 2020, mainstream media sites have brought attention to the issue. This movement is mainly supported by Exodus Cry, an anti-trafficking non-profitable organization as well as another 300 child protection, anti-trafficking, and women’s rights organizations. Since the beginning of this

campaign, over 2 million people have signed the petition. Furthermore, there had been protests in major cities. On the International Day of No-Violence, October 2nd, people in London, Montreal, and Los Angeles protested to shutdown Pornhub for enabling and profiting from videos of sexual harassment. “Pornhub’s executives turn a blind eye to the scores of illegal and abusive videos they host and promote, for the sole purpose of corporate profit. Pornhub is profoundly complicit in child sexual exploitation and sex trafficking,” said Vanessa Morse, CEO of the Centre for the End of All Sexual Exploitation in the United Kingdom. This movement has gained support from many people around the world and all backgrounds. Jenna Jameson, a porn actress, noted, “Pornhub profits off of the rape and torture

Furthermore, Pornhub refuses to disclose how many content moderators they employ. According to an employee, there are around 80 MindGeek moderators worldwide. Considering that Pornhub receives around 1.36 million hours of content, each moderator would have to spend hundreds of hours per week reviewing the files. On December 4, Nicholas Kristoff published an investigation in the New York Times about everything that’s taken place on Pornhub and other pornsites. Kristoff proposed that companies should have less immunity in the justice system so they can be held accountable for the content they are profiting from, start truly moderating said content, and prohibit downloads to users’ own devices. Since that article was published, things escalated quickly. MasterCard and Visa reviewed their ser-

on one’s own device and people can use Fake IDs to verify their accounts. On November 6, 2020, the government of Thailand shutdown Pornhub in their country. This was an important move because according to their yearly report, citizens of Thailand spend the most time on Pornhub than any other nationality, which means that a major income source for the site is now shut down. In March of 2020, a group of MPs and senators sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau to address the ongoing sex trafficking and exploitation on Pornhub. In November, another letter on the same topic was addressed to federal Justice Minister David Lametti. Neither political figures addressed or responded to the letters. However, after Kristoff’s investigation, which called out Prime Minister Trudeau in the New York Times, started getting international attention, the Prime Minister responded. “We are always extremely concerned with gender-based violence, with exploitation of minors, with child pornography,” Prime Minister Trudeau said on Friday, December 12. “We’re going to continue to work with police agencies and security agencies, and all means possible to ensure that all Canadians are kept safe.” He added that the Canadian government is working with police and security agencies to combat sex trafficking. Furthermore, Canadian Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault said that new regulations and severe fines would be placed starting 2021. Canadian Senator, Julie Milville-Dechêne, says, “It’s not easy to go after the intermediary platform that has the model of YouTube, because the citizens are putting the material in.” Senator Julie Milville-Dechene has been fighting to increase regulation on pornsites and attended the protest in Montreal. Although steps have been made in Pornhub, there are still countless other pornsites that upload similar videos, such as XVideos, Brazzers, PornMD, RedTube, and Youporn, to name a few. Other sites that upload other unethical content should also be under scrutiny. Kristoff found that there has been a spike trend upwards in the content of child pornography reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. In 2015, there were 6.5 million files and in 2019, 69.2 million. Facebook deleted 12.4 million files depicting some sort of child sexual abuse and/or exploitation in the third quarter of 2020. The problem is not porn itself. It is unethical for companies who profit off of victims. It is about rape. It is about sex-trafficking. It is about child sexual exploitation. Lydia, a woman who was trafficked when she was 5 years old, says: “I don’t want people to hear ‘No porn! It’s more like, ‘Stop hurting kids.’” All of the signatures, efforts, protests, posts were not in vain. Steps have been taken towards a world where companies are held accountable for their wrongdoings. Nevertheless, there is still a great way to go. Raise awareness and consume ethical porn.



Photo courtesy of Traffickinghub

vices with Pornhub, a bipartisan law aiding survivors was proposed in the US, and Canadian leaders made a statement addressing the issue. On December 8th, Pornhub updated their policies. They said that a) Effective immediately they would only allow videos uploads from content partners and Model Program, a program that allows verified content creators to profit from their own videos; however, from the new year onwards, they will start to allow video uploads from regular verified users after the content is screened under a new system. b) They will ban all downloads, except for the ones from the Model Program. c) They added a new segment of employees called “Red Team” which will act as an extra layer of protection; the team will screen content already uploaded to spot potential illegal content that was approved and uploaded in the first stage. d) They will launch a Transparency Report in 2021. These are all great words and goals, but only time will tell if Pornhub sticks to their promises. As Nicholas Kristoff said, “I don’t trust Pornhub a bit, so officials will need to monitor this sector in a way they haven’t before.” An additional challenge is that even with those policies, there are ways to go around those rules. Downloads are not the only way to get content

of women and children. Take a stand against these monsters at MindGeek...Shut it DOWN.” She is one of the many celebrities and adult industry film-makers who have supported this cause and signed the petition. Pornhub claimed that they are “unequivocally committed to combating child sexual abuse material, and [have] instituted a comprehensive, industry-leading trust and safety policy to identify and eradicate illegal material from [their] community.” They declared that “any assertion that [they] allow [sexual violence] is irresponsible and flagrantly untrue.” Pornhub had features that facilitated this type of behaviour. For example, one of the features in the Pornhub site was that regular users could upload videos, and most of their content is user-generated. However, to upload a video, all you needed was an email address. There was no way to prove that a) the people involved are adults, b) that everyone involved consented to the actions in the video, and c) that everyone in the video agreed to have the video shared on a pornsite. Another feature is that users can download the videos directly from Pornhub’s website. So even if Pornhub takes it down, others can still have access to it and re-upload it to other sites, or even upload it back on to Pornhub itself.

HEALTH

A student’s guide to COVID-19 vaccines



Illustration by Omar Ali

Emelia Grossman
Senior Advisor

For months now people all across the globe have been eagerly awaiting the light at the end of the tunnel for this COVID-19 pandemic, and it seems to have finally (almost) arrived. With numerous vaccines being developed and beginning distribution, many questions have arisen, with various speculations of how safe and effective the different vaccines are. Within this article, the main vaccines that are currently most effective will be covered so that North Toronto students can become more educated on each one.

Currently the most widely approved vaccine as of December 19th is the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. This vaccine is presently approved for those who are 16 years of age or older, with further testing for individuals who are younger than 16 still being conducted. Similarly to the Moderna vaccine, Pfizer/BioNTech’s vaccine is made using mRNA technology that “[teaches] cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response inside the body.” Like any vaccine, Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine has short-term side effects such as pain, swelling, redness on the arm where the vaccine was administered as well as chills, tiredness, and headaches. Once again, these side-effects simply demonstrate that the vaccine is doing what it is meant to do and creating the immune response that will help the body fight off a COVID-19 infection. Pfizer’s vaccine has also shown to be extremely effective, with a reported 95% efficacy. In terms of storage, this is where the Pfizer vaccine may fall short of Moderna’s, since Pfizer’s vaccine must be stored in ultra-cold temperatures of minus 70 degrees Celsius. Due to this need for extremely cold temperatures, “the vaccine requires a special ship-

ping container packed with dry ice to keep it at the proper temperature.” This may cause issues when the vaccine is being distributed to disadvantaged areas as access to these kinds of cooling materials will be more difficult.

Another successful vaccine that is starting to be distributed is Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine. The Moderna vaccine uses mRNA technology to fight against COVID-19, which is similar to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. The mRNA used in these vaccines “contain[s] instructions for human cells to make proteins that mimic part of the coronavirus.” This then creates an immune response with antibodies that will fight against a possible future COVID-19 infection. Moderna’s vaccine has shown to be about 94% effective and is given in two doses that are administered 28 days apart. One edge that Moderna’s vaccine holds is its ability to “be stored at standard freezer temperatures of -20 Celsius for up to 6 months.” This gives the Moderna vaccine an advantage over Pfizer’s, since the temperatures needed to store Moderna’s are much more accessible and are already widely used. In terms of any serious adverse effects, Moderna’s vaccine has not displayed any so far. Although they have reported fatigue, headaches, fevers and some short-term side effects, these are not uncommon in vaccines as it shows your body is creating the immune response needed to fight the virus. This gives the vaccine a very favourable safety profile as it currently has “no specific safety concerns.” The Moderna vaccine has so far only been tested on those who are 18 years of age or older. Further testing for younger teens and children is still underway.

There is also the vaccine being developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca. This vaccine is commonly known as the Oxford vaccine and it is currently in phase three of clinical trials. This stage is the efficacy

trials phase of the vaccine testing process. Efficacy should not be confused with effectiveness, as they are related but not the same. While efficacy is how well the vaccine works in a controlled trial, effectiveness is how well the vaccine works when it has been distributed to the general population. During this phase, scientists distribute the vaccine to thousands of people and then see how many become infected compared to people who received a placebo, which is essentially just “a shot of saline that has no effect”. This third phase reveals if the vaccine is indeed effective at preventing the disease or virus it is meant to. Furthermore, this phase tests a large number of people to ensure that even fairly rare side effects are detected. In the case of the Oxford vaccine, it has recently proved to have up to 90% efficacy in the first full peer-reviewed results of phase three. However, it is important to also note the doses each vaccine needs. For the Oxford vaccine, it had an efficacy of 62% when participants were given two standard doses. The 90% efficacy is achieved when participants received a low dose followed by a standard one, this is essentially a half dose and then a full one. The safety of this vaccine is also looking promising. Over about 3.4 months, 3 out of the 23,745 vaccine participants had serious adverse reactions that were most likely linked to the COVID-19 or control vaccines. All three participants have since recovered. There were 172 other serious adverse effects, however, these were all deemed unrelated to the COVID-19 vaccine. Overall, these interim results of this vaccine has proven it can effectively defend against COVID-19, while also being very safe. AstraZeneca announced on December 11, 2020 that they will start clinical trials for a combined version of their vaccine and the Russian vaccine, Sputnik V. These trials will start by the end of 2020.

In terms of the distribution of

these vaccines, Canada has so far approved the Pfizer vaccine as well as Moderna’s vaccine. The first groups of people to receive the vaccine are residents and staff of long-term care facilities, adults 70 and older, starting with people who are 80 and older, health-care workers and adults in Indigenous communities. These four groups have been advised to receive the initial doses of the vaccine by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). For the second phase of the vaccination rollout, the NACI has advised that the recipients should include “health-care workers who were not part of the initial rollout, residents and stage of all other congregate settings (e.g., living quarters for migrant workers, correctional facilities, homeless shelters), and essential workers, including police, firefighters and those in food production.” The question of when the general public will receive the vaccine is still partially unanswered, as many phases must be completed before this happens. The distribution of the vaccine to the general public will also vary based on the province’s decisions. The head of Ontario’s vaccination distribution task force said he believes “we can get into a lot of mainstream Ontario by later July.” However, in Alberta they currently have plans to administer vaccines to the general public in the fall of 2021. Overall, the Public Health Agency of Canada has stated “that the entire country should have enough doses on hand next year (2021) to vaccinate every Canadian who wants a shot by the end of September.” As scientists continue to discover more about COVID-19, the knowledge of the vaccines also continues to evolve. This is only a simplistic view of each of these very complex vaccines and it is crucial to always stay informed on the possible COVID-19 vaccines that will continue to circulate as well as the ones currently being distributed across the world.

POLITICS

2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol

An overview of the Capitol insurrection.



Photo courtesy of **The Wall Street Journal**

Hannah Benjamin
Layout Editor

Amanda Willson
Section Editor

“In America we have the right to peacefully protest, but what has occurred today goes against everything we stand for as a nation,” Todd Young, Republican Senator of Indiana tweeted. Only six days into the New Year, pro-Trump supporters attempted to overturn the 2020 Presidential Election by storming into the Capitol, where the senate was confirming the Electoral College votes that decree Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States. Several Americans claim that the riot and break-ins were incited by Trump’s speech in which he continually announced that they were required “to fight much harder.”

Converging on the East Front steps after 1 PM, the pro-Trump protestors expressed their anger as they shouted, “Four more years,” “USA,” and “Storm the Capitol,” while they marched on Pennsylvania Avenue towards the Capitol building. Thousands of rioters surrounded the Capitol within an hour, causing the police to be heavily outnumbered as they “did not expect President Trump to incite them and that they would forcefully push their way in. There just was not enough personnel,” said a Capitol Official. Smashing through windows, breaking down doors, and scaling walls, Trump supporters began to enter the building, causing panic among senators, representatives, and congressmen and congresswomen. Although Trump compelled them to protest “peacefully and patriotically,” the unrest proceeded to forcibly grow, resulting in several injuries and 5 deaths.

As the members of the Congress were instructed to seek safety

by hiding under desks, removing their identification badges, and escaping through secret passageways, the overwhelming number of mainly white and male rioters stormed the Capitol building. With the intent to disavow democracy, some rioters damaged priceless heirlooms and stole items, while others carried the Confederate flag through the building. Created in the 1861 Civil War, where 11 Southern states fought to keep slavery, the Confederate flag represents racism and prejudice to the Black community. Other symbols and flags displayed at the riot included a First American Flag (a symbol of the Groyper Army, a white supremacist group), a “Kekistan” flag (derived from the Nazi flag), and the Gadsden flag (used by anti-government, white supremacist groups). The Capitol police arrested 14 people during the riots and as of January 9th, and there have been 82 arrests to date including Richard Barnett, who entered House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office, stole her mail, and wrote “We will not back down” on one of her documents. In regards to the retribution, those who stimulated violence may face complete consequences for their actions under President Trump’s executive order authorizing up to 10 years in prison for “injury of federal property.”

In response to the Capitol violence, President-Elect Joe Biden declared it as “one of the darkest days in [U.S.] history” and as an “unprecedented assault on democracy.” He further compared the difference of police treatment between the Black Lives Matter Movement protests to the violence seen at the Capitol, stating, “No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter [movement] protesters yesterday, they wouldn’t have been treated very differently from the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol”. According to CNN, Democrats were “horrified” and in “disgust” when watching the Capitol Riots, and many revealed that “America [had] failed.”

These chaotic and extreme actions resulted in Nancy Pelosi arguing that Trump “is the most dangerous person in the history of [the United States]” and left Michelle Obama calling Trump “infantile and unpatriotic.” As shown in a survey gathered by Marist Poll, 88% of Americans oppose the Capitol riots, and 97% of Democrats view the 2020 Presidential Election as accurate.

The recent attack on the Capitol has also developed a division among Republicans. According to a study collected by Marist Poll, 18 percent of Republicans support the pro-Trump rioters who stormed Capitol Hill, implying that the majority of Republicans do not condone these actions. Moreover, according to an insider’s perspective, the “doors were already open to them, and the barricades had been pulled down.” They just “wanted their voices [to be] heard,” and they were “sick and tired of what had been going on.” Many seem to have attended the protest with non-violent intentions; however, there was inevitably an assembly of attendees with more violent plans. Regardless, this gathering had been planned long before by Ali Alexander, through public Facebook pages and online groups, which left many questioning why the Capitol was so easily breached. Furthermore, other Trump supporters stated, “[The rioters] should have never done that. It’s making Trump look like a bad person.” Another supporter added, “Trump’s tweets and his video were also egging the rioters on,” as Trump states of a “Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, be wild!”

Apart from this, Trump has received a lot of disapproval and indignation as he initially failed to denounce the actions of the rioters himself. Trump provided a statement through a video posted on Twitter, where he began the video repeating claims of election fraud and expressed compassion toward the rioters, leading Twitter, among other social media networks, to permanently disable his account.

He mentioned, “I know you’re hurt. We had an election that was stolen from us... You’re very special... but go home and go home in peace.” However, the White House Press Secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, explained, “The violence we saw yesterday at our nation’s Capitol was appalling, reprehensible, and antithetical to the American way. We condemn it, the President and this administration in the strongest possible terms.” Additionally, on January 7th, Trump stated, “I am outraged by the violence, lawlessness, and mayhem [of the attack on the Capitol] ... the demonstrators who infiltrated the Capitol have defiled the seat of American democracy. To those who engaged in the acts of violence and destruction, you do not represent our country, and to those who broke the law, you will pay.”

Furthermore, Donald Trump’s second impeachment has been executed by the Congress with 232 votes for the impeachment, including 10 Republicans, and 197 who opposed. The process will now move to the Senate.

Democracy is the belief in freedom and equality, where power is held by its citizens. In the United States, all eligible citizens have the right to freedom of speech, religion, equal protection, and inclusion in federal, provincial, and municipal elections. However, the infiltration of the U.S. Capitol building was viewed by some pro-Trump supporters as a freedom of speech, while other Americans saw this movement as a violent slander of democracy and a representation of inequality. In an attempt to provide justice against this adverse violence, the respective steps are being taken. The Congress has impeached President Trump, law enforcement is working to arrest and prosecute every recognizable partaker, and it is society’s responsibility to guarantee that those who chose violence are held accountable for their actions.

GLOBAL WARMING

Lockdowns and the climate

What has the pandemic really done for climate change?

Ema Kazazi
Contributor

It's indisputable that the pandemic has caused immense loss and devastation for nearly everyone around the world. To look on the bright side, it's often mentioned that the environment is doing better, but how much has the pandemic really done to improve climate change?

In early 2020, the global lockdown led to significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions as travel became less common due to stay at home orders, and factories were being forced to limit production as a result of outbreaks. Worldwide daily emissions were the lowest in the beginning of April, dropping 17% compared to the previous year. This decline is mainly due to the large change in surface transportation, meaning the use of cars, trains, planes and other modes of transportation, and those emissions saw a 43% decrease.

NASA scientists also created a model that showed what emissions would have looked like if there were no lockdowns. "We all knew the lockdowns were going to have an impact on air quality," Project leader and NASA researcher Christoph Keller stated. "It was also soon clear that it was going to be difficult to quantify how much of that change is related to the lockdown measures, versus general seasonality or variability in pollution... In some ways I was surprised by how much it dropped."

The study focused on nitrogen dioxide emissions, which are mainly emitted by cars and other vehicles. It showed that emissions decreased ap-

proximately 20% versus what they would look like if 2020 had gone on without the lockdowns. In other cities, such as Milan and Wuhan, emissions were down 60%, which is an extreme decrease from the norm.

Air travel has been strictly limited around the world, leading to a 97% decrease in April for Canada, and a 96% decrease in May. With these major limitations being imposed, it may be possible that people recognize that some travel is unnecessary, which can hopefully continue to lower air travel levels as the airline industries have some of the greatest pollution rates.

Other benefits include cleaner waters due to fewer boats being used as well as less air pollution, especially in areas where the lockdowns lasted for an extended period of time and were much more strict, such as India, Italy, and China, where citizens were forced to stay at home and travel was very limited.

Although this news suggests hope for the future of solving climate change, it's unlikely that the lockdown has any real effect on climate change, and it may actually work to deteriorate prior accomplishments that worked towards helping the environment. The more recent lockdown will also likely have negligible effects on improving the state of the environment.

Professor Keith Shine of the University of Reading stated, "... because CO2 is so persistent in the atmosphere, short-term emission reductions resulting directly from the pandemic lockdowns lead to undetectable reductions in warming. It is only via sustained and radical changes in the way we use fossil fuels that we can hope to meet the Paris [climate agreement] target."

It is no longer enough to sim-

ply stop emitting greenhouse gases and assume that the climate will fix itself. Through the burning of fossil fuels, we have set off a chain reaction of events that will only worsen as time progresses. The only real solution would be to lower greenhouse gas emissions and also work on removing them from the atmosphere, which is something that the lockdowns are not accomplishing.

The pandemic also created a more unstable economy, meaning that investors are less willing to make risky investments. They would rather stick to investments that they know will continue to do well. Unfortunately, renewable energy appears to be a riskier investment than the oil and gas industry, and Charles Donovan, director of the Centre for Climate Finance and Investment at Imperial College, said: "The conventional wisdom says that investing in fossil fuels is more profitable than investing in renewable power. The conventional wisdom is wrong." Therefore, it is possible that some of the progress that has been made towards more renewable energy could be reversed due to the more insecure condition the economy is currently in as investors choose to invest in the fossil fuel industry instead.

Governments are less likely to keep up with environmental initiatives as the majority of their funding will be directed towards pandemic aid. International negotiations about climate change are being delayed, such as the COP26, or the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Other industries are using the pandemic as an excuse to increase their plastic production. Recycled plastic has seen a drastic decrease in demand while new initiatives to increase funding for plastic production continue appearing. "Plastic pollution was

already one of the greatest threats to our planet before the coronavirus outbreak," said Pamela Coke-Hamilton, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s director of international trade. "The sudden boom in the daily use of certain products to keep people safe and stop the disease [masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, single-use plastic for packaging] is making things much worse." To make matters worse, these single-use plastics are often disposed of incorrectly, meaning they are mainly ending up in landfills or along the streets as litter.

Additionally, with the second lockdown being less strict than the first one and people still needing to go to work, they are much more likely to take a car than public transit. In November, the automotive services firm, RAC, released a study stating that the pandemic may have set the UK back decades in their sentiment towards driving as opposed to taking public transport. 68% of the 3,000 car owners surveyed found their vehicles important for everyday errands, compared to 54% last year.

All things considered, it is unlikely the pandemic itself will have much of a positive impact on the future of climate change, and there is also the unfortunate likelihood that these lockdowns may promote environmentally unfriendly practices. However, it is a possibility that this could help lead the world into a more sustainable lifestyle, such as through less international travel and more online work, where people no longer need to travel to and from work or for events around the world. Although it is easy to forget during these unprecedented times, it is important that everyone continues to consider the health of the environment and what they can do to help.



Illustration by Enna Rejc

features

TDSB

The TDSB's response to COVID-19: Ensuring safety while maintaining privacy

A look into the TDSB's new policies regarding COVID-19 and how those affected feel about them.

Sophie Block
Section Editor

As case numbers increase in Toronto, students have begun questioning whether or not the continuation of in-person school is a good decision. While it seems that transmission is low in schools, there have been eight cases at North Toronto C.I., as of December 26th, and schools have been shut down after the winter break. How has the TDSB been managing the spread of COVID-19 within high schools, and have these measures proved safe enough?

Simone Bellengier, a grade 11 student at North Toronto ordered to quarantine, explained what happened when someone in her class tested positive. "I was called by North Toronto the morning after being in contact with the student," explained Simone. "They had told me that [this student was] in grade 12 and that I had to quarantine immediately." Bellengier was not to be allowed to come to school until 14 days had passed and she had to contact her teachers individually to make arrangements for her schoolwork. North Toronto C.I. told Bellengier that Toronto Public Health (TPH) would message or call her with further instructions and that testing would be recommended by TPH if they felt it was necessary. TPH did not call Bellengier, and instead sent an email with a list of symptoms, basic covid info and what the next steps were.

When someone is told to self-isolate, the name of the staff member or student that has tested positive remains anonymous and it is only known by the school administration. "The rest of the school community is not provided with a specific name as we must respect the right to privacy for our students and staff," explains Ryan Bird, the Corporate & Social Media Relations Manager at the TDSB. Some have criticized the TDSB for not disclosing more information about positive cases, but Bird has said that there have not been any issues involving privacy that have interfered with the TDSB's ability to respond to COVID-19. Simone Bellengier says that she agrees that the person who has contracted COVID-19 should be kept anonymous. "Despite the frustration some may have from not knowing who it is, [that] student also needs to be thought

about," Simone remarked. "By revealing their identity many NT students will begin to reach out to them and blame them for this outcome, something that will not benefit anybody and will only make matters worse." When asked if there were any liability or privacy issues worth noting when discussing COVID-19 in the TDSB, Bird wanted to make one message clear: "In the end, we balance informing schools with important information about COVID-19 cases while respecting the privacy of students and staff."

As most students know, the first step before entering the school is filling out a simple Service Now self-check, in which a QR code is used to grant students and staff access into the building. The QR code functions to benefit the TDSB, as it allows them to prove, if need be, that a positive student should have noticed symptoms before entering the school. Bird reported that "[the QR code] is just one way that the TDSB ensures people have passed the screening process." However, this system's effectiveness to prevent those with COVID-19 from entering the school remains unknown. Most students skim through the list, eager to make it to their class.

Samara Golger, a grade nine student at Forest Hill Collegiate Institute, said that she most likely wouldn't lie on the self-check, but that it would depend on the symptom. "If I had a small sniffle on a cold day I might blame it on the temperature," she explains. Her stance is not that different than most, as most students do probably have a runny nose after walking to school in the cold, or have headaches after long nights of studying. While the top of the form does



SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL AND WORK:
DAILY HEALTH SCREENING

Photo courtesy of The Toronto District School Board

state that it is looking for any symptoms that differ from normal, students may easily dismiss a possible symptom as nothing more than a regular incidence of a Canadian teen's life. As Ruby Steinberg, a grade 10 NT student says, the self-assessment makes you think twice about whether you could potentially put others at risk by going to school. However, in reality, it could not fully prevent an outbreak from happening at a school.

Another controversial method that has been introduced to prevent outbreaks is the COVID Alert app. Some have chosen not to download this app as they believe that it invades their privacy. This is false. In reality, the app uses Bluetooth to connect with the same app on other devices, using a system of inputted codes to track positive cases.

As of late November, over 3000 people in Ontario have used the COVID Alert app to notify others that they tested positive. Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious diseases specialist at the Toronto General Hospital Research Institute, said that although this number may seem small, out of the 14 million people in the province, this is not insignificant. As well, this app is still a great way to complement other public health measures. In an email sent out by the TDSB on December 4th, Toronto Public Health encouraged students to download the COVID Alert app so they could be notified if they have come in contact with someone who is contagious with COVID-19.

Keira Ayoub, a grade 10 student at North Toronto C.I., says that closing everything down while keep-

ing schools open does not make sense. Simone Bellengier agrees with Keira, and says, "I do not believe the measures put in place are enough to ensure the safety of NT students ... it is frustrating having to quarantine even after testing negative and [missing] school because of another student." Bellengier believes that the ideal scenario would be to close down schools until COVID-19 cases decrease dramatically. On the contrary, Ruby Steinberg says that she is quite satisfied as she rarely ever worries about school as a possible risk. "There hasn't been any person-to-person transmission at school so they must be doing something right," Steinberg explains. As part of the communal effort to curb the spread of COVID-19, high schools are being shut down until January 25th. Because many families gathered with others during the break and the number of daily cases in Toronto is continuously on the rise, these weeks of lockdown will hopefully prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools. However, many students are skeptical about this return date, remembering the continuously postponed "three-week extension" that was announced last March. Since the opening of schools in September, the TDSB and TPH struggle to maintain privacy, freedom and health. Students must continue to be diligent when socializing outside of school to ensure that they are not infecting others. For now, students, parents, and teachers should applaud the ability of the TDSB to maintain safety in high schools without compromising learning and privacy.

ACTIVISM

The power of diaspora activism

During times of conflict in various countries, diaspora members unite to raise awareness about events that require more international attention.

Romina Emtyazi
Section Editor

Amid a new era of global awareness, along with a sense of collective humanitarian responsibility, we have become familiar with various forms of activism. On social media, users upload informative posts about different events happening around the world. The aim of this advocacy — disregarding the amount of misinformation on the internet — is to inform people of the “things that matter”. Inevitably, some headlines invite more public attention than others, and these topics are heavily discussed by mainstream media. Although it is implied that topics covered frequently in the news must be of bigger importance, this is not always true.

A diaspora is defined as a group of people settled far from their ancestral homelands. Canada is a country with many diasporas because people of diverse backgrounds have moved to this country for many years. But people do not often hear the terms “diaspora mobilization” or “diaspora activism”; instead, they see the results of their efforts in different ways such as helping organize peaceful protests, sending humanitarian aid to their country of origin, and initiating online campaigns to discuss a certain issue. These endeavours, as a grade 12 NT student puts it, “help people see [a] country’s true colours and raise awareness internationally.” The concern over the media neglecting to report various foreign incidents has caused diasporas to mobilize, become the voice of their people, and reclaim their sense of national belonging. Their aim is to generate collective action to shed more light on the events occurring in their country of residence, in the hopes of changing the portrayal of conflicts from a strictly political one to a humanitarian one.

By taking a look at local news and independent international activists, it becomes clear that there is a significant lack of coverage in the media, especially of events happening in smaller and less well-known countries. A contemporary instance of this is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia has recently experienced a turbulent war against its neighbouring country of Azerbaijan. These circumstances have also brought allegations regarding war crimes and human rights violations committed by some opposing forces. However, not many people have heard about these claims, or even of the war itself, and the topic is not properly represented in the mainstream media. You can use this example as a reality check. Consider the relevance of this news in your every-day life, what you have seen on social media, and how much you have heard about the topic on the news. Inessa Azoyan, a grade 11 NT student and member of the Armenian diaspora, believes that the reason behind this is that the media aims to produce content that attracts the highest au-

dience. “Those in North America do not care about some global issues, [so] people stop writing about them. They think that these [conflicts will not impact them], so why should they care?” Azoyan explains. She believes that this mindset is what prevents the media from talking about certain international occurrences.

Diaspora communities pursue action via social media activism, peaceful protests, boycotts, or writing informative articles. The impacts of these efforts become apparent when people both outside and inside the diasporas donate money, sign petitions, or share the news. Nathalie Adrianna Funes, a grade 12 NT student and a member of the Mexican and Latino diasporas, discusses her approach in advocating for her community. “If I have ever tried to raise awareness, I have written some articles. Last year, I wrote an article about the Women’s Absence Movement in Mexico”. Funes continues by saying that the mobilization of her diaspora is not specific to activism during times of crisis. “Latinos have a very strong community in Canada ... I know that there are a lot of places where legal aid is provided in Spanish for different communities, and how they genuinely care to help other members of the community,” she explains.

Ina Poonyth, a grade 11 NT student, shared her experience with Mauritian diaspora activism. After a bulk carrier ran aground on a Mauritian coral reef, protests erupted in Mauritius and around the world. International protests, which were mostly organized by the Mauritian diasporas, took place in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and many other nations. In addition to demanding justice and transparency, the protestors abroad also aimed to ask for the right to vote. Poonyth mentions that in addition to this movement helping improve the situation in Mauritius, the mobilization “empowered many Mauritians abroad, [giving] them a voice and [an opportunity] to connect.”

One of the most significant examples of recent diaspora activism is the supporters of the Indian Farmers Strike. While thousands of farmers continue their strike to protest against agricultural-marketing laws in India, internet users from all over the world are demanding more support and attention to this event. On the online platform Change.org, multiple petitions demanding justice for Indian farmers have been posted, and nearly five million people have signed them. Many of these petitions were created by members of the Indian diaspora, specifically those who reside in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Indian diasporas are raising concerns that the new farm laws are going to enable powerful corporations to become heavily involved in the farming economy, taking power away from local farmers.

In Canada, peaceful demonstrations and gatherings have taken place all over the country in support of the protests. Raji Pabla, a university



Photo courtesy of **Africa News**

student who attended some demonstrations in downtown Toronto, does not believe that moving to another country destroys one’s attachment with their ancestral land. “Seeing the Indian community united in Canada, protesting in brain-freezing weather is truly inspiring” she explains. “There is no doubt that [this support] helps bring the issue to light in the media ... which is really significant.”

The impacts of diaspora activism on target countries is a topic that is up for debate. While many members of diasporas speak positively about the outcomes of their actions, some others see it as meaningless or performative.

In the experience of Inessa Azoyan, diaspora activism led to substantial outcomes during the recent conflict in Armenia. She explains that the Armenian communities around the world were able to collect boxes of warm clothing, sleeping bags, and food which were delivered directly to the soldiers in need. “The diaspora contributed \$370 million to help those displaced by the war, wounded soldiers, and to cover funeral expenses,” Azoyan says. Additionally, the Mauritian justice movement previously mentioned in the article resulted in Mauritians living abroad to gain the right to vote.

On the other hand, this advocacy sometimes has no major outcomes in some countries. This may be because several governments do not allow the diasporas to influence internal policies and consider diasporas a threat to their authority and independence. This is especially visible in nations with controversial human rights records, often trying to sweep their wrongdoings under the carpet. These nations label out-of-country activists as disloyal citizens who have no right to be talking about an issue while residing outside of the country.

This view is not specific to governments. A study done by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), interviewed diaspora returnees about their experience in their country of origin. A significant majority of the participants stated that they faced prejudices and hos-

tility from numerous people in their ancestral countries. While many were appreciative of their efforts, some believed that diaspora members never truly understood the implications of the conflicts while living all the way across the world. For example, a South Sudanese interviewee from the study recalled that “some people look down at you. They try to cast doubt about your loyalty to the country... Some say: ‘Oh, the diaspora, they always run away, use their passports and leave the country’.” This argument also ties in with the issue of performative activism and how people use the struggles of their country as a mere tool to attract attention to themselves.

One sentiment shared by most people in the diaspora is guilt. Inessa Azoyan explains that she feels a lot of guilt in spite of what her diaspora has achieved. “[It’s] difficult to see my relatives and my people struggle through each day while my family and I sit in Canada in a warm house, continuing our regular routines,” Azoyan expresses. Nathalie Adriana Funes feels similarly, explaining that “it’s [like] an internal battle.” By moving to another country, she will have better opportunities in life, but it is hard for her to watch news about Mexico knowing that by moving, she has not really done anything to make it better. “You are making yourself a better world when you’re leaving, everyone else behind it. I deal with a lot of guilt regarding that,” Funes further expresses.

When geopolitical analysts are asked to give their opinion on a global matter, they manage to analyze conflicts to the very core and talk about what they think is best for a country. Unfortunately, more often than not, they miss the bigger picture and forget that they are talking about actual humans who are being affected by a certain issue. That is why it is important to voice your concerns and listen to the challenges that other people are facing, in the hopes that it may create a more amicable world.

SELF-GROWTH

The importance of failure

We have to stop looking at failure as the end of a journey. Failure is a stepping stone to success; it is an essential part of everyday life and true victories.

Iva-Mari Miskulin

Copy Editor

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. And yet, somehow, constant success doesn't make us insane, right? We must ask ourselves how much we actually learn from our successes. Technically, we only end up learning what went right, missing out on the important information we learn from our failures. Society is obsessed with perfection; everything we do needs to go right. However, this mentality is dangerous and unhelpful, as the way we learn is based upon failure.

It is said that when we tackle tasks that are slightly outside of our comfort zones, it fosters an environment in which we are the most capable of learning new things. If the tasks are too easy, we learn nothing, and if the tasks are too difficult, we give up. So, what is the perfect balance to learn the most effectively? It's when we fail 15% of the time. Research at Princeton, Brown University, and the University of California and Los Angeles concluded that computers learned the most quickly when they were placed in circumstances that made them 85% successful. When these studies were conducted on animals, the results were the same. When we fail, we gain experience, and these experiences can be considered the most valuable lessons in our lives. Experience teaches us how to deal with failure, how to deal with slumps in our life, how to learn, how to approach new challenges, and most importantly, how to better understand ourselves. You may not realize what you have gained at the time of your mistake, but afterwards, you'll see how much it has allowed you to grow.

We have to stop looking at failure as the end of a journey. Failure is a stepping stone to success; it's an essential part of everyday life and true victories. As the famous violinist Ray Chen said, "Success is an accumulation of failure," and if we all start looking at it through a more positive lens, we will get more out of life. We are human; we do not know everything. Imagine a world where there was nothing left to learn. It would be dull and no one would feel motivated to do anything. Luckily, in our world, there's room for discovery, improvement, failure, and success.

Don't take this the wrong way, though. Persistent failure merits a change of mindset, but occasional failure should not discourage you. Let's say you just failed a test; instead of feeling defeated, try to understand the reasons behind this. Did you not study enough? Did you not do enough practice questions? Do you just not understand the concepts in general? Did you not ask for enough help from your teacher? Analyzing the process you went through to reach this failure can help you find a different process that will help you reach success.

SpaceX, a huge company currently at the forefront of space exploration, is a large-scale example that demonstrates the importance of failure. Why are they leading the game,

you ask? Because they are not afraid to take risks. When the risks they take end up in explosions, they don't wallow in misery. Instead, they celebrate, because it is one more thing for them to improve and learn from.

It is also important to understand that failure inherently follows risk. If you don't take any chances in life, you become sheltered from the unexpected and succeeding becomes less satisfying and frequent. Taking risks and failing is ultimately what discovery is, because, as long as you are learning, you are doing something right. Per contra, when you stop

the time? Valid point. There are, of course, people who succeed almost all of the time, but this is only from your perspective. You don't have the full picture. Everyone fails. The smartest people that you know fail, but their failures may not be as obvious. For evaluations, they fail so much beforehand that they learn from their mistakes and know exactly how not to solve any problem that they may face. Just because people don't talk about failure doesn't mean that they don't experience it, and it is damaging to chase perfection without understanding that failure is part of the

wrong, so, according to this philosophy, failure is expected. No one can escape failure, and if you are somehow avoiding it, it means that you're not pushing yourself hard enough. You're not learning, you're reiterating. The definition of insanity is saying the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So tell me, am I insane? Or do you have a different mindset than you did before reading this?

La définition de la folie c'est de faire la même chose encore et encore et d'attendre des résultats différents. Mais éprouver constamment la réussite ne nous rendrait pas fou? On doit se demander quels nouveaux apprentissages émanent de nos succès. C'est vrai qu'on apprend seulement ce qui s'est bien passé, et on rate l'information qui provient des échecs et peut être diablement importante. La société est si concentrée sur la perfection que tout doit se passer comme on l'espère. Mais, cette mentalité est dangereuse dans la vie, car la façon dont on apprend est basée sur les échecs. Il faut aborder nos échecs avec une attitude positive afin d'avoir de meilleurs résultats dans l'avenir.

Quand on apprend de nouvelles choses, il est dit qu'on est plus performant quand on doit accomplir des tâches qui sont juste un peu au-delà de notre zone de confort. Si les tâches sont trop simples on n'apprend rien, et si elles sont si difficiles qu'on ne peut rien comprendre, on abandonne. Donc quelle est la bonne quantité de difficultés pour apprendre le plus efficacement? C'est quand on échoue 15% du temps. Des recherches à Princeton, Brown University, University of California et Los Angeles ont conclu que des ordinateurs apprenaient le plus rapidement quand ils étaient dans une situation qui leur permet d'avoir du succès 85% du temps. De la même façon, quand ces études étaient faites sur des animaux, les résultats se répétaient. Quand on échoue on gagne de l'expérience, ce que l'on peut considérer comme la chose la plus importante, particulièrement dans le monde où l'on vit. L'expérience nous donne la chance d'apprendre comment aborder les échecs, comment se comporter dans les phases difficiles de la vie, comment affronter les nouveaux défis, et ça nous permet d'apprendre à mieux nous connaître nous-mêmes. Peut-être que cela ne sera pas apparent quand la faute est commise, mais quelque temps après vous constateriez combien ça vous a aidé à grandir.

On doit arrêter de percevoir les échecs comme la fin du monde. Échouer est une escale sur la route du succès, et c'est une partie essentielle de la vie et du trajet vers les victoires. Comme le violoniste Ray Chen a dit, "Le succès c'est une accumulation des échecs," et si on commençait à aborder nos fautes avec enthousiasme? On profiterait plus pleinement de notre vie. On est humain, on ne sait pas tout. Imaginons qu'il n'y ait rien d'autre à apprendre dans notre monde, ce serait assommant et personne ne voudrait rien faire. Nous avons beaucoup de chance



Illustration by Elena Prescott

learning, even if you're getting perfect marks, you are doing something wrong. It's a fine line between calculated and irresponsible risks, but taking these chances can be rewarding when it goes right, but still promote resilience when it goes wrong.

Humans have quite a negative attitude toward failure. In the past, failure meant death. But now, we look at failure as a sign that we are weak, that we are not smart, and that we will never succeed. Sometimes you may feel weak, but it is not the failure that causes this and rather our negative perception of it. In school it is normal to want to get the best grades and be commended for your work, however, the beauty of school is that one bad mark won't make or break you. Depending on your attitude, you'll get more out of your "bad" score than the person who got 100%.

Okay, but what about the people who get perfect scores all of

journey. Even successful athletes, whose jobs are based on winning, make mistakes. Michael Jordan, an extremely influential basketball player said, "I've failed over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed."

Destigmatizing failure and proving it is an important aspect of life is crucial in improving mental health and the way we learn. We don't talk about failure enough, and when we do, we are told that it can only be regarded as a disappointment. Redefine failure and success for yourself. Don't think of success as perfection; this is unreasonable. Ask yourself why you are learning, and why you are trying to "succeed". This will increase your motivation and allow you to focus less on the short-term goals, and rather on the big picture.

Murphy's law states that everything that can go wrong will go

qu'il y ait beaucoup de découvertes, d'améliorations, d'échecs et de succès qui nous attendent dans notre univers.

Ne nous méprenons pas, des échecs constants devraient donner lieu à un changement de mentalité et peut-être de direction, car la "définition de la folie c'est de faire la même chose encore et encore et d'attendre des résultats différents," (Albert Einstein). Mais les échecs intermittents ne doivent pas décourager, mais insuffler le désir de pouvoir analyser ses fautes. Par exemple, si on vient d'échouer à un test, on peut analyser ce qu'on a mal fait avant le test pour se préparer. Est-ce qu'on n'a pas assez étudié? Est-ce qu'on n'a pas fait assez de questions de pratique? Est-ce qu'on n'a pas compris les concepts en général? Est-ce qu'on n'a pas demandé assez d'aide? C'est important de faire cette analyse après quelque chose qui s'est mal passé, car ça permet de voir les raisons de l'échec et comment les éviter la prochaine fois.

Un exemple d'une entreprise qui n'a pas peur d'échouer c'est SpaceX. SpaceX est une grande entreprise qui est au premier plan de l'exploration spatiale. Vous vous demandez peut-être pourquoi ils sont si forts? Parce qu'ils n'ont pas peur des risques. De plus, quand ces risques finissent dans des explosions ils ne pleurent pas, ils chérissent les fautes car c'est une autre chose dont ils peuvent ap-

prendre et se servir pour s'améliorer.

C'est important de comprendre que quand on prend des risques, on va parfois rater. Si on ne prend pas de risques dans la vie, on se sent à l'aise mais le succès devient moins fréquent et satisfaisant. Prendre des risques et échouer c'est en fait la découverte. Tant que tu apprends il n'y a aucun problème. Par contre, quand tu arrêtes d'apprendre, même si tu reçois des notes parfaites, il y a un problème. Il y a une différence entre des risques calculés et des risques irresponsables, mais prendre des risques en vaut la peine quand ça se passe bien, et aide notre résilience quand ça ne se passe pas comme prévu.

Les humains sont naturellement compétitifs, et ont un état d'esprit assez négatif quand on parle d'échouer. Autrefois si tu échouais, tu mourais. Maintenant par contre, on pense que les échecs veulent dire qu'on est faible, qu'on n'est pas intelligent, qu'on ne va jamais remporter de succès. Parfois tu te sentiras faible, mais ce ne sont pas les fautes qui causent ces sentiments mais en fait notre perception négative de l'échec. A l'école c'est normal de vouloir recevoir de bonnes notes et être félicité, mais ce qui est bon dans l'école c'est qu'une mauvaise note ne va pas te briser. Si tu abordes les échecs correctement tu vas plus apprendre de ta "mauvaise" note,

que la personne qui a eu 100%. Et ces gens qui ont du succès tout le temps? Bien sûr qu'il y a des gens qui réussissent presque tout le temps, mais c'est seulement la vérité d'une perspective. Tout le monde échoue. Les gens les plus intelligents que tu connais échouent, mais leurs fautes ne sont pas si évidentes. Pour les tests, ils échouent quand ils étudient en privé. Ils échouent tellement qu'ils savent exactement comment résoudre et comment ne pas résoudre tous les problèmes qu'ils rencontrent. Si on ne parle pas de nos échecs, ça ne veut pas dire qu'on est parfait et qu'on échoue pas, et c'est préjudiciable de vouloir atteindre la perfection juste parce que l'on pense que c'est la norme. Même les athlètes, qui ont pour but de gagner autant que possible, échouent. Michael Jordan, un joueur bien connu de basket a dit, "J'ai échoué encore et encore dans ma vie et c'est pourquoi j'ai eu du succès."

On doit destigmatiser les échecs et prouver qu'il faut les traiter comme un aspect important de notre vie. Ça va nous aider à améliorer notre santé mentale et notre parcours d'apprentissage. On ne parle pas assez d'échouer et quand on en parle finalement, on entend que c'est mauvais et on doit être déçu quand ça arrive. C'est important de clarifier qu'il ne faut pas vouloir échouer, car les échecs ne sont pas quelque chose que tu dois sou-

haïter. C'est un passage entre le départ et le but final qu'on doit traiter avec respect et soin. Commettre des fautes c'est apprendre, et faire ces fautes ne te rend pas inintelligent. Aborder tes fautes avec une attitude positive et tirer des leçons de la situation peut par contre décider de ton potentiel. Ne gaspille pas tes échecs en oubliant de les analyser; apprends de tes fautes pour bien t'installer sur le chemin de la découverte et enfin du succès. Redéfinis échouer et réussir, ne pense pas à la réussite comme faire quelque chose parfaitement, car c'est déraisonnable et va te pourrir la vie. Demande-toi pourquoi tu apprends, et pourquoi tu veux avoir du succès. Ça te permettra d'être plus conscient et motivé dans tes travaux et te permettra d'être plus concentré sur une vision globale au lieu d'être concentré sur le court terme.

La loi de Murphy dit que tout ce qui peut mal se passer va se passer, donc un échec c'est naturel. Personne ne peut échapper à l'échec, et si d'une façon ou d'une autre tu y échappes, tu ne te pousses pas assez. Tu n'apprends pas, tu répètes. La définition de la folie c'est de faire la même chose encore et encore et d'attendre des résultats différents. Donc, dis moi, je suis fou? Ou est-ce que j'ai réussi à susciter en toi une réaction différente quand je te dis que c'est important d'échouer?

COVID-19

Abiding by COVID-19 rules during the winter break

Students share their winter break experiences and opinions on Ontario's recent COVID-19 restrictions.

Kiana Sharifi
Sophie Block
Section Editors

The weeks following Christmas parties, New Year's celebrations, and other festivities have seen an enormous influx of COVID-19 cases. Since the beginning of 2021, Ontario has been recording a record-breaking number of cases every day, some days reaching nearly 4,000. In spite of the public health measures put into effect during the holiday break, health care professionals are worried that Canadians chose not to follow these guidelines, attributing the rise in cases to the gatherings of friends and family. *The Globe and Mail* has called the second wave a "privilege pandemic", fuelled by Canadians who see COVID-19 as someone else's problem.

At North Toronto, the winter break was approached by students in many different ways. Some chose to gather with families, some chose to travel, and others decided to stay home for the majority of the break.

PJ Wilson, a grade 12 student at NT, gathered with family during the holiday season. Wilson believes that this was safe, as he celebrated with only one family member outside of his bubble. Wilson quarantined for about a week before the gathering and both parties tested negative prior to the holidays.

Although Wilson complied with the majority of the safety precautions, Wil Gibb, an Emergency Medi-

cine Resident at Stanford Health Care, has used social media to inform people that a negative COVID-19 test does not definitively "clear" you. He explains that the test may be performed too early to detect the virus, that nearly 20% of tests are false negatives, and that an individual could become infected virtually 0.1 seconds after their swab. His position as an ER doctor has made him desperate to communicate that a negative test is not a free pass.

Daisy Kaiser, a grade 11 student at NT, also gathered with family over the winter break. "My family believes that we should be able to see [each other]," she explains. Kaiser believes that the government does not have the right to enforce rules about staying at home, especially during the holiday season. "Seeing your family and friends is important, and I do not believe that it is right [to] shut down our entire lives due to a disease," says Kaiser.

On the other hand, Haleigh Di Buono, a grade 12 student at NT, believes that masks and social distancing is the most effective way to keep people safe. "If people want things to go back to normal, we need to follow the rules the government has put in place," she expresses. Kiara Distin, another student from NT, feels the same way but wishes that the government would create clearer limitations for COVID-19 social bubbles. "Bubbles should absolutely not be allowed right now. Everyone should be put on a real lockdown," Distin argues.

For many teenagers, bubbles were their way of justifying seeing their friends during this holi-

day break, however, some believe that these teens are misinformed on the true definition of bubbles. Sian Huang, a grade 11 student at NT, says she feels an immense amount of frustration when she sees other teenagers breaking guidelines to hang out with their friends. "A bubble is the people that live in your house; not your grandparents and your cousins and your friends. People are either misinformed or ignoring the actual rules, pretending that they're following them," Huang expresses. She believes that those who blatantly ignore the severity of COVID-19 and make deliberate decisions to break guidelines to see their friends is disheartening. "I think that teens can be incredibly short-sighted. [They] don't always realize that hanging out with friends will only make our lockdowns longer," she says. Huang finds it ironic that many teenagers will use "living their lives" as an excuse when it's their unsafe actions that may determine someone else's life and safety. She says that many people fail to realize that their dangerous choices affect other people's normal lives.

An anonymous university student studying in Scotland appreciates that while travelling may be dangerous during a pandemic, others don't need to worry about the choices she makes. "I'm not scared of the virus so it's my problem if I want to put myself at risk and not theirs," she says.

Ruby Steinberg, a grade 10 student at NT, also travelled during the break. Steinberg recognized that others would not be comfortable doing what she did, but said that she did

it in such a way that she felt safe and comfortable. "I wore a mask when on the hill and in the village, and tried my best to distance from people as much as possible," she explains. However, unlike the university student, Steinberg believes that her actions may have a ripple effect in other people's lives and says, "I think that it's our responsibility to make good choices when it comes to keeping others safe."

For teens, it is easier to believe that they will not contract COVID-19 than to face the blithering reality that they cannot socialize in the matter they want. Although there have been a significant number of cases where teens experience long-term symptoms, many see it as only a disease that older people will contract. In the case that the teenager is healthy, the risk of their parents contracting the virus and getting sick should be enough to make them stay at home.

Currently, due to the many people who contracted COVID-19 over the break, a stricter lockdown has been implemented, effective January 13th. "This is the most serious situation we've ever been in since the beginning of the pandemic," Doug Ford said as he announced the new lockdown. The government has decided to implement these restrictions because of the overwhelming number of COVID-19 cases and to aid the hospitals that have exceeded their ICU capacity. Health experts say that Canada's hardest-hit provinces have consistently failed to contain the spread of COVID-19, but that a stricter lockdown in Ontario would likely help drive cases down to manageable levels.

COVID-19

COVID-19 and schools around the world

Students from France, Mauritius Island, Iran, England, the U.S., Israel, and Switzerland share how COVID-19 has affected their lives.

There are people who still greet each other by kissing each other on the cheeks and who do not respect physical distancing. I'm not sure how to react when it happens."

Île Maurice/Mauritius Island – Vidushi Heeramun, 16:

Un mot pour décrire la quarantaine de mars à juin ici ça serait effrayant. En mars, le gouvernement a imposé un confinement complet. Personne n'avait le droit de sortir de chez eux sauf si c'était leur jour pour aller au supermarché ou s'il avait un badge qui montrait qu'il avait la permission de sortir. J'avais des cours en ligne mais certaines écoles n'avaient même plus de cours. Je suis en première cette année et j'ai l'impression qu'on a raté une partie importante de la seconde: la transition vers la première. Pour moi et pour les autres, d'après ce que j'ai entendu, la première a commencé avec beaucoup de difficultés, surtout puisque le rythme de travail a accéléré drastiquement et on va dire que certaines personnes ont mal commencé l'année. Je suis frustrée puisque nos niveaux sont plus bas que ce qu'ils auraient dû être. Les terminales aussi sont stressés parce qu'ils doivent reprendre comme si tout est normal et ils ne savent pas comment ils vont pouvoir aller étudier à l'étranger. Pendant les cours en ligne, j'avais l'impression d'apprendre moins, de moins comprendre les cours et de moins retenir l'information, sûrement parce que je n'avais pas l'habitude de travailler comme ça. Les masques sont obligatoires dans les lieux publics et la température de chaque personne est prise à l'entrée de certains magasins et restaurants. C'est pareil à l'école, mais les gens ne respectent pas les restrictions une fois qu'ils rentrent dans l'école. L'atmosphère pendant le confinement était tendue parce qu'on ne savait pas ce qui allait se passer. Les gens qui n'avaient pas de revenu fiable et d'économies ne pouvaient pas acheter de la nourriture, et les gens qui avaient de l'argent ne pouvaient quand même pas avoir assez de nourriture parce que les supermarchés étaient vides. Maintenant, l'atmosphère est détendue, presque tout a rouvert et les gens essayent de vivre normalement, mais il est clair que notre économie a souffert, surtout avec la fermeture d'air mauritius qui a fait peur à beaucoup de gens. Il reste quand même un peu de peur, et on parle pas mal de ce qui se passe dans le monde et des conséquences de la pandémie à Maurice.

One word to describe the quarantine from March to June here would be scary. In March, the government imposed a full lockdown. No one was allowed to leave their homes unless it was their turn to go to the supermarket or they had a badge proving the government's permission for them to go out. I had online classes, but some schools ended classes completely. I'm in grade 11 this year and I feel like we missed a big part of grade 10: the transition to junior year. In my and my peers' opinions, grade 11 started with many difficulties, especially since the pace of work has accelerated dramatically and some students started the year on the wrong foot. I'm frustrated because our levels are lower than they should be. The grade 12 students are also stressed because they have to resume classes and prepare for their baccalaureate as if everything is normal and they don't know how they are going to be able to study abroad. During online classes, I felt like I was learning, understanding, and retaining information less than I would during regular classes, as I'm not used to working online. Currently, masks are mandatory in public places and the temperature of each person is taken at the entrance of most shops and restaurants. The same restrictions are imposed at school, but people do not respect them. The atmosphere during the lockdown was tense because we didn't know what was going to happen. People who didn't have reliable income and savings couldn't buy food, and people who had money still couldn't get enough food because the supermarkets were empty. Now, the atmosphere is relaxed, as almost everything has reopened and people are trying to get back to living normally. But, it is clear that our economy has suffered, especially with the closure of Air Mauritius which scared many people. There is still a little fear, and we talk a lot about what is happening in the world and the consequences of the pandemic in Mauritius.

"During class time, teachers will just openly take off their masks whenever they feel like it and their excuse is usually that the students are far away enough that it isn't dangerous."

Marseille, France – Anaïs Thomas, 15:

À Marseille, on a toujours des cas de COVID-19, mais je ne sais pas exactement combien. Ici on est confiné et les écoles ont toutes pris des approches différentes pour la rentrée de septembre. Je vais toujours à l'école en personne. Il y a des restrictions et des procédés à respecter comme le port du masque, mais pas tous les élèves et les professeurs ne respectent pas les restrictions. Il y a des personnes qui se font toujours la bise et ne respectent pas la distanciation physique. Je ne sais pas trop comment réagir quand ça arrive, je ne suis pas une élève exemplaire mais j'essaye quand même de suivre les restrictions et ça fait un peu peur de voir des gens qui ne respectent rien parce que je n'ai pas envie de tomber malade et de contaminer ma famille. Personnellement, en mars j'étais contente parce que mon examen du brevet avait été annulé, et j'aimais mes cours en ligne. Maintenant tout le monde est fatigué et moi je suis démotivée, j'ai l'impression d'avoir beaucoup trop de travail. Malheureusement je ne vois pas mes amis autant qu'avant mais mes amitiés n'ont pas souffert. Je me suis rapprochée de ma famille, mais certaines fois je ne peux plus être dans la même pièce qu'eux. Pour l'instant, on ne sait pas trop comment les choses vont se dérouler dans le futur parce que le nombre de cas augmente. Il y a une chance qu'une partie de nos cours deviennent en ligne et que nos classes soient divisées en deux. J'aurais aimé avoir des cours en ligne encore une fois; je ne comprends pas pourquoi les restaurants et les magasins sont fermés si les écoles où les restrictions ne sont pas respectées sont toujours ouvertes.

In Marseille, we still have COVID-19 cases, but I don't know how many exactly. Here, we are still in confinement and schools organized themselves differently when we went back to school in September. I still go to school in person. There are restrictions to be observed, such as wearing a mask, but not all students and teachers respect the restrictions. There are people who still greet each other by kissing each other on the cheeks and who do not respect physical distancing. I'm not sure how to react when it happens. I may not be an exemplary student but I still try to follow the restrictions and it's a little scary to see people who don't respect anything because I don't want to catch COVID-19 and infect my family. In March, I was happy because my Brevet exam [an assessment and a certification of the knowledge and skills acquired at the end of middle school] had been cancelled, and I liked taking online classes. Now, I've lost all of my motivation and my workload is too heavy. Though I don't see my friends as much as before, my friendships have not suffered due to the pandemic. COVID-19 has allowed my family and me to get closer, but sometimes I can't bear to be in the same room as them. At the moment, we are not sure how things are going to happen in the future, as the number of COVID-19 cases is still increasing. There is a chance that part of our classes will take place online from now on and that our class sizes will be split in half. I would love to have online lessons again and I don't understand why restaurants and stores are closed if schools, where the restrictions are not respected, are still open.

"I'm in grade 11 this year and I feel like we missed a big part of grade 10: the transition to junior year."

Zurich, Switzerland– Cella Leonard, 16:

In comparison to North America and the rest of Europe, the number of cases in Switzerland has been much lower. Of course – although the restrictions aren't as strict as I've heard they've been in the United States – it has still been an adjustment. My school is fully in-person and we have to wear masks during scheduled class time. Before we returned to school in September, my school set up portable classes that look like greenhouses and they built portable sinks outside the school's main doors. Upon entering, everyone has to wash their hands, and although this may sound like a really smart idea, I think it may be backfiring a little. People crowd around each other to get to the sinks and sometimes they forget to put on their masks beforehand. It can get really hectic and the staff does not do a good job of controlling the students. During class time, teachers will just openly take off their masks whenever they feel like it and their excuse is usually that the students are far away enough that it isn't dangerous. As well, our seating arrangement in class is completely the same; there are no socially distanced desks. However, in the cafeteria, the seats are socially distanced because we have to take off our masks to eat, but even then a lot of people won't follow the rules. It doesn't really surprise me that lots of students aren't taking this pandemic seriously, but what is more problematic is that the staff hardly does anything about it.

Tehran, Iran – Hana Rostami, 16:

At the beginning of the school year, classes were held in school once or twice a week for science and math courses. However, as the number of COVID-19 cases increased, all classes were held online. It was initially intended to have the mid-term exams in person, but the exacerbation of the pandemic did not allow for this. All classes are held online via Skype, where the teacher shares their presentation but students' cameras are turned off. Usually, there are four 90-minute classes every day, with a fifteen-minute break in between each class and thirty minutes for lunch. The classes start at 7:30 am and end at 2:30 pm. Exams are also held online and generally completed on Google Forms. The students are required to turn on their cameras to ensure surveillance for the exams. The students may also be asked to fill in a Word document provided by the teacher and email it back to the respective instructor. There are some difficulties that come with online learning. Although we have some group projects and group discussions, peer learning is not as prominent as it was in school and communicating with teachers has become much more difficult. In terms of health and safety, the current strategy is working well. However, I think that more direct communication between students and teachers is required. This can be done by asking students to turn on their cameras. Some teachers make use of tools such as Google Docs, while many do not. In my opinion, some teachers can also educate themselves on online-learning methods and implement new strategies to enhance their teaching and make learning easier for students. Courses can be provided for teachers to educate them about technology-based and online learning. Amid this situation, the one thing that I truly miss the most is my friends: the group activities, the fun we had together, and how we were always there for each other!

“Unlike Canada, 15% of your final grade in a class is studentship, which includes bringing your books, doing your homework, and participating in class, so most students participate a lot anyway. Every other week, the school organizes a social afternoon, which is not a part of the schedule.”

Brighton, England – Sarah Taherian, 15:

In England, the school year started in early September with students returning to in-person learning. As always, the school year is divided into three separate terms, students are given their regular timetables and have to switch in between classrooms to attend lessons. The school board has tried to lower the number of students in each classroom, but there are some courses such as English Literature and Mathematics that are quite popular amongst students; therefore, maintaining a number fewer than 15 students has been very hard. This created a lot of chaos both for students and teachers in the early weeks of September. To ensure the health and safety of staff and students, hand sanitizer stations are placed all over the school, a one-way walking system has been imposed in the hallways, and break times are staggered. Enhanced cleaning procedures have been introduced, and social distancing is encouraged wherever possible. Pupils and teachers in all of England's secondary schools are required to wear face masks in communal areas on the school premises. However, students spend their lunch hours at school and take their masks off while eating. Since the weather is getting cold, more and more students decide to eat indoors rather than in the courtyard. Some other safety measures include: no gatherings in front of the school gates, opening multiple entrances to the school to reduce contact between pupils, and socially distanced seats in classrooms. As cases all over the country have seen a significant increase, a nation-wide lockdown was imposed on November 1st, but schools have remained open. Despite next summer's GCSE —General Certificate of Secondary Education— exams being cancelled in Scotland and Wales, GCSEs have only been postponed in England.

“Even though kids in school are being careful, I know that a lot of them aren't as careful outside of school, so I try to avoid those people.”

Paris, France – Alexandra Rousset, 14:

COVID-19 was supposed to radically change my school but nobody really seems to care about the health protocols. Our schedules have been unchanged and my school remains fully in-person with classes from 8 am to 6 pm. During sports classes, teachers can choose to impose masks or allow students to decide between zero contact and wearing a mask. However, high-contact activities like wrestling are cancelled and clubs no longer take place. Unlike sports classes, students are required to wear masks during regular classes. We are not allowed to linger in the hallways and must sanitize our hands often. However, over 500 students cram into the dining hall each day without social distancing or masks and stairways are often extremely crowded. Additionally, many students wear their masks below their chins and don't take the rules seriously. While some students are indifferent to the new way of schooling, most students are annoyed. They find that classes are more difficult and wearing masks all day is exhausting, especially during PE.

“Although we have some group projects and group discussions, peer learning is not as prominent as it was in school and communicating with teachers has become much more difficult.”

Ramat Ha'Sharon, Israel - Shira Harel, 14:

The pandemic hit Israel harder at first, and so we were all quarantined last March. Unlike Canada, schools were closed for only three weeks and afterwards functioned partly through the internet. The school that I went to was a private school, and their schedule is nearly identical to the one they would have had if it was a normal year. They start at the same time and finish at the same time as they would in a regular year, and they have the same number of classes. Every class used to last 45-50 minutes, but now each class is shortened by fifteen minutes so that the students can get a break from watching their screens. To cover for the shorter classes, the teachers give more homework. The number of projects has stayed the same as in past years; students just get more work to complete between classes. Each student must have a computer with a working camera and microphone, and those who don't have one can rent one from the school's computer lab for a small fee. Each student is obligated to turn on their camera and speak at least once. Unlike Canada, 15% of your final grade in ...

הקורונה הכתה בישראל יותר קשה בהתחלה, לכן כבר בשנה שעברה כולנו נכנסנו לסגר. בשונה מקנדה, בתי הספר נסגרו לשלושה שבועות בלבד, ולאחר מכן חזרו לתפקד במתכונת חלקית ודרך האינטרנט. עד שהתחילה השנה הנוכחית, רוב בתי הספר כבר התארגנו על עצמם וכעת יש שגרה ממשית. בית הספר שבו למדתי היה בית ספר פרטי, והשגרה שלהם זהה כמעט לחלוטין לזאת של שנה רגילה. הם מתחילים באותן שעות ומסיימים באותן שעות, ויש את אותו מספר שיעורים. כל שיעור היה פעם בין 45-50 דקות, אבל כיום כל שיעור קוצר ברבע שעה על מנת שהתלמידים יוכלו לקבל הפסקה מלבהות במסכים שלהם. על מנת לחפות על קיצור השיעורים, המורים נותנים יותר יותר שיעורי בית. מספר הפרויקטים נשאר זהה לזה של שנים רגילות, פשוט מקבלים יותר עבודה להשלים בין שיעור לשיעור. לכל תלמיד חייב להיות מחשב עם מצלמה ומיקרופון עובד, ואלה שאין יכולים להשכיר לפטופ ממעבדת המחשבים שבבית הספר תמורת תשלום סמלי. בכל השיעורים חובה להדליק מצלמה ולדבר לפחות פעם אחת. בשונה מבקנדה, 51% מהציון הסופי שלך במקצוע היא התלמידאות, שכוללת הבאת ציוד, הכנת שיעורי בית, והשתתפות בשיעורים, כך שרוב התלמידים משתתפים הרבה בכל מקרה. מדי שבועיים בית הספר מארגן אחר-צהריים חברתי, שאינו חלק מהמערכת ואינו חובה, ובו תלמידי כל כיתה מתאספים בבית הספר בהתאם להנחיות, ומקבלים כמה שעות לדבר אחד עם השני פנים אל פנים בנוכחות המחנכת. גם בבתי ספר ציבוריים ישנה שגרה דומה, גם אם פחות עמוסה, וגם הם מנסים לארגן לתלמידים פעילויות חברתיות נוספות על מנת הלימודים לא יהיו פשוט ישיבה ובהייה במחשב כל היום. לדעתי זוהי יוזמה מבורכת ואני מקווה שיתחילו משהו דומה גם כאן.

Long Island, New York – Grace Notarstephano, 16:

New York's cases have been relatively low for a while. We had the highest number of cases of COVID-19 until July when we locked down, and that really helped until cases started rising again during October. In August, cases were quite low and most stores, restaurants, and malls were open. At my high school, students can either attend school in-person with some days at home (hybrid) or attend classes fully online. I chose to attend school in the hybrid format, so I was split into one of two groups (divided by students' last names). I attend in-person classes 2 or 3 days per week depending on the schedule (two groups alternate attending school on Mondays). We have 4 semesters in one year which we call quarters. There have been a few cases of COVID-19 so far which mostly occurred in elementary schools. This is because elementary students do not have the hybrid option and the majority of students attend school in-person full time. I do feel safe in school, as the kids in my classes know the dangers of COVID-19 and wear masks all the time, even when we're leaving campus to eat. There are a lot of precautions that don't make us the happiest, but we know that they're of the best intentions. Even though kids in school are being careful, I know that a lot of them aren't as careful outside of school, so I try to avoid those people. Unlike what many of my classmates say, I feel like I'm learning just fine. Being in school for a few days really helps with that. Online school is much more structured this year, so it's a lot more motivating than it was during lockdown last school year. There are challenges with doing work online since we are so heavily relying on the internet and it doesn't always work. Also, an issue I've been having is getting too much screen time for my eyes. I try to take breaks for the health of my eyes but being on my laptop for 7 hours a day doesn't help.

“However, over 500 students cram into the dining hall each day without social distancing or masks and stairways are often extremely crowded. Additionally, many students wear their masks below their chins and don't take the rules seriously.”

“At first, students couldn’t use the school fields or equipment, but no one listened. So, the school hired a policeman to guard the school’s facilities during the day.”

Ann Arbor, Michigan – Valerie Von Rutte, 16:

My school is now completely online. We have a block schedule, so I have longer classes but only three a day with only asynchronous work on Wednesdays. Some clubs are taking place via Zoom and fall sports took place like normal. Winter sports just got pushed back and the school board is debating whether or not they’ll take place at all. At first, students couldn’t use the school fields or equipment, but no one listened. So, the school hired a policeman to guard the school’s facilities during the day. Now, indoor gatherings with more than 30 people are prohibited, making winter sports less likely to be able to run. No one is allowed to go into the school, and we get weekly emails from the principal telling us to stay safe. I know that a lot of people have had a hard time adjusting to online school, but I actually prefer it. Students’ cameras aren’t required to be on, so no one turns them on. Online school is definitely more challenging than in-person school, as it takes more willpower and motivation now.

EDUCATION

Як залишатись зосередженим на самотньому навчанні під час COVID

How to stay focused during independent learning

COVID-19 has caused all in person students to move to remote learning, as result many students are facing difficulty staying focused. Here are some tips for NT students to help stay concentrated throughout this time period.

Mariia Krasnenkova
Contributor

Many high school students need help focusing on their homework and independent learning at home during COVID. Due to the pandemic, the education system has changed, as a result students now have to work more independently. In Ontario, secondary school students only see their teacher once every four days, and have to go through a year’s worth of material in only a couple of months. I am one of those students, and I want to share three things that can help you concentrate, be more productive, and stay motivated. The three things I recommend you do before you start studying are to create a suitable environment, create a clear list of tasks to complete, and make sure you take breaks.

Picking a good place to study is very important, because it can affect your concentration and productivity. Your work environment should keep you apart from distractions, such as your phone or family members. Some people can only concentrate in a silent environment, while others need background noise or music, so experiment to figure out what works best for you. If you prefer studying in a quiet place you can stay at home, or go to a public library, if they are open. If you live with a loud family, you can use headphones and music to create background noise that will block distracting sounds. The work surface is as important as the noise around you. Having a flat, clear surface with enough space to put your materials on and a comfortable seat will physically help you focus. Finally, if you need your computer to study, make sure it is fully charged, so you will not need to interrupt your thought process to charge it.

Furthermore, studies show it is better to focus on one item at a time instead of thinking about everything altogether. In order to be clear about what you are doing, create a plan and concentrate on completing one point at a time. Planning includes keeping

track of your deadlines, and ensuring you have enough time to finish all your tasks. It is also important to reread and revise your plan daily to stay on top of your work. When you are organized, stress and chaos are avoided, as things will not be left until the last minute.

Lastly, it is important to take breaks while studying, and have enough energy to keep focused. If you work for hours straight without taking a mental break, you will feel less productive throughout the working time. When you start to lose focus, take a 15 minute break, which will help refresh your mind and improve your creativity. To take a proper break, you should exercise, make a snack, or read a short text. Also, you can listen to soft music which will soothe your mood if you feel stressed.

For secondary school students, independent learning is a new process that can cause newfound difficulties and stress. During COVID-19, preparing a study environment, organizing, planning, and getting enough rest are the things students should keep in mind to focus effectively on independent learning.

Багато старшокласників потребують допомоги, щоб зосередитись на виконанні домашніх завдань та самотньому навчанні вдома під час Ковіду. Через пандемію система освіти змінилася, тому студентам доводиться працювати більш самотійно. В Онтаріо учні загальноосвітніх шкіл бачаться зі своїм вчителями лише раз на чотири дні, і вони мають пройти річний матеріал за пару місяців. Я один із тих студентів, тому я хочу поділитися трьома речами, які можуть допомогти вам зосередитися, залишатися продуктивними та мотивованими. Три речі, які я рекомендую вам зробити перед початком навчання, це: створити відповідне середовище, скласти план завдань та робити перерви. Місце, де ви навчаєтесь, дуже важливе, оскільки це може вплинути на вашу концентрацію та продуктивність. Ваше робоче середовище не повинно відводити



Illustration by Haruka Kadota

вас від таких відволікаючих факторів, як телефон або члени родини. Деякі люди можуть зосередитися лише в тихому середовищі, тоді як іншим потрібен фоновий шум або музика. Якщо ви віддаєте перевагу навчанню в тихому місці, ви можете залишитися вдома або відвідати публічну бібліотеку, якщо вона відкрита. Якщо ви живете з гучною родиною, ви можете використовувати навушники та музику для створення фонового шуму, який заблокує непотрібні звуки. Робоча поверхня така ж важлива, як і шум навколо вас. Наявність плоскої, чистої поверхні з достатнім простором для розміщення матеріалів та зручним сидінням фізично допоможе вам зосередитися. Нарешті, якщо вам потрібен комп’ютер для навчання, переконайтеся, що він повністю заряджений, тож вам не доведеться переривати свій розумовий процес для зарядки.

Крім того, дослідження показують, що краще зосереджуватися на одному предметі за раз, замість того, щоб думати про все взагалі. Для того, щоб чітко зрозуміти, що ви робите, створіть план і зосередьтеся на виконанні одного пункту за раз. Планування включає

відстеження ваших кінцевих термінів. Щодня перечитуйте та переглядайте свій план. Коли ви організовані, це дозволяє уникнути стресів і хаосу, оскільки речі не залишаться до останньої хвилини.

Нарешті, важливо робити перерви під час навчання і мати достатньо енергії, щоб бути зосередженим. Якщо ви будете працювати години поспіль, ви будете відчувати себе менш продуктивним та захопленим протягом усього робочого часу. Коли ви починаєте втрачати фокус, ви можете зробити 15-хвилинну перерву, і це допоможе вам освіжити розум та покращити творчі здібності. Щоб зробити належну перерву, вам слід потренуватися, перекусити або прочитати короткий текст. Крім того, ви можете слухати тиху музику, яка заспокоїть ваш настрій, якщо ви відчуваєте стрес.

Для учнів загальноосвітніх шкіл самотнє навчання - це нове, що може спричинити труднощі та стрес. Під час Ковіду студентам слід пам’ятати про навчальне середовище організоване плануваннятадостатнійвідпочинок, намагаючись зосередитись на самотньому навчанні.

COVID-19

What it is like to quarantine for 14 days

One NT student’s experience of self-isolation after contacting a COVID-positive individual at school.



Photo by Omar Ali

Simone Bellengier
Section Editor

The day has come. After fourteen days of quarantine, I can finally step outside, but all I seem to feel is exhaustion rather than excitement. The last two weeks were a repetition of the same days, one day blurring into the next, trapping me in an everlasting world of loneliness and confinement. As the only person who had to quarantine in both of my classes, I was known as the girl trapped in the computer screen, unable to sit in my regular seat at school. When I tried to speak through my computer, I had to yell. When I tried to listen, I had to blast my computer’s sound. When I tried to see clearly, I had to continuously connect and disconnect my Wi-Fi. These were only a few of the external challenges that occurred during my quarantining journey in the midst of school.

The morning before school — day one of quarantine — I woke up to the sound of the phone ringing which then turned into the sound of my

mom yelling: “Why did we let her go to school? She could have just gone to virtual school. Now she may have COVID”. That only meant one thing; I had been exposed to the virus. Although it was a situation that was anticipated every time I stepped through the doors of North Toronto, I had believed that it could not possibly happen to me. And yet, the phone call I received from the Vice Principal, explaining my potential exposure to the virus, turned my worries into a reality. I should have been worried about my health, but the first thing I thought about was school. I thought about all of the attendance, tests, and assignments that I would be absent for, and the stress was overwhelming. The quadmaster system would make me miss a quarter of the course and the fear of falling behind was stronger than my worry that I had contracted the virus.

Day one soon became day two. I was now in my 8:45 am class, but instead of seeing my classmates and teacher in-person, I was seeing them through my screen. My days consisted of falling behind, misinterpreting assignments, and my screen time

skyrocketing. I had also slowly made myself believe that I had the virus; one cough and I would panic, one sneeze and I would tell my mom, one headache and I already thought I had a fever. It became more of a mental struggle that I had to endure and I would convince myself that I had the virus. My dad, panicking, had locked me in my room, only opening the door to give me my daily meal, and using FaceTime to communicate while in the same house.

On day five of my quarantine, I got tested for COVID-19. After sobbing, my dad almost fainting, and my mom calling us dramatic, our tests came back negative. Unfortunately, I still had nine days ahead of me. My motivation continued to slow down, my attentiveness continued to deplete, and my biggest passions were put on hold. Every day felt the same: the same morning, afterschool and night routine. The days felt much longer than 24 hours and the steady routine that I lacked caused me to go to bed at the same time my peers would wake up. At first, I felt afraid of my friends finding out and the rumours that would circulate at school, but de-

ciphering my secret wouldn’t be difficult since I was showing up to class through a computer. My friends were more than willing to help pick up the worksheets I missed, record classes that I missed, and be there for me whenever I felt helpless and frustrated.

As day ten approached, my bland routine became familiar and the eagerness I once felt to leave my house diminished. Returning to my busy life of school, athletics and extracurriculars seemed so foreign, and bouncing back from the sluggish life I was currently living would be difficult. When the fourteenth day of self-isolation had arrived, I could not tell if I was more stressed or relieved. The support from teachers and peers provided a smooth transition with schoolwork, but just like the rest of the world, my mental health had suffered greatly. In spite of this, living inside of my own thoughts had given me a chance to reflect. I may not have had control over the situation, but I did have control over my perspective and attitude, and this realization is ultimately what got me through the fourteen days.

EDUCATION

How quadmesters have changed the way we learn math and science

NT students struggle to adjust to learning in the new quadmestered system. Those taking math and science courses are hit the hardest.

Andrea Pupovac
Contributor

September of 2020 was filled with lots of uncertainties, namely, the return to school. One of the largest concerns was regarding the new quadmester system: a daunting new way of learning and teaching. Most of the students at NT had never experienced what it was like to go to a semestered school, so the prospect of having to learn 110 scheduled hours of course material in 10 weeks was something completely foreign.

Needless to say, many are finding this transition stressful. As we are well on our way to completing quadmester two, the potential flaws of the quadmester system are becoming more and more apparent. Because of their content-heavy nature, many students are having difficulties learning math and science courses in such a short amount of time, which has contributed to a lack of motivation and burn-out.

Angela Krstic, a grade 11 student at North Toronto, took physics, along with a spare, at the beginning of this quadmester. Krstic dropped physics, deciding that the benefit of the material learned was not worth the lost time and the burden of constant stress. When describing her experience of taking the course she said, “Physics in the quad[mestered system] stressed me out to the point where I dropped it about a week after, even though I actually liked the subject.” Although it is significantly less work than non-semestered, it did not feel this way to Krstic. She wanted to ease into it and move bit by bit, rather than speeding through one unit a week.

Krstic is not alone in her statement as many students are expressing similar concerns. The speed at which courses are taught puts a lot of pressure on students to quickly learn the material while still meeting their usual standards of academic achievement. The shortened amount of time also means fewer assessments, meaning that every test and assignment is now weighted much more when calculating the final mark. Moreover, the pace leads to weekly unit tests and few days between assessments. Not only does this result in students feeling exasperated, but it results in poor learning as well; students are given nearly no time to retain new information.

The workload is doubled for students who have two content-heavy courses in the same quadmester. Mridul Mittal, a grade 12 student at North Toronto, took both physics and math in the first quadmester. When asked about his experience during quadmester one, he said that the quality of learning has deteriorated this year. “For physics, I had an assessment every time I was in class. And for math, a subject I enjoy, I felt like I was learning the material just for the sake of writing this one test,” Mittal explained.

Students aren’t provided the

time they need to properly revise the material, leaving them with gaps in their knowledge and feeling unprepared for the future. Maryanna Barkas, a North Toronto student who took grade 11 chemistry in the first quadmester, expresses the same concerns. She says that if she were given a chemistry problem now, after having finished chemistry last quadmester, she doesn’t think she’d be able to solve it. “Even though I finished with a relatively good grade, I don’t think I’ve retained the information,” Barkas expressed.

The quadmester system has taken a lot of the enjoyment out of these courses, leaving students with incomplete impressions of whether or not they like the subject. “Because it was so short I didn’t get a sense of whether I should continue with chemistry. In class, I would become exhausted and tired, and I couldn’t figure out if that was because I wasn’t interested in the material or because I was two hours into a four-hour period,” Barkas explains.

The overload of work has caused students to detest subjects that they previously enjoyed, leaving students feeling discouraged and deflated. Still, with the arrival of the vaccine, we can all hope that things will normalize sooner rather than later and that we will be able to look back on this as a learning experience and a lesson in resilience.

Le mois de septembre 2020 a été rempli d’incertitudes, tel que la rentrée. Un des plus gros problèmes qui concernait tout le monde c’est la fonctionnalité du système quadrimestriel; une nouvelle façon, plutôt décourageante, d’apprendre et d’enseigner. Ce changement portait un ajustement massif, car la plupart des étudiants ne sont jamais allés à une école semestrielle. Du coup, l’idée de devoir apprendre 110 heures de cours dans une période de 10 semaines se présentait comme quelque chose de complètement étranger.

Évidemment, beaucoup ont trouvé cette transition stressante. Vu que maintenant on est sur la bonne voie pour terminer le deuxième quadrimestre, les failles potentielles du système quadrimestriel deviennent de plus en plus apparentes. En raison de la quantité de contenu qu’ils enseignent, plusieurs étudiants trouvent difficile à gérer les cours de mathématiques et de sciences en si peu de temps. Le nouveau système a débordé les étudiants, ce qui a contribué à un manque de motivation et qui, au final, a laissé les étudiants épuisés.

Angela Krstic, une élève de 11ème année à North Toronto, est l’une de ces étudiantes. Elle a pris le cours de physique de 11ème année avec une réserve (spare) au début de ce quadrimestre. Krstic a abandonné le cours, décidant que les avantages du cours ne valaient pas le coût dû au temps perdu et au stress constant. En décrivant son expérience avec le cours, elle a déclaré: « La physique



Photo by **Ava Ireland**

dans le quadrimestre m’a stressé au point que j’ai abandonné environ une semaine après le début du cours, même si j’aimais vraiment le sujet ». Bien que ce soit beaucoup moins de travail que lors d’une année normale, ça ne semblait pas comme ça à Krstic. Elle voulait bouger petit à petit, plutôt que d’accélérer en faisant un chapitre par semaine.

Krstic n’est certainement pas la seule, car de nombreux étudiants ont exprimé des situations similaires. La rapidité des cours met une grande pression sur les étudiants en les forçant à apprendre rapidement les nouveaux concepts afin de maintenir leur niveau normal de réussite scolaire. Le temps réduit a eu aussi une quantité et une variété d’évaluations réduites, ce qui signifie que chaque test compte beaucoup plus vers la note finale. Même s’il y a moins de travail, ce travail doit être terminé dans des délais courts. En plus, les étudiants font maintenant des tests unitaires chaque semaine. Cela donne non seulement un sentiment d’exaspération entre les élèves, mais également un apprentissage médiocre, car cela ne laisse pas suffisamment de temps de bien retenir toutes ces nouvelles informations.

C’est encore plus difficile pour les étudiants qui ont deux cours de matières exigeant dans le même quadrimestre. Mridul Mittal est un élève en 12ème année qui a étudié la physique et les mathématiques au premier quadrimestre. En parlant de son expérience dans le premier quadrimestre il a dit que la qualité d’apprentissage s’est définitivement détériorée cette année, « Dans mon cours de physique, j’ai eu une évaluation à chaque fois que j’étais en classe. Et pour les mathématiques, une matière que j’apprécie normalement, j’avais l’impression d’apprendre juste pour l’intérêt d’écrire un test à chaque fois. ».

Les étudiants n’ont pas le temps dont ils ont besoin pour réviser

correctement, ce qui entraîne des grandes lacunes dans leurs apprentissages ainsi qu’un sentiment qu’ils ne sont pas prêts pour l’avenir. Maryanna Barkas, une élève qui a suivi des cours de chimie de 11ème année, partage ces sentiments. Même après avoir terminée le cours dans le dernier quadrimestre, elle se sent incapable d’appliquer les connaissances qu’elle a apprises. Elle a dit que si on lui posait une question de chimie elle ne croit pas qu’elle serait capable de la résoudre. « Même si j’ai terminé avec une note qui est relativement bonne, je ne pense pas que j’ai vraiment appris ce qui m’était enseigné en cours. » Barkas a déclaré.

Le fait le plus inquiétant de tout, c’est que le système quadrimestriel semble avoir détruit le plaisir qui se trouvait dans ces cours, et a laissé une impression déroutante aux étudiants qui essaient de décider s’ils aiment le cours ou non. Barkas explique que « Le temps d’apprentissage était si court, du coup je n’ai pas eu le temps d’avoir un vrai aperçu du cours, et je ne sais pas si je devrai continuer avec la chimie. En classe, je m’ennuyais. Je ne savais pas si c’était parce que je n’étais pas intéressé parce que qu’on était en train d’apprendre, ou si c’était parce que j’étais en classe il y a déjà deux heures et il me restait encore deux heures de plus ».

La surcharge de travail a laissé un mauvais goût aux élèves qui au début aimaient leurs cours mais maintenant les détestent, à cause des changements que la COVID a amené. En plus, les élèves se sentent dégonflés et démotivés, ce qui ajoute aux nombreux problèmes de santé mentale qu’ils ont déjà. Mais avec l’arrivée du vaccin, nous pouvons tous espérer que les choses vont se normaliser éventuellement, et on pourrait considérer cela comme une expérience d’apprentissage.

ANTISEMITISM

The disturbing rise of antisemitism

On January 14, a Montreal synagogue was vandalized with Nazi symbols. I’ve been there, some of my cousins go, and someone vandalized it.

Sophie Block
Section Editor

Just over three years ago, my family took a trip to France. It was one of the best trips I have ever been on, as are many people’s trips to France. Perhaps not visited by most though, was a synagogue my family chose to go to. This visit changed the way I viewed my religion and opened my eyes to more than I would have ever thought.

As a Jewish family living in Toronto, we had always seen security guards in front of synagogues but I had never taken much notice. Sure, our bags had to be searched during the Jewish High Holidays, but I just assumed it was because hundreds of people were gathering. But this same rule doesn’t apply to Christians. It was hard to see why this was so significant in a city as diverse and safe as Toronto.

In France, however, when my family arrived at the synagogue, we were required to show identification. Why? Because in France, there had been so much antisemitism that this was the new way to stay safe. This is standard in Europe for people who are not regular visitors.

While touring different Jewish areas, my family and I heard many stories. One from a tour guide at Versailles explained that she used to be a teacher, but after several incidents of students yelling racist slurs at her, she left her job.

Only three years ago, perhaps because of my age or perhaps because of the rise of antisemitism in recent years, I could not think of this being necessary at a synagogue in Canada. Now, though, I am not sure.

On January 14th, 2021, a Montreal synagogue called Shaar Hashomayim, one of the biggest in the country, was vandalized with Nazi symbols. I’ve been there, some of my cousins go, and someone vandalized it. Not only that, but the man was carrying a canister of gasoline when he was arrested; clearly attempting to light the synagogue on fire. As I read online about the racist attack, I was taken aback. As I looked at the familiar doors now covered with Nazi symbols, I questioned why anyone would have so much hate for those of another race or religion.

Unfortunately, this is not a stand-alone incident. More widely circulated were the recent pictures of Trump supporters storming Capitol Hill. Many of these rioters were wearing clothing with racist slogans or carrying other racist materials. Two shirts stood out as being particularly antisemitic: one said “6MWE”, standing for “six million wasn’t enough”, referring to the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. Another man wore a hoodie that read “Camp Auschwitz”, making Auschwitz, a death camp, seem like an overnight camp.

In December of 2020, during the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, the only Anne Frank memorial in the United States was vandalized. Swas-



Photo courtesy of The Times of Israel

tikas and the words “We are everywhere” were found written on the statue. When I heard about this, I thought of it as something foreign, something that wouldn’t interfere with my life. But those in that town, maybe a few that were just like me, now feel unsafe going to their synagogues. If they wear religious clothing outside, they are now more at risk of being attacked.

In an astounding survey conducted in the U.S. by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany this December, 63% of millennials and Gen Zers didn’t know that six million Jewish people were killed in the Holocaust. Almost half could not name one concentration camp. In New York, almost 20% of millennials and Gen Zers incorrectly believed that Jews caused the Holocaust. Additionally, in the United States, only fifteen states require Holocaust education as part of secondary school. Furthermore, in Florida, one of the states where Holocaust education is required, a principal refused to call the Holocaust “a factual, historical event.”

Also in the U.S., The Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue mass shooting killed eleven and wounded six. The week after this, I remember going to synagogue, along with much of my congregation, to show the resilience and support of the Jewish community.

This same year, a “heavily armed” gunman in Germany live-streamed antisemitic taunts as he tried to force himself into a synagogue on Yom Kippur, one of the High Holidays. He then killed two people at random outside. It’s for this reason that people are so thor-

oughly searched by Toronto police before entering crowded synagogues.

Despite my own surprise each time I hear of an antisemitic incident, these statistics should not really come as a shock. In 2018, a lawn sign promoting Holocaust education was vandalized. The United Jewish Appeal’s sign, featuring well-known Holocaust survivor and educator Max Eisen, was taken down after someone spray-painted “achtung” on it. “Achtung” is a German word meaning “attention” or “watch out.”

When I was in middle school, there was one day where a Toronto Jewish school was threatened with a bomb. With similar incidents occurring in New York, all Toronto Jewish schools went into lockdown. Thankfully, everyone was okay, but this event was one that should not have occurred in the first place.

A report produced by B’nai Brith Canada’s advocacy arm, the League for Human Rights, documented 2,207 incidents of antisemitism in 2019. This increase of more than 8% over the previous year was an alarming rise and was a precursor for the additional surge of antisemitic incidents in 2020. Additionally, the report showed the largest increases were in Ontario, with a 62.8% growth, and in Quebec, with a 12.3% growth since 2018.

In the increasingly racist online world, Jewish creators and accounts have experienced similar hate. On TikTok, Jewish creators have reported that they experience antisemitism nearly every time they post content to the platform, regardless of whether or not the content is

about their Judaism. Education is at the root of the issue. If everyone was educated about the Holocaust and if they heard the stories of Jews of the past and Jews of the present, it would be much harder to hate. The United States, Canada, and the world has to mandate Jewish and Holocaust education in schools because the lack of knowledge is most certainly contributing to rising antisemitism. Education doesn’t only mean in schools; education is also reposting accurate, educational posts on social media, reading articles, and always continuing to hear from Jewish and minority voices.

I am very lucky to not be experiencing this hate firsthand, and I want to make it very clear that while I am not a victim, I know that many teens around the world like me do feel threatened because of their religion. Even though I know that I live in a safe city, I cannot guarantee that I won’t be scared the next time I am able to gather for the High Holidays, especially if the number of these incidents continues to rise.

Canada prides itself on its diversity, but many prejudices remain. Educate yourself and educate others in hopes of creating a more accepting world of all people. Don’t listen blindly, and always challenge those who make racist remarks. Speak out if you hear racist slurs and encourage diversity. The world has a responsibility to act together to help combat antisemitism, along with other hate in the world.

EDUCATION

Work over the break: The students’ perspective

Was work over the break truly necessary?

PJ Wilson
Section Editor

This last winter break came at the end of two of the strangest semesters most North Toronto C.I. staff and students have ever seen. As a welcome change of pace, the stress of school was relieved from most students leading up to the new year. As assignment deadlines for the first day back loomed though, many students have called into question whether these assignments are necessary measures amidst COVID-19, or an excessive strain to

put on already stressed-out students. In a survey conducted among 28 NT students, it was revealed that about 60% of students have assignments due within the first week back, which they believe would be impossible to finish without work done over the break. When asked for their opinions, answers varied: “I am ok with it,” answered one grade 12 student, “[the break] gives me extra time to do my work, and I can do it at my own pace, which I haven’t been able to do this year because of quadmesters.” Many grade 12’s disagreed with this outlook; “I really don’t like it. I’ve been feeling especially burnt out and was looking forward to a

break without stress, however I’ve had to do school work every day of the break”. Many shared the grievances of this particular student, especially the idea that “a break should be a break.” Opinions continue to differ even given the pandemic. Some students sympathize with teachers: “They’re as stressed as we are right now, and work over the break was the only way for them to get through these compressed curriculums.” On the other hand, many maintain that work compounds the stresses the holiday season already brings, and that it should have been assigned as extra credit to accommodate those with limited free time.

The survey also polled the estimated hours of work students believed that they would face over the break, and while the majority of students fell around 6 hours, some reported upwards of 20 hours. Not surprisingly, it was the students with this amount of schoolwork who felt the most upset at the fact they had been assigned work. What do you think? Was work during winter break a necessary measure or should more have been done in an attempt to minimize it? Regardless of how much work you did, hopefully you found some time to relax this holiday, and are feeling ready to take on 2021.

FUTURE SELF

Letter to my grade 12 self



Illustration by Ysa Dan Mari Fajardo

Tori Wilson
Contributor

Dear grade 12 Tori, What a crazy year so far. It’s currently the 9th month of quarantine, although it feels like much longer. Personally, the workload and stress of high school seems manageable, but the pandemic presents its own challenges. For one, online school is very different from anything I’ve experienced. It seems that most students have found it diffi-

cult to properly focus and absorb the material taught in class. This is especially difficult for more visual or kinesthetic learners such as myself. Adapting to a new school routine, virtual learning, and new peers is a very dramatic and difficult change, but I see this as another challenge. I often wonder what this year would be like without COVID. It feels like everything I’ve been looking forward to has either been postponed or canceled. Things like my eighth grade graduation, summer camp, grade-nine a-thon, Red and Gray Day, the list goes on. My most pressing question that I think is on everybody’s mind is when will all of this end? Have

my years to come also been changed by the pandemic? If so, in what way? Something that seems so distant to me at the moment is real, physical social interactions without masks. Making friends has been difficult because it seems impossible to meet people my age. The quadmestered system works well for me when it comes to school work, because I’m able to focus on two subjects at a time, but I meet far fewer people. Coming from a smaller school, seeing all the students who went to Glenview and Hodgson make friends easily is frustrating. I’m concerned that our grade will be more distant since we haven’t been able to make many

friendships in the early years. Which brings me to my next question: how does grade twelve function socially? What do you find different about it, and do you attribute it to the pandemic? Although it seems like I’ve been complaining a lot, I’m lucky to be at NT and to have a grade nine year at all. I’m sure one day COVID will be a distant memory. I hope our grade twelve year goes smoother than our grade nine one.

Sincerely,
My Grade 9 Self

ONLINE LEARNING

Challenges of online teaching

How teachers have had to adapt to the new school year.

Nathalie Adriana Funes Serna
Editor in Chief

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been many changes to the educational curriculum and guidelines. The fast pace to which the staff has had to adapt to proves to be an additional challenge for them.

Teachers have had to adapt their course curriculums to the new norm and fulfil the new board expectations on a short deadline. However, even within the different subject areas, there are different levels of expectations and requirements.

Mr. Hobson, the Head of the History and Social Sciences department at North Toronto C.I., says: “In terms of actual departmental or subject specific expectations, History and Social Sciences aren’t faced with such a daunting task as other programs [since] our curriculum is more malleable.” For these subjects, teachers can leave out some topics or information without affecting the learning or safety of students. He adds: “Whether or not you remember that Sir Robert Borden was Prime Minister of Canada during World War One is of a different magnitude than not learning that you shouldn’t dip a piece of copper wire into any old nitric acid solution you may have lying around. You guys know that, right?”

This is not the same for departments such as Mathematics or Sciences. Many upper level courses rely on the lower level courses to give students the knowledge and tools required to be successful in those upper-year courses. For example, in order to succeed in Grade 12 Biology, you need a good foundation from Grade 11 Biology and some Grade 11 Chemistry. It is harder to pick and choose what should be left out of the curriculum when the students will need those topics in future courses. Mr. Gardner, a Senior Mathematics teacher at NT, explains that “if you cut too many things out of mathematics, students will not be prepared for their next course and this could spell disaster for their future.”

While in regular school years teachers could simply go up to the board and teach, with online learning, they have to prepare slides in advance of time. Mr. Kinoshita, a Physics Teacher and Assistant Curriculum Leader of Science says, “the amount of time that I spent to do maybe one or two slides in PowerPoint, especially with equations, could be about an hour per slide where I might take five minutes to do that live class.” The Math and Science department teachers spend an extra amount of time typing all of the notes because inputting symbols in a document is far more challenging than typing the regular alphanumeric symbols on your keyboard.

While there are some

variants among the departments, there are other issues that are the same. For example, a big issue is that the TDSB keeps changing the system on short deadlines.

The announcement in the middle of quadmester one about exam cancellations was a relief for many students. However, for teachers, “that meant [they] had to redo the entire assessment superstructure,” according to Mr. Hobson. This is not the only challenge regarding creating fair evaluations. Teachers are required to create two equal, but different evaluations — one for each cohort. Furthermore, for courses that are imparted in the four different quad masters, teachers must create eight evaluations throughout the year; as opposed to creating one or two in regular years.

Another example of last minute changes are the new platforms staff are expected to learn to successfully operate and guide students through. Brightspace is not intuitive, and it has been difficult for students and teachers to learn to use it given the short time frame.

According to Mr. Taylor, Guidance Counsellor and ACL of Business, Co-op, and Communications, “these ongoing changes are hurting staff morale.”

A second instance where departments agree is the overwhelming experience of teaching four cohorts worth of classes in a single quadmester. Teachers are required to teach two courses in two quadesters and one course in each of the other two. Mr. Hobson shared, “The amount of work for the two courses together is a lot. Trying to prepare and keep track of who was doing what between in-person and virtual classes was overwhelming. To keep it short, I was exhausted, stressed, and towards the end finding it impossible to properly fulfil my functions.”

Managing two courses in the same quadmester is time consuming and tiring for teachers because they have to prepare lessons and assignments that are accessible online, mark, and maintain their online platforms. Many teachers are diverting much of their free time to accomplish this. Mr. Gardner shares, “I was not available for my family to share in housework and meal preparation. My wife and kids did a lot to support me.”

On the other side of the coin, teachers who had one online quadmester feel they have a lot of time on their hands. Mr. Gardner shares his experience: “I taught two grade 12 mathematics courses in Quad 1 and it was very, very difficult. I am teaching one course now in Quad 2 and I have too much prep time.”

For the caretakers, things were stressful when the pandemic first started, but it is becoming easier as the school year progresses. Caretakers also received new instructions from the board on how to carry out

their tasks. “That added a little bit more stress because they’ve had to change the way they’ve done things. There are different cleaning solutions or different ways of putting them on desks or something like that. But you know, I have a pretty experienced staff here, which is pretty good,” shares Mr. Doughty, the Head of the Caretaking.

Since the pandemic began, there has been a shortage of Supply Staff at NT. For Supply Staff, a challenge that adds stress to their lives is that since they have temporary positions at school, they have to be moving around different schools, further exposing them to the virus. Ms. Akom-Boateng, a supply staff who has been at NT in recent weeks said, “They do nothing about it to support us.” She added that Supply Staff feel like they are on their own.

An additional challenge “in this remote environment, [is that] many typical expectations that can be resolved with a quick in-person meeting, can get turned into lengthy and inefficient email exchanges. This can become onerous and frustrating,” shares Mr. Taylor.

Furthermore, the lack of social interaction can become burdensome and uninspiring. Because of the pandemic, many clubs and sports were cancelled. Mr. Taylor says, “I miss coaching and running clubs which, in a traditional year, brings a lot of fulfillment.”

TDSB staff do not only miss extracurricular events. Mr. Gardner reminisced about COVID-free years when students and teachers were in the classrooms without masks and social distancing: “I got to know and interact with most students, which is the best part of the job.”

However, teachers think that these expectations could be realistic and reasonable in another setting. Mr. Gardner says: “Most of the expectations are not impossible, just unreasonable due to lack of time, training and because it takes away from the ‘quality time’ we spend with our in person students.”

With the amount of assignments and homework teachers give students, students often suspect teachers are conspiring against them; this is far from the truth. Mr. Hobson shares: “We are very concerned not just about your physical health, but your mental health as well. I think it important that students know that their teachers really do care deeply about how you are affected. We are trying our best to give you a sense of structure, hope and meaningfulness in your lives. This has been an awful time for you. We just want the best for you.”

For the second quadmester, students who opted to change online were not incorporated in the Virtual Secondary School. Rather, they remained enrolled at North Toronto CI. Instead of coming to the build-

ing however, they joined the classes via Google Meet, while the rest of students who opted for in-person were in the physical classroom. This undoubtedly presents challenges for the teaching and learning of the student since the classes they are attending are designed for in-person class, not online. Mr. Davis, an English teacher at NT, adds: “It’s not the ideal learning situation, but I’m hoping it’s just temporary.”

Teachers were not the only ones affected. Understandably, student counselors also had an increase in their obligations and expectations as NT guidance appointments moved fully online. Due to the nature of these meetings, counselors get significantly more emails than what they did in past years. Mr. Taylor adds: “In the two weeks leading up to the start of school and the first two weeks of school, we were receiving an overwhelming volume of emails, which became untenable.”

There appears not to be strong communication between TDSB heads and staff. For example, there are a lot of technical issues the TDSB is not aware of. Dealing with these problems in a regular year is easier, but since they have never taught in a pandemic, TDSB heads can’t always provide the best guidelines and equipment.

According to Mr. Hobson, “a disconnect between the upper management of the board and teachers as a whole has been a constant; now it is simply more pronounced.”

Unlike in regular years, these challenges are further affected by the omnipresence of the virus, which in turn, is another reason to be stressed and worried. “I think it is taking a toll on many people, staff and students, because everyone has the fear of catching the virus in the back of their mind on top of all the other work that they have to do,” Mr. Davis says.

There are different ways teachers are coping with these circumstances. Some teachers are avoiding things temporarily or procrastinating. Others just keep a positive outlook and remind themselves this will not be forever. Mr. Kinoshita said, “I am having fun doing this. I’m doing my best job, playing with technology and learning as much as I can and trying to feel comfortable with it. That is my way of dealing with all this high level stress.”

From quickly adapting the curriculum to a quadmester system, to dealing with unexpected changes on a daily basis, school staff have found a way to overcome the different challenges this unprecedented school year has brought.

EDUCATION

Tips on staying focused during online learning



Photo courtesy of Victoria Jennings-

Victoria Man
Copy Editor

Having finished one quadmester and now in the middle of the second, most students and teachers have a decent understanding of how online learning should be like. However, there are still many issues with focusing properly during the synchronous learning and just studying at home for students. With virtual learning, there are just too many distractions at home that can affect the quality of education, but we will all have to learn to adapt to it. In order to get the most out of learning during these unprecedented times, if you're a student, you might want to consider applying some of the following tips to your daily learning routine to stay focused during online learning:

Set up a clean and organized space to get ready for learning:

Having a clean and organized space where you can work seems quite obvious, however many students still overlook and don't practice this habit. First, it would be ideal if you don't attend the Zoom call while you're in bed or in the kitchen making a snack, and it's the same thing if you're planning to do homework or to study. Find a quiet space with good lighting that will allow you to properly focus on the class material or

class call. Give a shout to your parents and siblings in the other rooms that you will be starting the synchronous class or that you're planning to study. The house suddenly quiets down for you. Clear out any distractions on the surface that you will be learning on. Move away anything that isn't your classwork, pencil case, and notes.

Put away your phone:

Doing this may seem very hard for some but it truly isn't as difficult as one might think. Many students at North Toronto C.I. have been practicing phone detachment and they all found it to be successful and helpful in allowing them to focus better on online learning. Having our phone by our side or even in the same room can allow us to be tempted to check it for notifications since a teacher isn't there to tell us to put it away. You might think there's "something very important" that you need to see on Snapchat or Instagram, but you really don't. The only big border that limits students from properly getting the education they need during online learning is their phones. Do what you must to assure that you won't be able to check your phone during synchronous classes and self studying. Power down your phone, put it in another room, or download an app like Flora (an app that prevents you from using your phone using creative ways).

Participate in online class calls and communicate with your teacher through email:

This might be super awkward, but in reality, you will be more engaged in your class. Ultimately, you will be learning a lot more than you probably ever have. Whether it's turning on your mic to give an answer or just taking notes and following along properly with the work as the teacher speaks, the difference between learning through an online call and learning in person is that you are responsible for doing your part as a student. It is far more difficult for teachers to ensure that everyone is understanding what is being taught during online lessons in comparison to in-person classes. Participating in online class calls will allow you to understand a bit more on the topic you are learning and if you are confused, it is YOUR responsibility to contact your teacher. They will be very glad to see you reaching out. Although many students might find it embarrassing or plain awkward, there's nothing more embarrassing than not doing anything to learn properly while there's the chance to.

Those are the few basic tips on how to stay focused in online classes; they seem very obvious and you may be thinking that it's obvious everyone should do this... and you are completely correct. It is very obvious. It's clear that we all know what needs to be done to be able to learn properly during online learning. We need to

stay focused, but what is preventing us from achieving that? Between not being in a school environment, being too comfortable at home, wearing pajamas, listening to music in the background, checking notifications, texting friends, eating snacks, bringing the laptop and class with you around the house, and just plain out not listening, these are things that can all be easily stopped and avoided. With a little bit of adhering to rules and the resisting of temptation, we can all achieve a high level of focus during online class and learn more than we probably expect.

While students have a difficult time learning online, teachers can also have a hard time when teaching. Imagine teaching a group of students in the morning for 3 hours, then almost immediately having to be teaching again for an hour online. Some teachers even have to attend clubs that they have committed to as advisors. Then comes their time to mark work and plan the next class. Teaching online is just as tiring as learning online. Students and teachers should both be aware of how COVID-19 has put pressure on focusing on online classes for each other. Let us adapt to online learning and make our best attempt to get through COVID-style education together by being aware of our responsibilities as a student and mutually understanding both the student's and teacher's point of view.

CHARITY WEEK

Charity Week 2020/21 - Covenant House Toronto and Daily Bread Foodbank

The importance of supporting our local charities during this pandemic.

EVENTS

GRADE 9 VIRTUAL-A-THON | TIKTOK CHALLENGE | NT COOKBOOK
RAFFLE EVENT | TRIVIA | COOKING CLASS | TEACHER CHALLENGES
AND MORE....



CHARITY WEEK



February 1 - 5, 2021

Follow us on Instagram: @ntci_charityweek

Education Committee

Food insecurity and homelessness are problems many Canadians face on a daily basis. According to the Covenant House website, 20% of Canada’s homeless population are youths from the ages 13 to 24. Additionally, the Daily Bread Food Bank website explains how the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the usage of food banks to increase by 51%, as of August 2020. For generations, supporting our community through Charity Week has been a tradition at NT, and this year, the need for charity has never been greater.

“The youth we serve are diverse just like everyone else, they have hopes, dreams and the right to a bright future. The odds may seem stacked against them, but thousands of youth have found a path forward through [our] programs and services,” says a Covenant House representative. Individuals our age, deal with issues which can affect their ability to focus on other things, such as enjoying their youth. Our research showed the root causes for youth homelessness, many of which were constant from person to person. As also stated on the Covenant House website, 63% of homeless youth have reported some form

of abuse/neglect as the primary reason they left their home. Furthermore, over 30% of female youth who stay at Covenant House have had to rely on

has a goal to end hunger in Toronto and eliminate food insecurity. Additionally, this charity advocates for more help from the government for those who

“I am so tired of being poor. Everything is too much.”

sex exchanges to survive, such as having sex with someone in exchange of food. Many individuals dealing with issues such as these long for support to get back on their feet and heal. “I’m grateful that [they] connected me with the employment program. That is what helped to set me on my path,”

require financial aid. The pandemic has led to a record number of people in need of food, however the problem of food insecurity started long before the lockdowns. Before COVID-19, the Daily Bread Food Bank saw a 5% increase in demand for their services, which is comparable to the 2008-09

“She was empowered as “getting the keys to [her] apartment felt like [she] finally had control.” Through her experience, she felt “reliev[ed] [and] joyous to have a space of [her] own,” and saw “something finally come out [from] her work.””

Daren, a youth who was supported by the Covenant House, explained. The Daily Bread Food Bank

financial crisis. Through a survey they conducted called *Who’s Hungry*, discovered that anxiety about a lack

of food rose dramatically due to the pandemic, with one respondent claiming, “I am so tired of being poor. Everything is too much.” The survey also found that food insecurity is distributed disproportionately through different races, with Black and Indigenous respondents reporting higher levels of food insecurity when compared to the general population’s distribution.

Participating in Charity Week or directly donating to these non-profits will positively impact other youth in our community during this pandemic. With our support, we can help young adults like Jocelyn, who was able to receive housing from the Covenant House after transitioning out of foster care. She was empowered as “getting the keys to [her] apartment felt like [she] finally had control.” Through her experience, she felt “reliev[ed] [and] joyous to have a space of [her] own,” and saw “something finally come out [from] her work.”

Hopefully, you have been inspired to take action and support these causes. Charity Week, which is happening from January 25th to 29th, is your chance to get involved. Throughout the week, there will be opportunities for you to make a difference by donating to the charities, as well as awareness initiatives you can participate in. We hope to see you there (virtually)!

SCHOOL LIFE

Art Council presents: “Behind the Scenes”

Art Council

N TCI is filled with talented artists! Whether or not you're part of the art department, anyone can make art. The Art Council is dedicated to promoting visual arts in our school; this comes with celebrating the student body's creativity. And so, these pages are dedicated to showcasing just that! This collection of artwork has been accumulated throughout the year from the Friday Art Feature segment on the Art Council's Instagram page. This is where students can share their art with the school community. Please take the time to admire the artwork of your peers in the first ever Art Council student art promotion in Graffiti! Artists of North Toronto, we want to see YOUR work! You can

reach out to us with submissions via email northtorontoartcouncil@gmail.com or Instagram [@ntci_art_council](https://www.instagram.com/ntci_art_council). Check out our Instagram page to see more amazing work!

In past years, you may have walked past room 227 during a Monday lunch period to the sight of crowds of students hard at work. Although we're not in the building this year, the Art Council is still hard at work, despite the changes to our learning environment. We're always busy with something! The Art Council is made up of many different committees that each work to bring art to North Toronto in their own unique ways. Here's a glimpse at what we do:

Spirit Committee is dedicated to brightening up the school's grey walls. From seasonal decorations to school spirit events, they're probably working on related visuals. Look to the school's front windows and the current decorations—yup,

that's probably the Spirit Committee's work!

Gallery Committee puts together and showcases the artwork of students in the form of virtual art galleries. Take a look at these digital galleries through Brightspace, the school website or the link in [@ntci_art_council](https://www.instagram.com/ntci_art_council)'s Instagram bio and check out your peers' works!

Public Relations helps spread the word about other committees' projects. They also give student artists a platform to be recognised through our Friday Art Features, and create informational instagram posts that teach about both historical and current artists. Have any ideas for Art Council Instagram content? Let us know what you want to see! Ideas are always welcome.

NEAT (North Toronto Environmental Action Team) brings art and environmentalism together to create a single large installation

every year as a branch of the official NEAT committee. This year, they're creating a mural using upcycled household items. Art Council or not, you can contribute to this permanent installation too! Join in on NEAT's craft sessions to make pieces of the project and meet new people along the way.

Semaines Blanches is working on a large permanent mural inspired by the climate crisis to brighten the school's walls. This year, they have also created a series of artworks on the sidewalk in front of the school that are only visible when it is raining outside.

For anyone interested in joining, it's not too late! Despite the pandemic, Art Council is still open for all North Toronto students (both in-person and virtual). Art Council is a great way to make new friends, give back to the school, and most of all, to create art!



Illustration by Mariia Krasnenkova



Illustration by Angel Guo



Illustration by Suhani Sharma



Illustration by Baran Forootan



Illustration by **Felicity Hughes**



Illustration by **Stella Sternberg**



Illustration by **Baran Forootan**

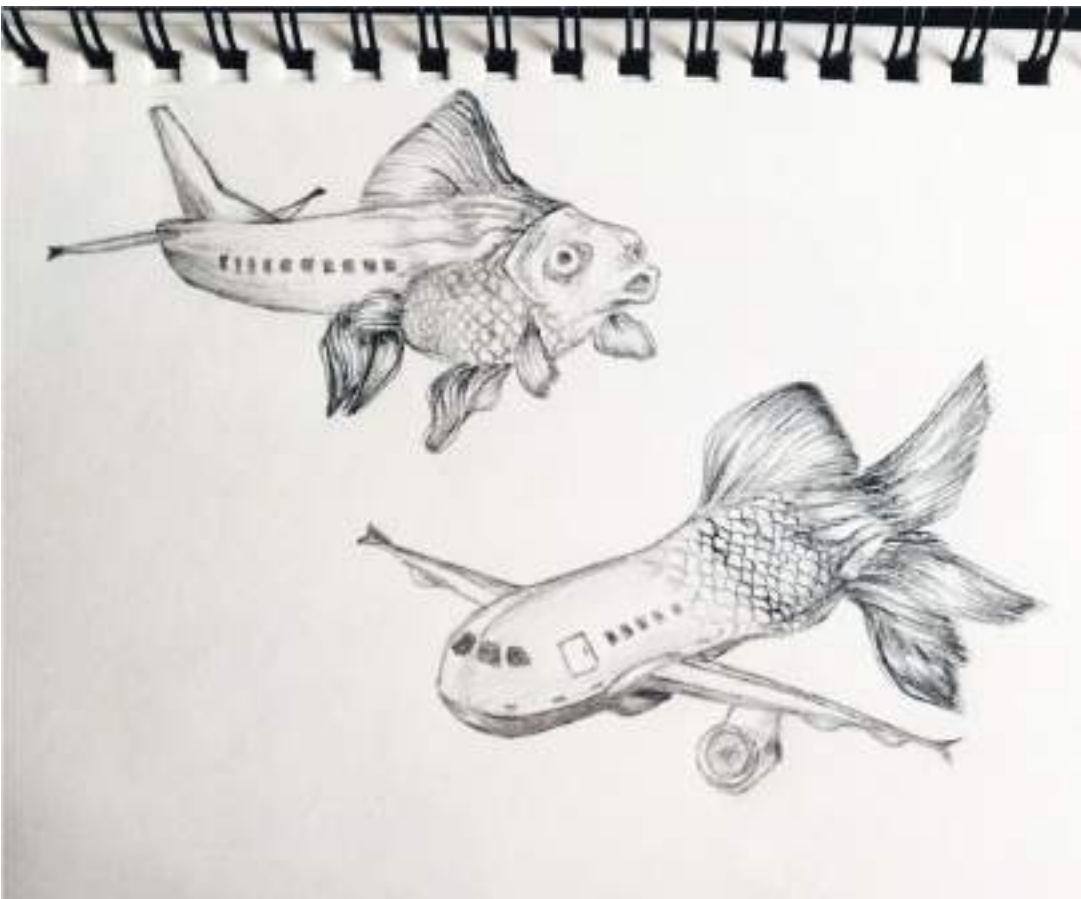


Illustration by **Mariia Krasnenkova**



Illustration by **Alex Kossak**



Illustration by **Stella Sternberg**



ADVICE

Ask the Norsemen

Anonymous Question: If you had to assemble a basketball team of teachers and NT staff, who would be on the starting five? *Gym teachers are not permitted.

Dear person,
Thanks for sending in this really weird question. After much deliberation, thought, debate, consideration, and screaming, we have put together a cohesive list of not only the basketball team itself, but the other teachers and staff who would continue to see the Norsemen to victory.

Kino:
Every team needs a trainer. A person who teaches the players how to hone their skills, what plays are going to be played, and most importantly... a person who can mathematically calculate the perfect 3-pointer. Kino has all these abilities and more to bring to the table with his intellect, wit, and natural knack for leadership. We think he'd push our team to become not only the best athletes they can be, but the best teachers as well.

Mr. Tait:
A coach needs to be decisive, inclusive, persuasive, quantitative, and competitive. Mr. Tait exemplifies many of these qualities through his experience as a science teacher and as a basketball coach for the girls' basketball team, leading them to multiple championships.

Rest of the team
Mr. Mack:
Mr. Mack would be our sixth-man. He's extremely reliable and he's got the ability, the drive, and the ambition to come in clutch when necessary.

Hobby:
As the coach of the girls' rugby team, we all know Mr. Hobson, or Hobby, could get into it and be a pretty scrappy player. Although he's not the tallest, he definitely makes up for it in stamina and positive energy.

Mr. Marast:
Mr. Marast is tall, athletic, and slightly intimidating. His booming voice would make for excellent communication on the court, and his height would make him ideal as a backup centre.

Mr. Varahidis:
Mr. V. would be an amazing addition to the team. He goes to the gym, encourages others, and could definitely throw down if necessary. This man also leads the best dynamic stretch sessions, as we all

know from his greatly anticipated Monday Stretch Days, making him a quintessential part of the team.

Ms. Boutiller:
Here's the thing about Ms. B., if you don't know her, you've heard of her. It is for this reason that we think she'd make a great addition. NT's drama teacher is known for her unpredictable nature, which would make her invaluable on the court. I now if you do know her, you know that through a combination of yoga, zumba, and power aerobics, Ms. B is shockingly flexible, which could result in some awesome lay-ups, sealing her into a member of the team.

Ms. Elliott:
If you've ever been stopped in the hallways for using your phone, the culprit has most likely been Ms. Elliott. The eccentric Spanish teacher has chaotic energy that can only be rivaled by Ms. Boutillier, which makes her a great fit as a bubbly bench hypewoman.

Mme. Philippe:
Mme. Philippe is strong - not only physically, but mentally. We just know that she would be a formidable opponent, and the other team would NOT want to mess with her.

Starters
Mr. Barnswell:
As we all know, Barnsey is a basketball KING. He coaches girl's' basketball, and is the biggest fan of Kobe Bryant that anyone has ever seen. Because he is quiet and unassuming, he could be a weapon that the other team doesn't expect anything from, but will end up being the one player that the opponent's coach deliberately says to watch out for.

Brocky B:
If you've ever seen a seven-foot GIANT wandering the halls of NT, you've seen Brocky B. Although he may not seem like much more than a lanky business teacher, he has coached several basketball teams, and if you've ever seen him in action, you know he can go from zero to one hundred really quickly. His tall, athletic frame combined with his endless knowledge of basketball makes him the obvious choice for center.

Ms. Bulgutch:
For those who don't know,

Ms. Bulgutch is short, loud, and *feisty*. You can not tell us that she would not absolutely body her way to the basket, and could finish any way under the net. She would trash talk the other team and rile them up, while still keeping her cool the entire time. She would have the ability to make the other team get a technical, and would be the fastest little power forward she could be.

Ms. Rough:
Ms. Rough is power incarnate, which is why she's one of our power forwards. This gym teacher is swift, divisive, and is always able to keep a cool head. She's also an amazing team player, knowing when to hold back and help her teammates, and when to take charge to decimate the other team. She may not be very tall, but her expertise, skill, and instinct more than makes up for the height difference.

Mr. Tallevi:
As the male head of the physical education department, and the coach of numerous NT teams, Mr. Tallevi is a force to be reckoned with. The excitable, active, and supportive gym teacher is our choice for point guard. He has a commanding presence in a room, has lots of basketball experience and is a natural leader.; perfect for point guard.

Cheerleaders:
Ms. Dalamba:
If you know Ms. Dalamba, then you know how kind, sweet, and encouraging she is. And if you don't know her, then you've definitely heard about her from someone who does. She has an infectious energy about her, making her the perfect cheerleader to boost morale, mood, and lead the team to victory.

Zozo:
Y'all, Mr. Zohar isn't just another cheerleader, he's the cheer CAPTAIN. His positive charm is simply contagious and the way he motivates everyone around him, makes you want to be better, if only to make him happy. He would also be sure to roast the other team with opaque english references or straight up biting his thumb at them. Finally, you can't tell us that he wouldn't look amazing with a mini skirt and pom poms.

Mr. Silver:
Mr. Silver may seem like a grump, but it could be his head wasn't

screwed on just right, perhaps his shoes were too tight, but the most likely reason of all is that his heart may have been 2 sizes too small. That, or he's just a bit shy. We did consider Hobby for this position, but we think Mr. Silver's athletic ability would make him the ideal candidate to be a majestic cheerleader flying through the air. Either way, we know that deep down, Mr. Silver's heart is made of gold, and that he would put his all into pushing the team to victory.

Ms. Wolfe:
Ms. Wolfe's wholesome personality and energy is exactly what a cheerleader is. Her pep and enthusiasm allows her to bring positivity to every situation, and if worse comes to worst, if the team loses, Ms. Wolfe's comforting presence would be historic. These qualities would not just make her a great cheerleader, but an unforgettable one.

Ms. Chamberlain
All we have to say is this: Ms. Chamberlain is the textbook definition of supportive. Not only would she be at the bottom of the pyramid supporting her peers above her, she would also be at every game; the first to arrive and last to leave, ensuring that everyone on the team felt good about their performance in the game, regardless of the outcome.

So there's our line up. We think that all these teachers would bring something new and special to our school's basketball team. But more importantly, we also think that with this set up, our school wouldn't just win games, we'd dominate them. Are you satisfied? If not... too bad, we Norsemen have been calculating power levels, measuring teacher heights, and imagining assists for weeks on end, so if you disagree... send in your list! We Norsemen will be more than happy to thoughtfully and thoroughly roast it.
If you ever need us to solve your problems, whether it be related to basketball, school, dating, covid, or just life in general; we Norsemen will always have answers.
So send in your issues NT! We're the closest thing y'all have to a therapist now.

Sincerely,
The Norsemen

Anonymous Question: I keep seeing people in school just take off their masks whenever they want. They'll do it when they're coming up the stairs or eating or whatever. But I'm kind of scared to tell them to put on their masks because they're either older or intimidating. What should I do?

Sincerely,
Tired

Dear Tired,
It's okay to be nervous that you might embarrass yourself or feel intimidated, but remember; we're in

the middle of a pandemic! If you see someone without their mask, they are endangering themselves, and more importantly, others. Let them know! Even if it's embarrassing, they prob-

ably won't remember it after awhile. Try to get some of your friends to do it too. Not only is there power in numbers, but if everyone is telling them, then they're more likely to fol-

low the grain.
Stay safe,
The Norsemen

business & tech

SMALL BUSINESSES

Small businesses to support

Here are 5 small businesses that give back:

Hannah Benjamin
Layout Editor

Amanda Wilson
Section Editor

The year 2020 has proven to be a devastating year for many due to the events of the Beirut Explosion, the Australian wildfires, the catastrophic Indonesian floods, and the publicized injustices faced by the Black community. However, perhaps the most impactful was the COVID-19 pandemic that placed the entire world at a standstill with major negative impacts on citizens and the economy. With the New Year approaching, we can leave 2020 behind and search for new beginnings along with resolutions. Hopefully, the 2021 New Year's resolution that we can all agree on is supporting small businesses during this challenging time. We encourage you to take a look back at this article when selecting gifts for holidays, or ideas for some retail therapy. So, without further due, here are 5 local charitable businesses that you can support!

Genuine Tea

Genuine Tea is a small business located in North York that shares the love of tea and adventure with its customers. Since 2008, the two co-owners—David O'Connor and Sarah Wilcox—have travelled the world learning about hand-crafted teas. Since then, David and Sarah have returned to Canada with a mission to share their passion for tea and promote mental health, by donating 1% of their proceeds to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). By doing so, the CMHA provides advocacy and resources needed to support Canadians struggling with mental illness. As for the products, Genuine Tea offers a variety of tea, energy bites, and honey drizzles, among many other healthy organic products. For more information, please visit their website at genuinetea.ca.

Good Food For Good

Good Food For Good is a company, established in Toronto, that sells a variety of sauces and condiments, including BBQ, butter chicken, and spicy ketchup sauce. These sauces are far from ordinary, as all of Good Food For Good's products are made with natural and organic ingredients with no added sugar. With every purchase, Good Food For Good donates one meal to fight world hunger through their partnerships with Food Banks Canada, LA Food Bank, and the Akshaya Patra

Foundation. Good Food for Good has already donated over 396,316 meals and is currently working on reaching its goal of one million. By supporting Good Food For Good, you can provide a meal for someone in need. Visit their website for more information at goodfoodforgood.ca.

Kotn

Currently located in Trinity-Bellwoods, this clothing business ensures fair and equal pay, safe working conditions, and sustainable long-lasting fabric. Kotn guarantees ethical practices in their cotton production, as accredited by the Better Cotton Initiative; the world's largest non-profit organization for cotton farming. Kotn makes every effort to conserve biodiversity, minimize water usage, and restrict harmful pesticides and other dangerous practices. In addition, Kotn works with local non-profit organizations to provide children in the Nile Delta with quality education, particularly by empowering young girls. The small business has both female and male clothing lines that fit people of all sizes, as well as a home lifestyle section. For more information, visit their website kotn.com.

Leaves of Trees

Leaves of Trees is a Toronto-based business—located on Queen St East—dedicated to creating a collection of all-natural and cruelty-free skincare products that are suitable for everyone. Their goal is to “Commit To Kind-

ness” in all aspects of their business; from material sourcing, and packaging to production. Leaves of Trees also strives to create products of the highest quality with a limited environmental footprint. Additionally, all their argan oil sourced products—their most popular purchases—are derived from Morocco, providing increased access to economic freedom for the women of rural Morocco. You can visit their website, leavesoftrees.com, to learn more about this local business.

Reunion Coffee

Founded in 1955, Reunion Coffee is an ethically sourced and sustainable small business located in Roncesvalles Village. This small business sells a variety of coffee beans and coffee accessories from around the world including South America, East Africa, and Southeast Asia. Reunion Coffee is also powered by renewable energy and is certified as a B Corporation, which means it provides economic stability to farmers, conserves biodiversity, and ensures organic foods and rights for its workers. As a result, Reunion Coffee was awarded Roast Magazine's Macro Roaster in 2015 and has been recognized as one of Canada's Greenest Employers in 2018. Moreover, Reunion Coffee works towards a greener future, planting over 800,000 trees in Haiti, Brazil and Tanzania, and donating funds each year to support projects in Colombia. For more information,

visit their website at reunioncoffee.roasters.com.

Student Owned Business Recommendations

Along with the previously mentioned small businesses, here are 2 other outstanding businesses to consider purchasing from. To begin, Amira Cosmetics is a small business established in Toronto that specializes in creating handmade false eyelashes. More information is available on their website, amiracosmeticsss.online, or their Instagram, @amiracosmeticsss. DenBox is a business owned by an NT student, Deniz Guven, where handmade jewelry is sold. Visit their Depop website, www.depop.com/denbox, or their Instagram, @denbox_, for more information.

Toronto is home to 1.15 million small businesses, making up over 97% of all Toronto businesses. Evidently, these small businesses make great contributions to our city's community and economy, revealing the importance of providing support to our local small businesses, especially amidst this global pandemic. Your purchases from small businesses can have an immense impact on thousands of other lives, so be sure to support your local businesses throughout 2021.



Photo Courtesy of **BlogTO**

ONLINE SHOPPING

Online shopping during the holidays

The increase in online shopping due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hailey Wong
Contributor

As society transitions to a virtually dominated world, companies depend on their e-commerce and online marketing growth to persevere through a major change in consumer behaviour. With COVID-19 cases on the rise, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has classified in-person shopping as a high risk activity. To ensure the safety of customers and workers, companies encourage shoppers to stay home and avoid crowded stores during the holiday season. However, this shift in consumer behaviour has not stopped shoppers from making purchases. Although economic uncertainties such as unemployment and pay cuts may present shopping as an inessential activity, a survey found that 80 percent of Canadian shoppers plan on continuing holiday traditions through an increasingly popular alternative; the e-commerce market.

As stores are limited to curbside pick up or are completely shut down, consumers rely on online shopping for a more efficient, accessible, and safe method to in-person shopping. Analysts predict an estimated 33% rise in online shopping this holiday season to a record \$189 billion worth of e-commerce sales. With the

continuation of the unprecedented online shopping rate, the growth of e-commerce in the past two years will be equivalent to that of one season. The



Illustration by Danielle Xin

surge at which customers are switching to online shopping has expectedly dropped 4.7% of in-store sales. If brick-and-mortar stores are to shut down or consumers experience further government stimulus checks, figures may surpass the initial predicted estimate.

With Black Friday kicking off the start to this unusual shopping sea-

son, Adobe Analytics reported an annual increase between 20 percent to 29 percent with a total of \$8.9 to \$9.6 billion in sales. Similarly, Cyber Monday

accounted for a total of \$11.2 to \$13 billion in online sales, a record-breaking increase from 19 percent in 2019 to 38 percent, making it the largest amount of online sales in one day ever.

“The reality is Canadians became comfortable shopping online throughout COVID-19. It became a habit and now we expect that to con-

tinue as we go into the holiday season,” says Canada Post’s spokesperson, Jon Hamilton. Delivering close to two million packages a day, delivery services are preparing for the busiest delivery season the industry has ever experienced. Record-high demands, safety restrictions, and the overall strain of the pandemic have resulted in shipping delays and concerns. “It’s coming in and going out at record levels,” says Hamilton. The company has hired 4,000 seasonal employees and deployed an additional 1,000 delivery vehicles to prevent capacity from being higher than demand.

To adapt to such significant changes in consumer behaviour, companies are enhancing their technological capabilities. Canada Post is promoting Flex Delivery, a free service delivering packages to the nearest postal offices rather than doors to avoid parcel theft. Intuitive mobile browsing, chatbots, simple payment options, and personalized recommendations, are some ways companies can improve their online marketing. As the e-commerce market becomes the main source for sales, enterprises pushing their digital capabilities will be the ones thriving through the current change in consumer behaviour.

SPACE TECHNOLOGY

The James Webb space telescope

What a recent scientific breakthrough has in store for modern astronomy.

Defne Tuncer
Contributor

Throughout the course of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there have been countless technological advances that deserve significant recognition, one of which is the James Webb Telescope. This creation was named in memory of James E. Webb, an ex-administrator of NASA who played an integral role in the Apollo program. The telescope, also known as the JWST or “Webb”, is a space telescope planned to succeed the famous Hubble Space Telescope. The Hubble Space Telescope is an old telescope model that was launched in 1990, and is still in operation. It was considered to be the largest, most adaptable space telescope, prior to being dominated by Webb. The Webb telescope is set to be the largest, most powerful and sophisticated space telescope to ever be built and launched into space, with a total mass of 6200 kg. This is 100 times more powerful than Hubble. Webb is currently being developed by NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agen-

cy and the Canadian Space Agency.

Webb will be the premier space observatory for astronomers worldwide, extending the well-known discoveries of Hubble. It will enable a broad range of investigations within the fields of astronomy and cosmology, including the observation of some of the most distant events and objects in the universe. It will peer back over 13.5 billion years to the first stars and galaxies amongst the darkness of the early universe. The telescope’s objectives will bring light to the great mystery of the Big Bang, the study of the formation and evolution of galaxies, and the understanding of life on a larger scale. In addition to other planetary systems, Webb will also study objects within our own Solar System.

What makes Webb particularly special and so different from the Hubble Space Telescope is that Hubble is incapable of identifying how galaxies have assembled over billions of years. Webb will discover unique attributes beyond earth, such as predicting what the future awaits for stars and galaxies. Webb also has longer wavelength coverage and improved sensitivity; two essential upgrades from Hubble. Webb will use infrared light—invisible

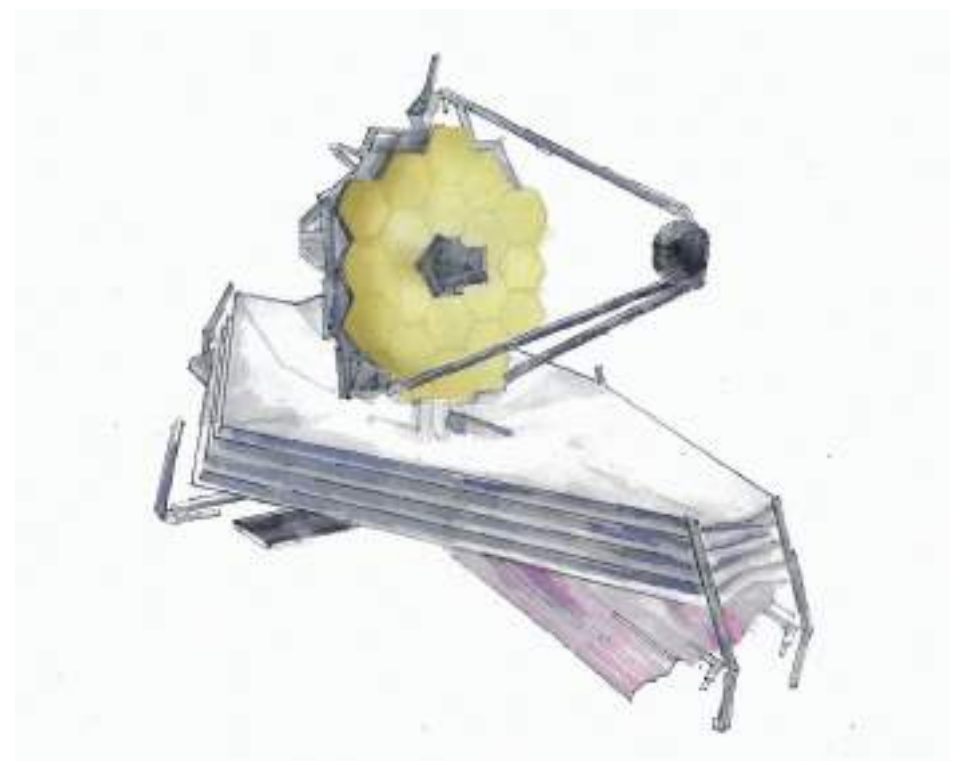


Illustration by Danielle Fuentes

to the human eye—to peer through cosmic dust, a task Hubble was unsuccessful in. Webb’s prominent features include a primary golden mirror made of 18 separate segments, giving it the title of the largest space-based telescope ever built. Webb also has a tennis

court-sized five-layer sun shield that protects the telescope from the Sun’s heat. The telescope’s size is so large that it must be folded to fit the rocket being launched into space. It will take nearly two weeks for the telescope to fully unfold, along with two additional

weeks to travel to its final destination. The telescope's development began in 1966, and was initially planned to launch in 2007. Several delays originated and with the arrival of the global pandemic. The launch date has been set to 31 October 2021. The mission lifetime is currently estimated at 5-10 years or more. The cost of the project was originally estimated at 500 million dollars, but after years of redesigns, cost overruns and failed

tests, the current cost of development increased to 10 billion dollars. Moreover, due to the contributions of the Canadian Space Agency, Canadian scientists have been guaranteed observation time on the Webb Telescope and will be among the first to benefit from Webb's powerful instruments. It will be a significant milestone for Canadian astronomy, due to Canada's immense contributions to the engineering and development of

the most important and sophisticated space telescope to date. Researchers from a number of Canadian universities and institutes have also made significant contributions to the project. They have provided one of the science instruments and the guiding system of the telescope, both of which are critical. Earlier in October, the final acoustics and vibration tests were performed on the Webb Telescope, prior to the final launch date. The results

were an enormous success, and the telescope is ready to launch in about one year from now. The telescope will be filled with the hopes and dreams of space fans, stargazers, amateur astronomers and scientists, allowing for humanity to expand its knowledge of the universe. It is definitely an advance and innovation for the world of modern science to look forward to.

SMALL BUSINESSES

We are NOT in this together

The effects of lockdowns on independent businesses in Toronto.

Alex Kossak
Contributor

We have all heard murmurs of how COVID-19 lockdowns negatively affect independent businesses, but with the lack of information provided by the media, it is difficult to comprehend its true negative impact. When discussing what makes up an independent business, most think of small stores and boutiques around the city. What many don't realize is that the term 'independent business' entails much more. To give a simple description, an independent business is free from outside control. While this definition includes many storefronts, it also includes a large majority of the approximate 7 500 restaurants along with every artisan in Toronto. Each of these businesses have been forced to drastically change the way they operate, whether it be starting or expanding an online platform, creating outdoor spaces, or bringing services to a complete halt. Although storefront rent prices vary depending on square footage and location, the average rent for an 800-1,000 sq ft space in downtown Toronto is roughly \$10 000 per month. Every business operates on a seasonal basis; the average off season period being five months of inactivity. This all depends on the business type. Regardless of what type of business, each relies on its busiest season to generate enough revenue to cover their expenses for the completion of the year. Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to sit down with the owner of an independent ice cream parlour, located down at the Harbourfront. During the lockdown, he had to alter his product packaging and selling methods to comply with the COVID-19 guidelines enforced by the provincial government. Once he updated his product, he could resume quote on quote "regular" operations. However, given the protocols and limited foot traffic from lack of tourism, he was unable to truly resume business as usual, which in turn limited his income. Due to the fact that his business consists of selling ice cream, he heavily relies on the profit generated throughout summer, from May to September, to pay for the store expenses. Those include a \$10 000 monthly rent, utilities, insurance, product costs, and employee wages year-round. Nevertheless, those expenses only include the cost of keeping his store open, and not what he needs to put food on the table for his family. Because of the COVID-19 lockdowns and protocols, different



Photo by Mikayla Toplis

events over the past months were cancelled. This includes, but is not limited to, the One of a Kind Show, the CNE, Toronto Comicon, FAN EXPO, the Toronto Outdoor Art Fair, and the Harbourfront Centre's weekly festivals. Hundreds of artisans and other businesses participate in these events annually and it is for many, their primary source of income. Some artisans that work larger shows such as the One of a Kind Show, report making a quarter of their annual income from only one event. Several artisans, along with independent business owners, acquire their income through merchandising. However, because of the first lockdown, stores were unable to sell the products, thus they did not gain the funds to buy more. It is for this reason that so many businesses were demolished in only a matter of weeks. Furthermore, I was able to interview another business owner of a Canadian wholesaler company in the fashion industry, whose primary business included selling their accessory lines to stores. This company has been in business for over 20 years, yet almost ceased to exist when the numerous stores that they sold to in Canada

closed. Eventually when the stores they supplied to reopened, not one of these stores had the means or requirement to buy merchandise and be a retailer for this company. As a result, the company was left with tens of thousands of dollars worth of inventory and because of the nature of the fashion industry, all of it will be considered dated when the same season rolls around next year. With the debt from the unsold inventory and no store looking to buy, they lacked the resources to create their new line for any upcoming seasons, ending their business definitively. The owner I interviewed passionately explained that "we are not in this together as some are merely inconvenienced by not being able to eat at their favourite restaurants or shop as they please, where those of us who operate small businesses are having years of work annihilated". These words of one business owner speak for the thousands of business owners across the country trying to keep their only means of living from dissipating. If you take a walk on Queen St. W, a growing total of 60 stores have been permanently closed from John street to Bathurst alone. The

weeks surrounding the holidays are the busiest for those in retail, most making 60 percent of their annual revenue in the month of November. Implementing a second lockdown during such time is directly targeting and decreasing the profit from the businesses in Toronto. When stores are closed and people are told to stay home, e-commerce dominates the market and consumers rely on bigger corporations such as Amazon as an alternative. Those fortunate enough to survive the first lockdown will most likely be unable to survive the second. Currently, it is impossible to notice the full effects of the pandemic on small businesses unless you've directly relied on them for your own living. Once restrictions begin to lift and the world returns to what some wish to call "normal," Toronto will no longer be the diverse city bustling with activity that it once was. With that being said, if you are able, I encourage you to shop at small and local businesses rather than ordering online, as small-business owners are the ones in need of our purchases.



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arts & culture

SOCIAL MEDIA

TikTok's influence on teens

Looking into one of the most controversial yet beloved network on social media

Ruby Steinberg
Contributor

These 15-60 second videos watermarked with a vibrating logo have made their way into your life and the lives of nearly every teen in Canada. In less than 18 months, TikTok has grown by over five and a half times, consuming the lives of 6 in every 10 Canadian teens. As one of the fastest growing social media platforms in the world, an important question is raised; how is this app influencing its primarily teenaged users? Well, the answer to this question is multi-faceted. In truth, the app does, in fact, provide a platform for creative expression, but its grip on teens has spread farther than pure entertainment; it plays with our brain's reward system. This in turn, creates the perfect storm for the spread of problematic ideas and harmful standards. The TikTok algorithm is built to keep users wanting more. Its objective is to have its users spend the most amount of time on the app as possible. Essentially, with monetized ads, your time is their profit, and in direct competition with all other social media apps your phone, TikTok is pushed to make their app the most entertaining, the most captivating and the most addictive. A 2018 Harvard study demonstrated a link between the effects of social media and gambling with slot machines. TikTok, interestingly, works almost identically to these infamously time and money sucking machines. Its scroll feature provides an exciting sense of anticipation; as seemingly endless

content, means endless possibility as well. Just as in a slot machine, TikTok also targets the reward centre of one's brain, leaving you wanting more with each passing second. Additionally, both play on one's fear of missing out. Just as in the fear that if one

out on important information necessary to forming relationships, and interacting in a social environment. The thing that separates the two, however, would be the fact that, with TikTok, each user's experience is unique. The algorithm aims to create a tar-



Illustration by Bianca Miclaus

stops playing, the next spin of a slot machine may be the jackpot, TikTok is able to spawn the sense that social integration coincides with continuing to scroll on your "for you" page. It creates the fear that one may miss

geted feed for each individual user; This targeted feed is known as the "for you" page. This is what makes this app so dangerous. Its almost magical time sucking ability is extending further than the time we have to spare.

The average user spends nearly one hour on the app per day, and over 90% of users access the app on a daily basis. TikTok is simply another factor coming into play. Now, When you open your phone, it becomes less about simply answering that text you just got, and more about restraining your urge to put your pencil down, for "just a "5 minute" TikTok break." Not only is this app a time vampire, but it can create quite damaging body image issues as well. Most "for you pages" are dominated by conventionally attractive people, and very little stray from these beauty standards can create unrealistic representations of how one is "supposed to look". **Provide an example of these standards. Essentially, how one is "supposed to look" if they want to be equally as successful on the app. By tugging on these insecurities, TikTok can leave teens with unhealthy eating habits and generally unhealthy body image issues. Given all of this, However, the app does have some elements of positivity. It can serve as an outlet for creative expression, including art, dancing, and comedy. Not many other social media platforms can support each one of these under the same roof, and with the videos being recommended to those who have shown interest in the subject, you have the potential to reach a very large number of common minded people. So is this app really a threat, or is it simply a platform for entertainment and creative expression as it so claims? I'll leave that up to you.

ENVIRONMENT

Make the switch

How you can ditch unsustainability with some simple eco-friendly switches in your life.

Arissa Roy
Junior Advisor

By now, most of us know that climate change is one of the biggest threats to our generation. Action on this issue is not only desired, but necessary. Many of us understand this, but sometimes it is hard to know how to start living a sustainable life. Here are 3 everyday items that are made sustainably, which you can switch to.

Pela Cases (<https://pelacase.ca/>) "This all started with Jeremy Lang, our founder. He saw first hand the damage plastic was doing to our oceans while on a family vacation in Hawaii in 2010. Jeremy had the cour-

age to spend years experimenting with new materials to try and find an alternative to plastic that could be used in everyday products." - Pela website 10 years later, Pela has created the world's first-ever 100% compostable phone case. I know- 100%. According to their website, 1 billion phone cases are thrown away each year, many of which are made from materials such as plastic. Some cases are thrown out because we don't like the case anymore, or because we are getting a new phone; either way, most of us have switched cases. The effects of this have a drastic impact on the environment. This is why every month, 20 000 people choose to switch to Pela cases, which are not only extremely environmentally friendly

but are very stylish and affordable. Stojo (<https://stojo.co/>) Stojo creates reusable products that make it easier to live sustainably. They are on a journey to end disposable culture- one product at a time. Stojo sells collapsible cups, bottles, and bowls that are portable, are not heavy, and are extremely durable. They are perfect for taking to school, or while chilling at home. Finally, Stojo products are a lot more cost-effective than most popular brands, especially for water bottles such as S'well.

BAMBRUSH (<https://www.bambrushes.com/>) BamBrush is a Canadian based brand making biodegradable brushes from bamboo. As mentioned on their website, "Every plastic toothbrush that has ever been made is

still out there. That simple sentence sums up our philosophy. We began with the BamBrush which is a biodegradable toothbrush and we will continue on. When you are buying a BamBrush you are having a direct impact on the environment and the footprint you leave on this planet." Not only are their products plastic-free, they are also made cruelty free and vegan. These are just three of many products out there that are made environmentally conscious. I encourage you to take some time to look at what switches you can make. Change starts with us and does not have to start with big actions. The littlest ones, added up, create a massive impact.

MANGA REVIEW

Our Dreams at Dusk: A magical coming of age for the LGBTQ+ reader

Trigger Warning (TW): mentions of suicidal thoughts. Content Warning: mentions of homophobia and transphobia; minor spoilers.

Anna Sum
Contributor

Of stories that delve into the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, *Our Dreams at Dusk* is a beautiful story that goes far beyond current standards put in place by the media. The world of anime and manga is a deep and expansive genre. Popular titles like *Naruto* or *Fruits Basket* only scratch the surface of the kinds of stories that the medium can offer to readers. It has such an underdeveloped potential for growth, however, there are many flaws that exist in current content which is something that needs to be recognized. Anime and manga have a longstanding problem in depicting positive minority representation without falling into harmful tropes or demonizing their characters. This has developed a complex relationship with the LGBTQ+ community in particular, where transphobia, homophobia and acephobia run rampant. While titles like *Revolutionary Girl Utena* and *Tokyo Godfathers* have made leaps and bounds for on-screen queer representation, others miss the mark entirely. The industry often promotes problematic content that either lean towards the oversexualization of same sex couples and characters or blatant queer erasure and queerbaiting - like *Sailor Uranus* and *Sailor Neptune* from *Sailor Moon* - and is prioritized towards pleasing a heterosexual, cisgender audience. But, all hope is not yet lost. Although it's difficult to find a story that fits the bill in terms of having an interesting storyline and positive portrayal, every once in a while you'll come across a hidden gem. *Our Dreams at Dusk*, a four volume series by Yuhki Kamatani, is a magical and heartwarming coming of age story centering mainly around a closeted gay teenager. Maybe you've heard of it, maybe you haven't. Regardless, this four part series has gone criminally unnoticed. Tasuku Kaname, the main character, is a high school student who moved to a new town just before the start of summer break. At school, Tasuku is almost outed to his peers and he contemplates taking his own life. However, a chance encounter with a mysterious stranger who goes by the name of Anonymous leads him to discover an LGBTQ+ drop-in center atop a hill which overlooks the small seaside town of Shimanami. There, he meets many diverse individuals, learning to dismantle his internal queerphobia and the rigid social norms that society presents.

Our Dreams at Dusk truly sells itself on the 'dream' part of the title - as a queer reader myself, it has almost everything a manga should have within its pages. First, Kamatani puts an extraordinary amount of detail into the artwork. Their linework is clean and steady without a line out of place. Every panel of this manga is drawn

with great care, and this high quality doesn't falter as the series progresses. Imagery and symbolism within the manga bring the story to life. The eyes in particular are used as a way to express the characters' emotions in their most vulnerable moments. Portrayed in some moments as stars or shattering glass, they emphasize the conflict at hand's intensity; the author's drawings border reality and fantasy in a riveting mixture of magical realism. In particular, Kamatani has a way of conveying the characters' emotions through expressions rather than dialogue. The art style is truly captivating to say the least. You could spend a half hour exploring a single page - I know that I did. If the charming artwork is what reeled you in, then the story will definitely keep you hooked. The story does not have a singular hard pressed plotline or goal, which works in favour of its direction. As a coming of age drama, there's no drive for jaw-dropping plot twists or intense confrontations. This gives the creator more room to use character development as a way of pushing the plot forward and addressing key themes and underlying conflicts. Ultimately,

the way that the visuals and storyline come together makes for a deeply emotional, personal story that's sure to make many readers shed a few tears. Something significant is that Kamatani does not shy away from the harsh realities faced by the LGBTQ+ community in modern day. The story begins immediately with Kaname being called homophobic remarks from his classmates, which is what drives him to consider taking his life. However, as painful as the readers' initial interactions with Kaname are, this makes his character growth as the book progresses all the more fulfilling and emotional. Moreover, in later volumes of the series, we also explore the stories of other drop in center regulars: from Misora, an elementary school student questioning their gender identity to Saki and Haruko, a lesbian couple dealing with the legal barriers and stigma that come with their relationship. The story is written with careful thought and attention to developing characters. Each member of the

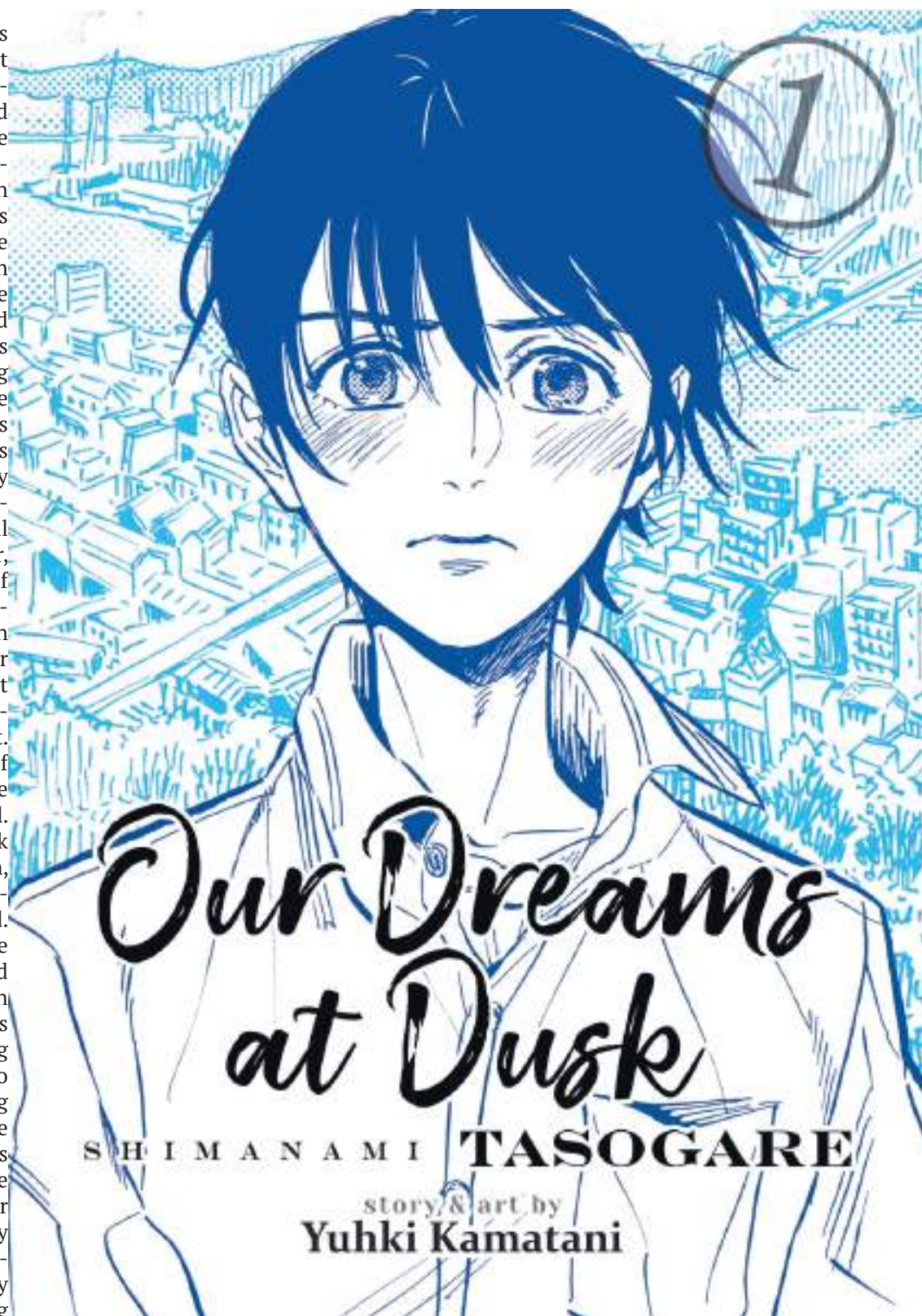


Photo courtesy of Amazon

drop-in center is fully fleshed out, with their own lives, interests, and obstacles and hardships, struggles, and problems, so there is never a dull moment. Another prominent factor that sets this story apart from others surrounding LGBTQ+ people is its refreshing take on struggles that the community faces. For starters, it moves in a different direction from typical Western values regarding sexuality and gender identity. Western media tends to put a heavy emphasis on the idea of 'coming out,' and this isn't a new observation either. LGBTQ+ characters more often than not will find their character arc tied to their growth as a person, particularly in coming of age or self discovery stories. While this can be a sign of a person's growth and their self-acceptance towards their identity, sexuality and gender are only a single piece of what makes them an individual. Kamatani steers clear of this and never pressures their characters' to 'come out' necessarily. Instead, they focus on the lesser discussed aspects

surrounding identity exploration like internal queerphobia and questioning one's own sexuality and gender. Kamatani acknowledges the inherent struggles that LGBTQ+ people can face in being 'out': being disowned or estranged by family, being bullied or harassed by peers, and being gaslit by acquaintances are all situations that continue to happen today. These are all unfortunate realities faced in a system which typically turns a blind eye towards such prejudice. The takeaway message that Kamatani stresses is that, although it can be a wonderful weight lifted off your shoulders, being publicly acknowledged according to your sexuality or gender isn't what makes you valid. Your identity is valid whether you're closeted or out; whether you're comfortable with your identity or still figuring things out for yourself.

MUSIC

Sia criticised for new film “Music” for autistic representation

The film industry still does not get accurate autistic representation.

Ava Gottlieb
Contributor

Music is an upcoming film directed and co-written by famous singer, Sia. Music follows Zu, a recovering addict and dealer who becomes the guardian of her half-sister Music, a young girl with nonverbal autism. This film stars Kate Hudson, Maddie Ziegler, and Leslie Odom Jr., and is expected to be released in early 2021. Sia is currently facing backlash for casting a neurotypical actress as Music, the main lead. Rather than casting an actor on the spectrum as the autistic lead. She cast Maddie Ziegler, a frequent collaborator of hers known for starring in Sia’s music videos and live performances. Sia explained that she had tried to work with a “beautiful young girl” who was “nonverbal on the spectrum” before she had cast Ziegler, but it was too difficult with the “rapid shooting schedule and the level of functionality of the character”. Sia felt it was “cruel” to have her continue in this role, but this does not explain why she couldn’t replace her with one of the many autistic actors who have come out and said they would have easily handled the role. Sia responded to the backlash by explaining she consulted “people on the

spectrum about this decision and many other decisions” throughout the entire film. She also wrote, “the movie is both a love letter to caregivers and to the autism community. I have my own unique view of the community, and felt it is underrepresented and compelled to make it. If that makes me a [bad person] I’m a [a bad person], but my intentions are awesome.” As well, she pointed out that her cast was “neurodiverse” and that people shouldn’t focus solely on Ziegler’s character. She spoke out via Twitter, “I cast thirteen neuroatypical people, three trans folk, and not as... prostitutes or drug addicts but as doctors, nurses and singers. [It is] sad nobody’s even seen the dang movie. My heart has always been in the right place.” Critics have labelled this to be one of many examples of the autistic community being ignored and unrepresented in the film industry. Zoe Gross, the director of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, called out the pop artist and deemed her response to the backlash as “patronizing” and was hurt by the idea that the autistic community wasn’t allowed to be telling



Illustration by **Suhani Sharma**

their own stories. Sia has decided to ignore the criticism of autistic and disabled advocates. Gross continued to explain that “if Sia truly wants to be an ally to the autistic community, she should listen to the feedback she’s getting and learn from autistic people about how we want to be represented.” Throughout the controversy, Sia continues to stand by her movie and

said “I believe this movie is beautiful, it’ll create more good than harm and if I’m wrong I’ll pay for it for the rest of my life”. Until ‘Music’ releases, we won’t know whether it will be an example in a long history of misrepresentation or whether it will be an insightful depiction into the lives of this community.

AUTHOR

The Legacy of John Le Carré

John le Carré, the master of political and spy thriller, sadly passed away at the age of 89. His readers will remember him for his true and vivid illustration of the world of espionage.

Romina Emtyazi
Section Editor

Tvisha Mehta
Contributor

You may know him as the brains behind movies such as Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, Our Kind of Traitor, or the famous BBC mini-series, The Night Manager. Whilst the younger generation mostly recognizes these titles as famous spy or thriller movies, all these motion pictures were inspired by the personal endeavors of the renowned novelist, John le Carré. Le Carré passed away on December 12th at the age of 89 in a hospital in southwest England after a long battle with pneumonia. His death is a significant loss to the literary world. Le Carré had a reputation for taking away the glamour and romance of a spy’s world that are essential qualities of James Bond novels; and examining the grim and obscure world

of a professional spy instead. For him, the world of espionage was a “metaphor for the human condition”. The author’s fascination with spies started from an early age. Born as David John Moore Cornwell in 1931, his father, Ronnie, was a known con man who went to jail for fraud. The author was only five when his mother walked out on him. The young David fabricated that his father worked in the Secret Service as a way to explain his many absences from home. Later in his life, he joined the British Foreign Office in Bonn, Germany, and started working in the department of intelligence records, which gave him access to sensitive state information. It was during that time that he started getting ideas to write spy novels. He adopted a pen name, John le Carré, to avoid a ban that prevented Foreign Office employees from publishing books under their real name. In 1961, amidst the Cold War, he published his first novel, Call for the Dead, while he was working for the British Intelligence Service (MI6) as a spy. His career as a spy ended when

he became one of many British agents whose names were given to the Russians by a double-agent, Kim Philby. Philby became Le Carré’s inspiration for the mole “Gerald” in Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy. He published many of his most famous novels such as The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, during the Cold War. Le Carré’s books about Cold War espionage brought him widespread international acclaim among readers of all ages who were keen to know the truth behind major political shifts and the role of powerful countries in those movements. Jonny Geller, Le Carré’s agent for the past 15 years, said in an obituary statement that Le Carré was an “undisputed giant of English literature” who “defined the Cold War era and fearlessly spoke truth to power”. Decades after the war ended, he diversified into writing stories about arms trades, mafias, and modern war politics. By the end of his life, he wrote 25 novels, with 11 of them going on to become film and television adaptations. Even though Le Carré’s books are considered as fiction, all his books

were based on true stories and personal experiences, and were therefore an accurate representation of reality. In addition to being an author who refrained from glamorizing psychological warfare and deception of being a spy, he is known to have provided a great service to English literature. He skillfully illustrated features such as betrayal, deception, disguise, and clandestinity of the world of espionage, in whatever time period in history. Le Carré’s achievements as a novelist looms greatly over 20th and 21st century British literature. Despite Le Carré wanting to shed light on the grim realities of the world through writing, he was a believer in humanity, however, he is not an optimistic one. In an interview with the Associated Press in 2000, he stated, “Humanity — that’s what we rely on. If only we could see it expressed in our institutional forms, we would have hope then. I think humanity will always be there. I think it will always be defeated”.

MUSIC

How young musicians are dealing with the pandemic

Things may not be normal anymore, but it's still just as important to make the most of it.



Photo by Jessica Ren

Iva- Mari Miskulin
Copy Editor

This year we have all had a tough time adjusting to the new circumstances. For young musicians in particular, it has been a year to test their dedication and resilience. Many have had recitals cancelled, classes moved online, and large group rehearsals completely abandoned. With this new found independence, many have struggled and thrived alike. Let's take a look at a couple of adjustments that have been made due to the year's circumstances. Firstly, the effects of this newly virtual curriculum will be felt by the musicians in the future who are forced to spend the year distanced from their peers. Simon Rivard, the RBC Resident Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, said "I think personally that playing in a live ensemble is completely different from anything we can do distanced from each other. The social aspect of playing together is something that's usually underestimated." Feeling lonely during the pandemic is quite a common feeling that is shared not just by musicians, but by all who are forced to isolate to stop the spread of the virus. Getting together with friends and escaping from the already solitary life of individual practice is a thing of the past. "The whole point of playing in an orchestra is being able to create this utopian society where everybody works towards a common goal." The

satisfaction of creating something beautiful together is what gives many the motivation to practice vigorously. Sharing with others is ultimately what music is about. Musicians love to share music with each other and with audiences, so being left with no end performance goals has made days and even months feel much longer. Although quarantine has allowed time for plenty more practice and discovery, it is precisely this sheer amount of time that has made many feel so helpless. Comparing ourselves to the people who are having "productive practice days" and are learning a plethora of new repertoire, we feel discouraged. Motivation has been tough to find, even if one loves their art with all their heart, the lack of a normal schedule has left many stranded. The reason for this is that, normally, during trying times, people stick together. For example, during the wars people were still able to gather and support each other. However now, during a time of social distancing, we are not able to be together. We need each other, but we can't be together. "We can stick together with the illusion of social media but in reality everyone feels so alone" (Rivard). The biggest change that this pandemic will bring to music instruction in the future, according to Simon Rivard, is that we will stop taking everything for granted. When everything was normal back in 2019, many would complain about late hours in rehearsal or not even notice that they had spent days away from their friends. Now, many musicians long to spend just a couple more hours in rehearsals or a couple more hours hanging out with their friends. Community involvement has

never been easier and so difficult. With so many new initiatives being piloted by students, there is an invisible pressure on most to do "something important". However, "some people look inwards," and it's important to have a good mix of people who feel comfortable sharing and would rather work on their own. So, if you don't feel like loading your schedule with new initiatives, don't feel obliged to do so. Involvement is difficult during a pandemic as we cannot feel the energy and motivation radiating from our screens on Zoom. We are all different, and some people may be feeling more of a need to get involved than others. Some may need the attention and goals to motivate them, while others may feel perfectly fine on their own. The pandemic has however been a giving time in terms of outreach opportunities. Students from Students for Music and Wellness (SFMW), which was started during the pandemic, took advantage of this time to give back to the community. An organization that brings concerts by student musicians to vulnerable populations. Their Artistic Director, Julian Cimer, believes that the task of working on SFMW has made the pandemic a rewarding and influential experience. "I've gotten to do a lot of things that I didn't get to do before. It's given me a sort of interesting creative outlet where I'm able to be helpful to people." For Julian, the pandemic has allowed him to grow and the exciting experiences have masked the more negative effects of the pandemic. Bringing music to isolated communities is imperative in a time of total isolation. People who already lead solitary lives are now forced to stay in their rooms 24/7

without much hope for the future. "It can be quite a distressing experience, and I remember when we ran our first concert series, we got some video clips from inside of the home. The residents were singing along, some of them were crying tears of joy, it really warmed my heart to see that I could bring some joy to people who were really struggling." A piece of advice from the young tubist (tuba player?), "it's a hard time to be a person in general... The thing you really have to do is to stay in touch with the things that you truly love. Discovering new music and activities is really exciting and inspiring. Just get up and do something, and one thing will lead to another. Doing anything at all just feels valuable." What about a big message we should take away from the pandemic for musicians? "What we do is fragile" (Rivard). Things can change in the blink of an eye and we can't do anything about it. What can we do to help fuel our interests during the pandemic? Discover. Discover new repertoire, genres, books, concepts, games, etc. Discover anything you may be slightly interested in. Now is the time to branch out and do what you love. Being productive all the time may look good on paper, but it isn't healthy and you won't be happy. Doing something you enjoy mixed with the things you have to do will make you feel so much better about yourself and how you've used your time. "Avoid doing things that give a false sense of pleasure or immediate pleasure." Discover things that may be out of your comfort zone and may perhaps seem random. Now is the time to try whatever you've been yearning to do.

FASHION

Harry Styles challenging gender norms after posing for Vogue

It is about time that we break away from traditional gender stereotypes and remove barriers in gender expression.



Illustration by **Bianca Miclaus**

Natasha Bernstein
Contributor

British singer-songwriter, Harry Styles, is on the cover of the December issue of Vogue magazine, making him the first man to appear solo on the famous publication. Photographed wearing a blazer and a light blue dress, the singer sparked controversial conversations surrounding the topic of gender norms in fashion and traditional views of masculinity. This bold move has led to a further reflection of the stereotypical dress code that has been adopted by society over time and has highlighted the fact that clothes are genderless. As he assures in the interview for the magazine, this is not the first time that the singer has expressed being comfortable in his masculinity. This isn't the first time Styles has challenged gender norms as he has been breaking barriers in fashion for a while. His impact in the indus-

try has grown with him as an artist to the point of making him a style icon. In just a short period of time, he has been the face of GUCCI and was the youngest co-chair at the Costume Institute Gala in 2019. For that year's Met Gala, Styles arrived wearing a black ensemble, with a lacy sheer top and men's heels. Harry Styles wearing a dress challenged the ideas of many conservatives and brought hate from diehard right-wingers like Candace Owens, an author and pro-Trump activist. On November 14th, the day after the magazine cover was announced, Candace Owens retweeted the Vogue cover with the comment, "Bring back manly men", which sparked an uprising all over social media. Celebrities like Zach Braff and Olivia Wilde amongst others, came to Styles' defence, and even politician Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez supported him on her Instagram story saying that "some folks are sensitive to examining and exploring gender roles in society. Perhaps for some people it provokes anger or insecurity around masculinity/femininity/etc". However,

people like Candace Owens believe—and have made it clear—that men defying gender norms with symbolic acts such as wearing dresses, mean nothing else but lack of masculinity. As Harry Styles has said in a past interview with Timothée Chalamet, "there's so much masculinity in being vulnerable and allowing yourself to be feminine." He went on to explain that masculinity is not defined by what you wear, rather than being comfortable with yourself. On December 2nd, Harry Styles posted on Instagram a recent picture from the cover of Variety Magazine, with the caption "Bring back manly men" as a rebuttal to Candace Owen's previous statement. He posed in a light blue suit, with white frilly detailing on the cuffs. Harry Styles is rarely active on social media which resulted in this post receiving 7.8 million likes. Candace Owens tweeted a response saying, "I inspire a global conversation. Nevertheless, #BringBackManlyMen shots fired." This was not well received by Harry Styles fans. Although Harry Styles is doing a re-

markable job of redefining gender norms through clothing, he is not the first to do it. Past artists such as Boy George, Prince and David Bowie are just some examples of people who have done the same, but in a different time. After decades of advocacy for gender equality, people still respond alarmingly to breaking traditional stereotypes. Overtime, pants were worn and normalized by women, which was traditionally thought of as a clothing piece for men. Women do not normally get ridiculed for wearing pants, and neither should men for wearing skirts. As we proceed through life, the lines in gender expression will continue to blur. The idea that men are deemed as less masculine due to expressing themselves revolves around toxic masculinity. Since the beginning of time, men have been told to "man up" and that "boys don't cry". Phrases like these contribute to the challenge in breaking down gender barriers and dismiss that expressing feelings of vulnerability are a human feature and not only a female trait.



MOVIES

Marvel has improved since the 2009 Disney merger

Eli Sol
Contributor

In 1961, comic book writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby turned Atlas Comics into Marvel Comics with their smash-hit series the Fantastic Four, paving the way for the next 60 years of incredible content. Fast-forward to 2009: Disney buys the thriving Marvel enterprise, putting both Marvel fans and Disney executives on edge.

Prior to the purchase, Disney was as successful as ever: a pure, innocent company that would never cover gruesome, problematic, or political topics. Marvel on the other hand, had just released Marvel Zombies 3 and Secret Invasion, two extremely dark storylines that captivated their readers. Disney executives feared a loss of innocence and a decline in the trust of their young audiences if they made such a bold purchase. In turn, dedicated Marvel fans feared that Disney would ruin their most beloved characters and franchises. They feared that Spider-Man would lose his quips, Punisher would lose his deadliness, Wolverine would lose his savagery, and Deadpool would lose his everything. Eleven years later, one

can say with complete confidence that no such losses were suffered. Disney took a leap of faith, and none can say the decision did not pay off.

By 2009, Marvel Studios had already made several movies in collaboration with Columbia Pictures; the first five Spider-Man movies, and the X-Men movies - which were made in partnership with 20th Century Fox. However, Disney decided to stick to what they do best, and took total control of Marvel's movie business. With Marvel fans in their right pocket, and a wallet of about \$63 billion in the left, Disney went to town on the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), spending millions of dollars on each movie, and making millions more in return. Avengers: Endgame made history when it became the highest grossing movie of all time, all thanks to the genius of the Russo brothers, the faith of Kevin Feige—President of Marvel Studios, and Disney's very deep pockets.

The pre-Disney Marvel fan was elated to see their favourite superheroes and villains displayed on-screen, but how do they feel about the comics that set this wheel into motion? Did the dark but fantastical world of Marvel Comics die when fans turned their backs to buy movie tickets? Not in the slightest. Star writers like Jason Aaron, Brian Michael Bendis, and Dan Slott created some of the most fascinating

and original Marvel comics to date. Honourable mentions include: Siege, Avengers versus X-Men, Spider-Man: Spider Verse, Civil War II, and Death of Wolverine. The reader then says; "Alright, but what does that have to do with Disney?" The answer, dear reader, is that it does not. Disney had the sense to maintain a "hands-off policy" in regard to Marvel Comics. That way, comic book purists feel that they are remaining true to the brand, because they can read their comics without having to thank Disney. The dark, but mature subject matters, complicated characters, captivating narrative, and well-known authors maintain the feeling of authenticity. Though it should be noted that the Marvel Comics division is still underwritten by Disney.

At the end of the day, though purity and authenticity matter deeply to the Walt Disney Company, business is the name of the game. This massive cooperation would not have bothered spending \$4 billion on Marvel if they thought it would flounder. If a die-hard Marvel fan is still somehow not impressed by Disney's performance, perhaps they should consider the numbers. According to CNBC, Disney generated a profit of over \$18 billion dollars from the 20 Marvel movies they funded. Marvel Comics have almost completely eradicated the Detective Comics (DC) competi-

tion, and made tens of thousands of sales worldwide. Significant Marvel characters have exploded into fashion and popular culture, appearing on t-shirts, radio songs, and even basketball shoes. Since the Disney purchase, the MCU franchise has received 3 Oscars and over 15 Oscar nominations, proving Disney's effectiveness in the movie business, especially when it comes to casting and visual effects. Over the past 11 years, the MCU has made billions of dollars, and sold millions of movie tickets across the globe.

Zach Zohar, a devoted comic book fan and a former NT student remarked: "I witnessed Disney's takeover of the MCU first hand and saw how it inspired people of all ages, cultures, and ethnicities. Marvel's popularity skyrocketed after the merger, and will continue to expand into the future. All I can say is that the Disney takeover was a stunning success." It's time to bury the hatchet, Marvel fans. Disney is a host unto itself, and like it or not, they have done an excellent job with the enterprise we all love. Marvel will continue to grow and be shaped by your support and interest. Marvel is not just a corporation, it is a universe, with a gargantuan cast of original characters and stories, and the best damn fan base in the world.

MOVIES

Greatest cinematic interpretation of the Joker

Among the many portrayals of the Joker by various actors, Joaquin Phoenix's depiction of the character stands out as the best one in cinematic history.

Barad Kiai
Contributor

Intiguing characters are the core of storytelling, and can often entirely make up for stories that lack quality. Why do good characters entertain us so much? It is because humans love the company of other humans, but socialization becomes tiring at times due to the imperfect nature of the people around us. Characters are meant to be so well-crafted that their imperfections would greatly complement the rest of their personality such that we never get tired of them. One of the most famous, intricate, and beloved characters in the history of fiction is Batman's perfect antagonist, the Joker. The Joker always brings suspense and chaos to the story. Over the years, many actors have taken on the role of the Joker; however, Heath Ledger's performance in *The Dark Knight* is widely regarded as the best interpretation of this iconic character. While many other Jokers exist, Heath Ledger's portrayal of the Joker is almost always crowned the king. Although, there is an even better Joker. A Joker we as the audience can sympathize with and fear at the same time. That Joker is Joaquin Phoenix in *Joker* (2019). This interpretation of the Joker is thoroughly explored in the film, allowing us to witness what pushes this character over the edge. The film itself is made in a way for the viewer to capture the world of Gotham whilst enabling them to feel deeply connected through the skilled directing and fantastic story. The themes are powerful and relatable to our own society which enriches the knowledge of the audience on the topics that the film explores. *Joker* (2019) is the greatest interpretation of the Joker character in cinematic history because it illustrates the complexity of the main character, the superb quality of the film, and the deep themes presented throughout the movie.

However, each depiction of the Joker has problems of its own. Cesar Romero's Joker from *Batman* (1966-1968) was meant to be more of a comedic figure compared to other Jokers. While the actor did a good job at achieving this goal, Cesar Romero did not include the complexity of his character and the dark themes surrounding his story (*The Golden Joker Expectation*). Jared Leto's Joker from *Suicide Squad* (2016) tried to accomplish the "Golden Joker Expectation" but utterly failed. His character was dreadfully written, terribly designed, and an awful plotline. Jack Nicholson's Joker was extremely... mediocre. His Joker did an adequate job at fitting into the "Golden Expectation," but it was nothing too outstanding. *Batman* (1989), the movie featuring Jack Nicholson as the Joker, was somewhat meant for younger Batman fans, excluding some of the Joker's darker and mature themes. From the rather lacking competition, it is a popular belief that Heath Ledger's capturing performance is the greatest

interpretation of Joker in cinematic history, but Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal of the character in *Joker* (2019) has recently been crowned the new king. Phoenix's Joker is given much more screen-time than Heath Ledger's mysterious Joker did. We do not know anything about his past. All we know is that he is crazy but we do not know why. However, the movie *Joker* (2019) answers this question. *Joker* (2019) focuses entirely on the backstory of Arthur Fleck, who turns into the Joker by the end of the film, making him a much more complex and intricate character. The audience gets to see his family situation, his job, and his mental issues. The presentation of these dark and earnest themes is achieved by making the audience feel a sense of sympathy and relatability. The movie itself is better than *The Dark Knight* (2008); a superhero blockbuster focusing on excitement and suspense. *Joker* (2019) is masterfully made in a way that highlights its deep themes, suspense, and mystery. All this creates the perfect environment to create a great Joker, so great that Joaquin Phoenix won an Oscar for "Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role" for his depiction of the Joker.

Let us begin with the character "Arthur Fleck" and his story. Arthur Fleck is a man with a crippling mental state. He has multiple mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and laughing syndrome. He is a loner. Everyone who knows him laughs at him for his "crazy demeanour." Even more tragically, his only family member, his mother, abused him as a child. His psychiatrist is no help to him, asking the same questions every session that is of no help to Arthur. Society has completely rejected him. He receives no affection, no empathy, and no help. Eventually, the hate, the pain, and the anger all build up inside of him until he explodes. Following a group of young rich men, who begin to abuse Arthur by kicking and punching him, he pulls out his gun and shoots them. This is the first instance of Arthur getting revenge on a society that hurt him so much. After this, he kills two more people (his mother and his co-worker Randall), and enjoys it because of all the hate that had been brewing in him. By the end of the film, he shoots Murray Franklin, the TV show host who invited Arthur on the show to mock him. In the final scene of the movie, Arthur Fleck truly becomes "The Joker." All the events that trigger the Joker ultimately tip him over the edge of insanity, indicating the masterful writing of the script. The audience gets to see each layer of his anguish and hatred of others unite, one after scene after another, to create the Joker. This creates a deep level of realism that other Joker interpretations just fail to achieve.

Secondly, let's discuss the quality of the film itself. *Joker* (2019) is by all accounts a masterpiece in the "Quality of Film" department. The audience is able to feel the same sense of hopelessness and experience the wary vibe of Gotham City and the corrupt people it inhabits, which Arthur Fleck



Illustration by Anisa Williams

does by virtue of the music, cinematography, and screenplay. The director, Todd Phillips, uses filters and film sets that exude the emotions of Arthur. The movie was shot in New York; a city that perfectly reflects the issues of poverty and depression of Gotham. To further nail the feeling of Gotham, the movie received one the best critic scores in modern cinematic history; a score so good that it won the Oscar for "Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures." The film's deserving score by Hildur Guonadottir captures the hatred and disgust brewing within Arthur Fleck. No other Joker adaptation has scored anywhere near this one.

Finally, the themes in *Joker* (2019) explore the difficulties of abandonment and opposing oppressors that do not accept our version of reality. During the first half of the film, Arthur is constantly deserted by society. The same sentiment of rejection is present in the real world, where many downtrodden people do not receive the support they require. In our world, lower class and poverty-stricken citizens are heavily impacted by budget cuts and lack of funding in important areas such as health-care, social work, and other welfare-related programs. Another example is the systemic racism and unfair treatment of Black people that are becoming more evident by the day. Arthur represents these persecuted groups and he eventually breaks.

Even though everyone has abandoned him, he fights back against the oppressors, which is another major parallel of present-day realities. He kills those who have deserted and ridiculed him. This causes mass riots in Gotham City because Arthur was not the only person angry at a society that did not accept him. All the people who similarly felt betrayed suddenly rupture, and begin using Arthur as a symbol of the suppression of the powerless by the elite - which is something we have seen countless times in history, such as the recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. These strong connections to our reality show how *Joker* (2019) is filled with dark and effective themes that truly outweighs the quality of the themes compared to the other Jokers.

In conclusion, Joaquin Phoenix's rendition of the Joker is the supreme example of a cinematic Joker interpretation. The story of Arthur is complex and intricate, making the audience feel sympathy through the sheer realism of the character. The film was fantastically made: every scene, every sound, every moment makes the audience thoroughly engaged with the film and the Joker. The themes are dark and powerful, but above all true to life. These elements perfectly unite to create an almost perfect character; perhaps a character so great that he could be considered as one of the best in all of cinematic history.

SCHOOL

Highschool

Three groups or one?

Liam McLaughlin
Copy Editor

Don't you love waking up before the crack of dawn and watching the minutes go by in all the classes you dread; this question can be construed in three ways, according to how you interpret it. There is: yes, no, and a complicated answer. As such, throughout high school, there are three distinct groups of people: individuals who love school, those who resent it, and others who are complicated - with that category generally being the least transparent, or so I thought. Contemplating which group I would distinctly fall into, I solicited the attitudes of friends and family members and categorized them according to their response; "Which group did you fall into Ava, Dad, Grandma..Grandpa?" A seemingly simple question, would not entail a simple response, and as such, classifying my respondents was difficult. As I set foot into North Toronto hallways and paced up and down its corridors - during the first day of Grade 9 and once again in the midst of a pandemic - the notions that I had developed of school shortly whittled away, and I was left to my own predicament. In my quest to categorize NT students, I would find out that in fact there were not three types of people, but one, and this would stem from the opinions of other students as well.

On my first day of grade 9, my ears were bombarded with students' disgust as they coped with the reality that another year of high school was on the horizon. "Can you believe how quickly the summer went by; it's absolutely ridiculous!" "Should I transfer to Blyth?" These were the conversations I overheard amongst my peers. Surely not from all of them, but an overwhelming majority.

The COVID - 19 pandemic among other unprecedented events, such as the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, have shed light on the issues that are currently plaguing our world that have prompted incessant action. Accordingly, many NT students have advocated for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and contributed to the ongoing effort to support frontline workers within the confinement of their homes. Quarantine put a stamp on what truly matters. Our sense of normalcy and routine was stolen from us and the mere comfort within our homes made us cognizant of the fact that we should be appreciative of the roof above our heads. For many of us, it was, and still is a period of reflection. In spite of everything, my ears were bombarded once again; except the rancor speech dissipated quickly as it approached my ears, specifically by virtue of the 6 feet that separated us and the masks that engulfed our mouths. Their words were blatant, but their actions revealed a subtle truth; many students willingly returned to for in-class learning.

School documents indicate that merely 68 North Toronto students

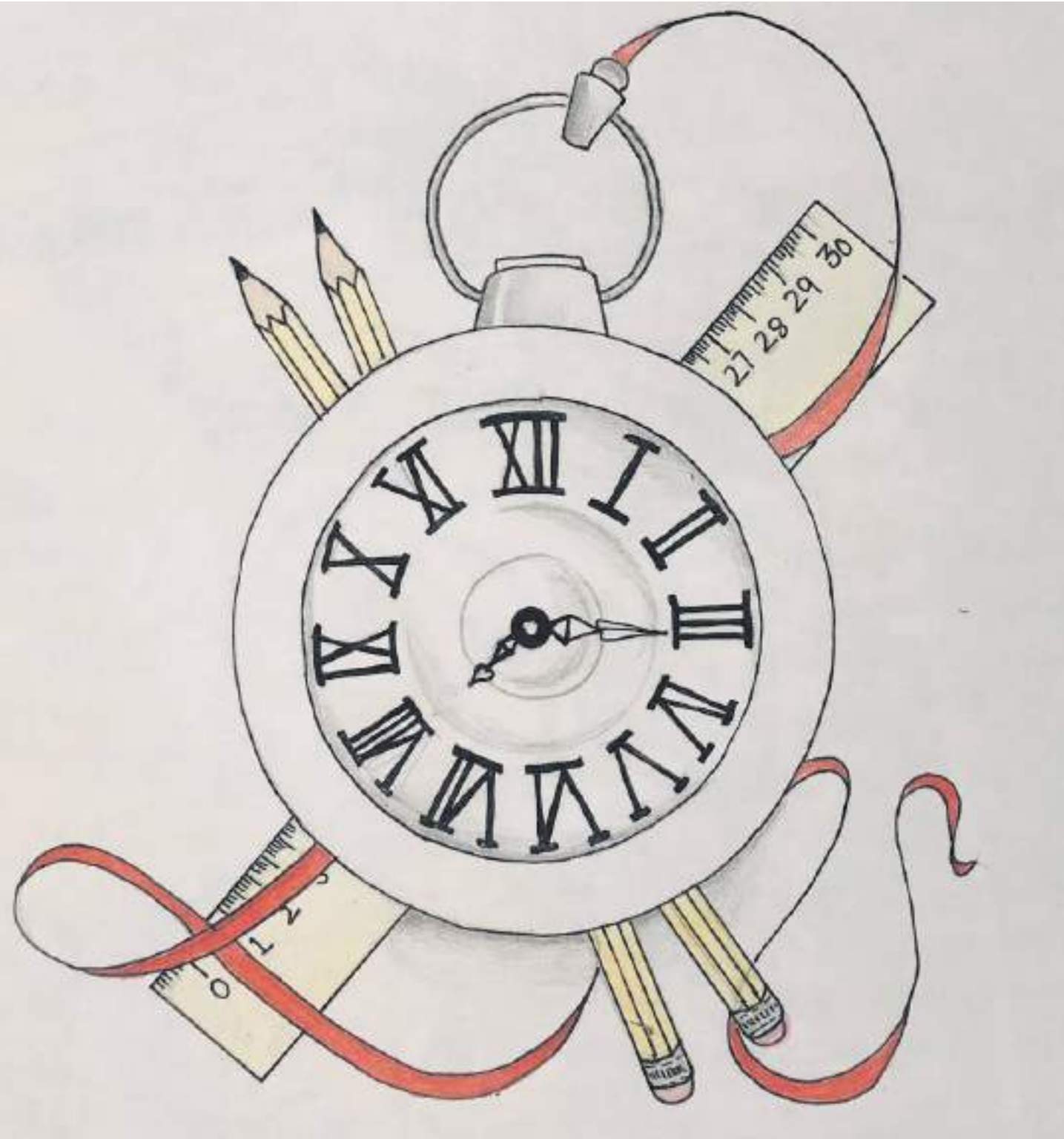


Illustration by Shreya Pawar Mamidi

have chosen to learn in an online environment during the second quadmester, whilst hundreds of students remain in school learning. COVID -19 indirectly subdued my curiosity: why are North Toronto students so opposed to the idea of school as they opt to learn in an in-class environment? Meanwhile, online-learning was not opposed and possibly encouraged by those who aimed to mitigate the virus. Surely, sleeping while in the midst of an important lecture would appear to be more attractive from the perspective of a typical NT Student, right? Perhaps not. Perhaps, North Toronto students, too, share the same struggle I have been managing for so long.

Simone Bellengier, a Grade 11 student at North Toronto CI, opted for in-class learning this quadmester. Simone recognizes school as an important aspect of her life and experiences surmounting pressure from her teachers and parents. She maintains a "strong love for learning and cultivating meaningful friendships with [her peers]." Simone reveals, "the amount of pressure [she] puts on [herself], and that [she] [receives] from [her] parents, to achieve high marks, consistently manage clubs, and navigate North To-

ronto's social ladder is stressful." Her feelings with regards to school are highly complex and "susceptible to change." She acknowledges that "we all yearn to find that balance between the appreciation we have for it, and the pressure we face because of it." Simone does not identify with a category.

As well, Simone's parents relish in her accomplishments, but also recognize her stress as a result of dynamic social climates and the technological age. Her mom reveals, "When I went to school, there was never negativity surrounding it. They were considered the happy days." Anxiety and depression are current issues that are plaguing our school environments as we transition into a new technological era, which have directly impacted our daily moods and perspectives.

Fletcher McLaughlin, a current NT alumni, reveals, "[he] felt nauseous before tests and at the mere thought of receiving a poor mark." Often "[he] could not tell if these were feelings of anxiety or the pure excitement of it all." Fletcher too recognizes a fluctuation in his moods as a result of the technological era and teenhood. He identifies as complicated.

I too identify with North Toronto's positive and negative experiences; perhaps the multiple layers of life constantly impact our attitude. As students, we have a certain proclivity to express our opinions in response to our changing moods, and as such, can not be an accurate representation of what we believe; no one is distinctly what they say to be. Teen lives are all too complicated, and thus we can not be categorized accordingly. Our freedom of self-expression, and a propensity to grow and change in new ways is a direct result of the dynamic environment at NT - a fact I disregarded in my initial assessment of high school students. To answer my question, we all fall under a common umbrella - North Toronto; we celebrate, rejoice, and support one another during our sorrow, and for now, that is the best reply I can think of. Although, I think you should get back to that test you were studying for.

SCIENCE

Is embryonic stem cell research in an ethical jail?

Despite multiple scientific breakthroughs in the field of embryonic stem cell research, ethical controversies surrounding this type of study prevent further progress in finding cures for many illnesses.

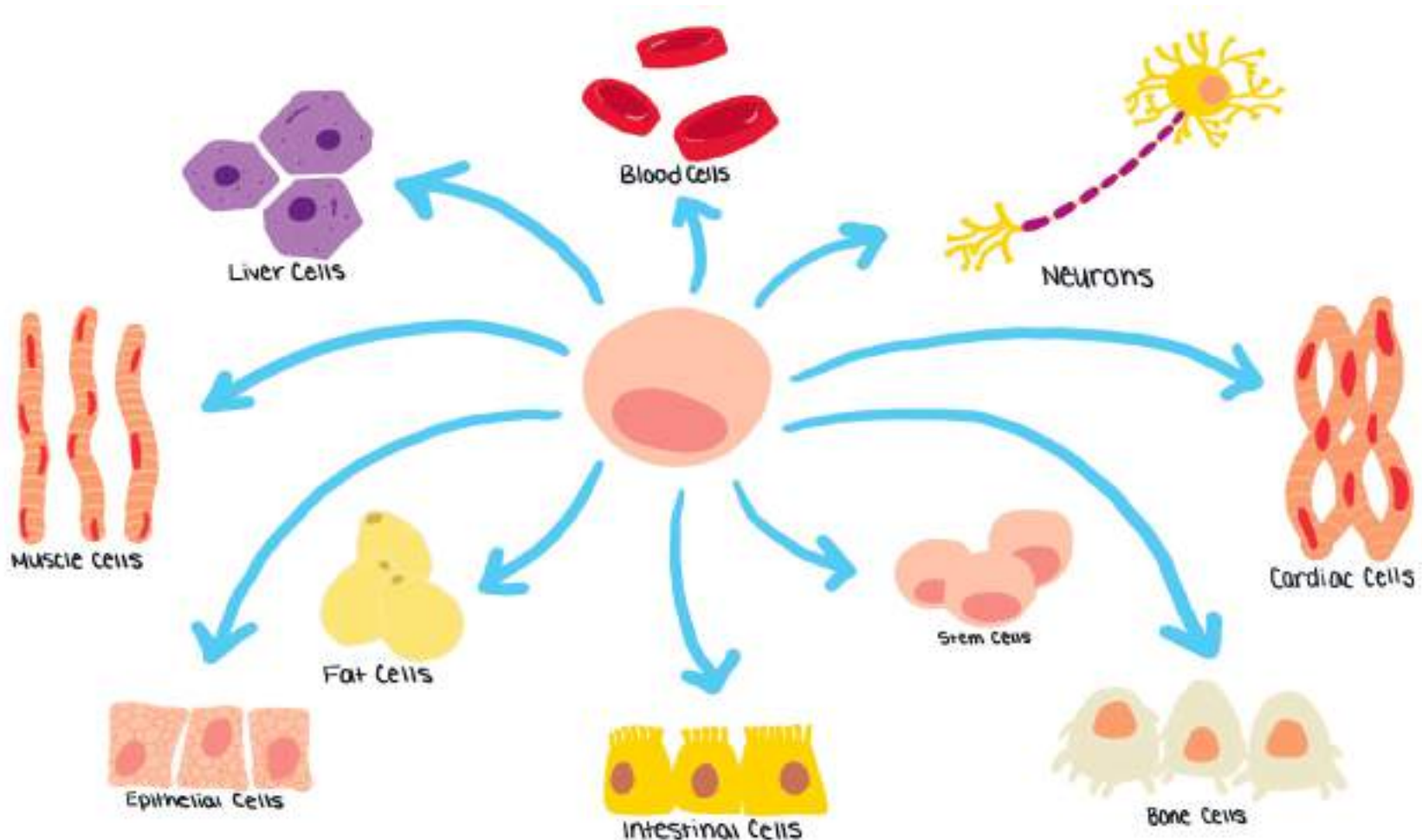


Illustration by Noor Ajel

Tvisha Mehta
Contributor

Is Embryonic Stem Cell Research in an Ethical Jail? Whilst trying to grasp what I believed in, I asked a few other people (aged 16-18, from different ethical backgrounds) and myself one question: if your loved one's only hope to live was to use embryos for a new organ, would you go through with the procedure? The answer: Unanimous. I agree with Embryonic Stem Cell Research and here is why I think you should, too. Embryonic stem cell research is an emotive topic because many believe an embryo to be a viable human life. However, embryos are used to help those who have incurable diseases. Using just one embryo can save countless lives and cure illnesses. Embryos are pluripotent at the blastocyst stage, which means they can differentiate into almost anything that is found in the human body. At this stage, the embryo is essentially a 'ball' of unspecialised cells, waiting to turn into vital organs, such as the heart or the brain. I understand why there is backlash regarding the use of embryos for stem cell research. Although, if you weigh the benefits received from one embryo, it is not only helpful for patients who are receiving treatment, but the future of stem cell research as well. Adult stem cells have been exposed to all types of environmental factors that interfere with the process of replacing expired cells with new ones. These cells are restricted to the person itself.

This is because they would be incompatible with almost anybody else, and in the case of an organ transplant using these cells, the recipient's body would reject the transplant. Scientists have discovered that adult stem cells provide a limited range of use. This is why embryos are more likely to be usable for research. Embryos provide a more viable way of curing illnesses than adult stem cells. This is due to adult stem cells being somatic, meaning they are already differentiated. Embryonic stem cells do not count as a human life at this point. This is because embryos have none of the five senses. They are currently a group of specialized cells. They hold no emotion or have a brain. These are the traits that substantiate a human being from a non-living form. In an interview with stem cell researcher, Dr Val Wilson, she stated, "There is a big potential to actually cure diseases that have never been curable in the past." She also mentioned, "There are many embryos that are going unused." Through the process of In-Vitro-Fertilisation (IVF) — artificially fusing sperm cells and egg cells together to create an embryo — when embryos are formed in embryology laboratories, only one or two embryos are extracted and placed into the uterus for a possible pregnancy. After, the embryos are stored in nitrogen tanks at -196°C and possibly never used. Instead of this happening, patients can choose to donate them to facilities where embryos are used for stem cell research. On the other side of the spectrum, upon several interviews, it was mainly men and women de-

voted to religion who disagreed with embryonic stem cell research. Some religions believe that an embryo becomes a viable human life at conception while others believe there is a time period in which it forms senses and is considered a human life. The different beliefs in regards to the timing of when an embryo becomes a human accounts for different levels of acceptance for embryonic stem cell research in various religions. This idea is mainly supported in the Jewish community, is accepted in many Muslim countries, yet is opposed by many Roman Catholics and some Protestants. There are over 1.13 billion Christians and protestants in the world, and they are predominantly in Europe and The Americas. Facilities that have the ability to operate advanced research on embryos are in Europe and North America. Although not all Christians and Protestants oppose the idea of stem cell research, many governments choose not to conduct experiments as to not raise political protests. According to Junying Yu, a stem cell biologist, "Currently, there are nearly 400,000 IVF-produced embryos in frozen storage in the United States alone, 4 most of which will be used to treat infertility, but some of which (~2.8%) are destined to be discarded." This is a shame as these countries are highly industrialised. A majority in countries that are predominantly Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist believe that a fetus is considered a human 120 days after fertilization. Most of these countries are newly industrialized or developing, and their citizens mostly have no disputes with embryos being

used for scientific researches. However, these countries do not have the facilities to conduct further research, and are therefore rendered useless. A New York Times article titled: 'Grappling With the Ethics of Stem Cell Research' clearly states the pros and cons arguments about this topic. This gives an insight to both views. The reason why we should use embryos is due to the fact that at the stage when they are being used for research, it has not developed emotionally or physically. It is a group of specialized cells that can save multiple lives for what might be a possible foetus. Currently, embryos have made advancements in curing Parkinson's Disease; a neurodegenerative disorder which affects mental ability and mobility, making the body unable to do most things. Ten million people worldwide have Parkinson's disease. Embryos can also be used to replace almost any damaged or diseased organ in the body. This shows how far embryonic stem cell research has progressed and how capable it is of doing so much more. Some people of faith and religion believe that it should not be allowed as a possible human life is used, despite the outcome provided being so much greater than just using an embryo. In my opinion, the ethical issues embryonic stem cell research faces are invalid as to what these embryos can accomplish now and in the future. I believe that embryos can help significantly in further development of science and medicine because I have already seen how it has transformed the scientific world.

‘Why?’: A search for meaning

Jonah Wineberg
Contributor

Why? A simple question with a complicated answer. An answer that has been sought after for the duration of humankind’s relatively short existence. Many have turned to religion or a higher power looking for purpose, and some have attempted to immortalize their names through power and conquest; but through these ventures, humankind has fallen short of finding a conclusive truth or meaning. Perhaps there is no meaning. Maybe we have been searching for an answer that is not there, or maybe the answer we think we need does not really matter. One might ask, “Why get out of bed in the morning and exist?” If religion or spirituality has not worked for you, I believe that a positive approach is to create your own meaning through relationships, and personal and moral fulfillment. One way to create meaning is by placing value in the relationships with others. The universe can be very

lonely, and life can feel empty without people to share it with. Accomplishments and memories may feel meaningless without people to enjoy them with. You may be the most accomplished person in the world, but it could all mean nothing if you are sitting alone in your cold ivory tower. Having people you care about can fulfill the primal need for belongingness and provide you with new perspectives towards life. A valuable bond can be formed with a family member, friend, coworker, partner, or even a pet, as long as it is a healthy relationship built on trust and kindness. According to a study conducted by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, a meaningful relationship can provide several types of emotional support and improve your overall well-being. Just because the world can be intimidating, does not mean you have to go through it alone. Outlining personal goals and pursuing one’s ambitions can make life more fulfilling. Find something that you are passionate about, something you want to improve on - perhaps a job you want - anything that you can spend time working towards.

Make your goals as small or large as you would like, they should be personalized to meet your needs. The great part about personal fulfillment is that your aspirations can grow and change as time goes on, so you can always make long-term improvements. If you don’t know where to start, try thinking small-scale. It could be starting a project you have been postponing for days, or a song you would like to learn on an instrument. Find a goal, and get going, and if you are feeling ambitious, try completing it by the end of the week. Life is short and you’ve managed to exist despite the one in 60 billion odds of a habitable planet, so it makes sense to make the most of it and to do the things that make you happy. Finally, and maybe most importantly, adhering to strong morals throughout your lifetime can help you find meaning. Throughout your existence on Earth, it might feel nice to spend it being a positive influence on the world around you, but how do you know what is right? There are countless perspectives on morality, ranging from different cultural, ethical, and political ideologies, so it is important to find your own moral code through re-

search and careful introspection. With no sense of responsibility, your actions would not hold as much weight, and life would feel hollow. Furthermore, the core of why you should be moral is that it makes you feel worthwhile. While doing the right thing can be difficult and inconvenient at times, in hindsight, you will feel a sense of accomplishment for being a moral human being. Being a good person should not solely be for your own benefit, but for everyone else around you. Considering the lives of others and doing your best to help them are what make you humane, and acts of kindness stem from an innate desire to be good to people. So to answer the big question, Why? Whether it be through relationships, personal growth, or unwavering morals, should you continue being to fulfill a meaning you create for yourself. When the universe feels both empty and overwhelming, look at it through a microcosm and see how you have control over the things you do. No matter what the answer to “why” is, you can always decide to go about your journey of finding out what the answer is to you.

CULTURE

El arte de aprender varios idiomas The art of learning different languages

There are multiple benefits to knowing different languages, many of which are useful in our everyday lives. Hay múltiples beneficios de saber varios idiomas, muchos de los cuales son útiles en nuestra vida cotidiana.

Sofia Radic
Contributor

Learning several languages is important for a few reasons: It makes communication easier, it gives you more work benefits, and it enables you to learn about different cultures and histories. Firstly, it is much easier to communicate if you speak several languages. For example, when traveling, you may visit a non-English speaking country. Communication with the local population will become much easier if you speak their language, and will ultimately enrich your travel experience. For instance, having a clear understanding of a native language will make touristic activities more enjoyable and will enable a greater understanding of the particular culture of a destination. Another benefit of knowing a foreign language can be represented with individuals who move from one country to a new one - with a different and unfamiliar language. Misinterpreting the language can cause many difficulties, but learning it beforehand can be of significant benefit to them; specifically in terms of work, education, and their integration into a new culture. In addition, knowing various languages opens up the gate to a plethora of working opportunities, as some workplaces require employees to know multiple languages. High profile organizations, such as the Canadian government, target individuals who speak a wide range

of languages when aiming to recruit workers. Obtaining this skill provides individuals with endless work-related benefits, and gives workers a sense of freedom and ease when contemplating their occupations. However, it does not end there. FluentU, a multi-language website, states that on average, multilingual people tend to have a salary 2% higher than those who speak only one language, another advantage to consider when deliberating whether or not to add spanish to your vocabulario. The ultimate benefit of learning several languages is that it helps you learn about different cultures and lifestyles, as you are more likely to discover discreet, yet essential details about a particular culture linguistically. For example, newcomers from Canada, who only speak English, may be unfamiliar with the rules of engagement in a new country. However, if newcomers make themselves familiar with the dominant language, settling into their new and unfamiliar way of life will become easier for them. While learning a new language may seem difficult and unappealing to most, its long term benefits should easily persuade anyone to pick up a new language. Hopefully, these advantages will entice you to add a new language to your arsenal of unique phrases and expressions.

Aprender distintos idiomas es importante por varias razones: Es más fácil comunicarse, te da más beneficios en tu trabajo y



Illustration by Shreya Pawar Mamidi

aprendes sobre diferentes culturas. Es más fácil comunicarse si sabes más languages por ejemplo, cuando viajas. Capas que el país que tú visitas no habla inglés en ese país y también va hacer más fácil entenderlos cuando sabes hablar el lenguaje del país. Si sabes el lenguaje del paistu experencia va hacer mas entretenido porque puedes hablar con todas las persona. Otro ejemplo es los recién llegados. Capas que no hablen inglés, entonces le puedes ayudar a entrar al colegio y capas que se hagan buenas amigas. Saber lenguajes te da muchos beneficios con opciones de trabajo. Uno de los beneficios es que tu tienes mas oportunidades en tener un trabajo porque unos de los lugares de trabajo requieren que sepan más que un lenguaje o mejora tu oportunidades en el trabajo. Otro beneficio es que tú capas que puedas tener más pagó

cerca de 2% más que otras personas según FluentU. Finalmente tú tienes más oportunidades en tu trabajo, eso significa que es más fácil tener un trabajo porque tienen más oportunidades para elegir en tu área de gusto. El último beneficio de saber lenguajes es que puedes aprender la cultura de un país. Tú capas que aprendes la creencia y la historia por el lenguaje y comunicación. O si quieres aprender un idioma y si tu te rodeas con personas que hablan ese lenguaje, tu puedes aprender cómo hacen las cosas también. Un ejemplo, las personas que recién llegan, capas que hablan inglés pero capas que no saben cómo funcionan las cosas en Canadá pero pueden aprender. En conclusión aprender lenguajes tiene varios beneficios, como la comunicación, subir oportunidades de trabajo y conocimiento de la cultura del lugar.

CULTURE

A car trip to China: Living as a second-generation Canadian

Living as a Second-generation Canadian.

Anna Sum
Contributor

On an idle Saturday morning, I find myself in the family car heading to a Chinese restaurant in Markham. It occupies a single-story building, and is a half-hour car ride from my home in Toronto. Its specialty? Dim sum.

What is dim sum? Dim sum is a subset of Chinese cuisine popular in places like China’s Guangdong province and Hong Kong. It’s similar to Spanish tapas as it boasts a wide selection of foods in the form of small portions that are shared amongst a table. The menus are endless, spanning edge to edge of legal-sized sheets of paper, with more dishes than you could possibly imagine. However, dim sum is so much more than what a three-sentence Wikipedia description can offer; it is an experience — a communal event. It’s where aunties gather to gossip, where uncles discuss their business ventures, and where cousins reconnect with each other. From casual get-togethers to wedding receptions, it is a place where people of all ages can coexist in peace. I have never had a community centre or church to attend, but for as long as I can remember, major moments of my life were spent with dim sum at a Chinese restaurant tucked into the side of an ageing plaza.

At this restaurant, droves of customers sit crammed together at tables with their shoulders brushing, and the wait staff bustle to and from the kitchen, snaking their way through a maze of tables and chairs. Small talk shifts from the condition of distant relatives to the low price of corn at the supermarkets without missing a beat; all this while combinations of English and Cantonese individuals travel back and forth across the table at a breakneck pace fuelling dynamic conversations. When I am surrounded by my family, the apparent contradictions in these interactions seem unimportant. Here, there is never a dull moment, and the chaotic atmosphere is like second nature.

Our entire lives are filled with contradictions. We buy new shoes only for them to get dirty, we eat ice cream when it is freezing outside, and we wear dark clothing in 35-degree heat. If these are all normal and acceptable, then why do people find it so hard to wrap their heads around the idea of multinational or multicultural people? As a Chinese-Canadian, lots of people have had trouble fitting me into a category. I am a second-generation child, meaning that my parents moved here, met each other, and had me. Acquaintances are usually confused when I tell them that I, a second-generation Chinese-Canadian, have never been to China. No, I am not from China, trust me; you can check my birth certificate. I’ve never even been outside of North America, let alone travelled to a country halfway across the globe. And yet, this never really bothered me as a child.

For me, ‘China’ was a drive

outwards to Markham past Toronto’s welcome sign, tall cityscapes dissolving into trees, and low sweeping warehouses. These car window sights play through my head like a long cinematic shot as I watch English words on neon backgrounds fade into Chinese characters with signs backed by yellow and red lights. For me, ‘China’ is the countless days spent in others’ homes, with cousins and siblings, aunties and uncles, and other members of my extended family — they were the world I grew up with, and I never felt out of place with them. Still, others thought differently.

Although most of my youth was spent in the suburbs of Markham and Scarborough alongside my cousins, I went to school in the midtown Toronto area where my family ran a small grocery store. And frankly, my early school years were an unpleasant experience, to say the least. I felt very disconnected. I was too white to connect with my Chinese peers who had been immersed in their culture since youth, and not white enough to relate to the typical pastimes of classmates my age. After all, my lineup of weekend extracurriculars and the physical distance in between never exactly left me time to hang out with my peers outside of class. At home, I was used to this unconventional cultural jumble; but at school, I felt trapped in a state of limbo.

Friday nights were reserved for language school, a common experience for many second-generation children, and a probable last attempt to preserve any semblance of Chinese culture and language in my “white-washed” brain. Every Friday evening, Chinese school presented new challenges in the form of reciting passages, memorizing vocabulary, and taking exams; needless to say that at the time, I was much more invested in catching the Justice League cartoon reruns that came on after rather than the classes themselves. I dreaded the humiliation it made me feel, and I assumed that quitting would relieve my burdens of classwork and presentation anxiety. I unenrolled just before Middle School; yet somehow, it left an even greater weight on my conscience. Shame still surfaces in quiet moments when I cannot remember how to write simple words or cannot keep up with the actors in those dramas my grandma watches when they speak Cantonese. All my life, I had been taught that my linguistic proficiency was inextricably tied to my worth as a person.

“Thus, with my declining Cantonese skills, I was left mourning both my sense of cultural identity and self-worth.”

With my ethnic roots grounded in a land oceans away, language and food - especially dim sum, imparted me with a connection to my ancestors’ homeland. Nevertheless, insecurity



Illustration by Jessica Ren

still manages to creep its way into my innermost thoughts. As a child, I was very nervous and worried about how I could continue going to Chinese restaurants when I grew older. My mother would not be able to keep catching my mistakes and translating words for me. When I would ask for extra cups or plates, phrases would spin around my mind like a broken record as I attempted to deliver a single coherent sentence. Servers do not have time to patiently wait for you when they are servicing ten thousand other tables. Below the surface, there is a fear of judgement and failure that chases me. Countless times, servers have given me strange looks when I try to muster up a conversation in my broken Cantonese. To them, I am Chinese, but at the same time I am not — I have failed to maintain my ethnic distinction. All they will ask is, “Do you understand what I’m saying? Because in their eyes, that is all they need to know before casting judgement.

The pressure to ‘pick a side’ is extremely prevalent in our everyday lives. The idea that you have to be ‘either with us or against us’ is far too common. But in reality, life isn’t that clear cut. Relating to one identity does not mean that another is invalid. For second-generation children, it can be tough navigating through the confusing nuances that culture and identity present, and avoiding the potholes of life that are stereotypes. It is a matter of reframing the picture that society represents. The thoughts and fears of not belonging to any single culture can transform into the idea that we have the privilege of seeing different lifestyles and practices from multiple perspectives. We have the ability to understand life both inside and outside our homes, and learn from the unique life lessons they offer. When we are able to

take a step back from the criticisms of acquaintances, family, and friends, we are able to learn to accept our identity for the wonderful, chaotic jumble it is.

In the eighth grade, I started to keep a notebook of Cantonese words and phrases. It started off small and insignificant, something that I felt ashamed of having to keep at all. I would write the titles of my favourite dim sum dishes in hopes of memorizing their Chinese translation. But unlike previous attempts to immerse myself in the language, it was a decision firmly made by my own volition purely for interest’s sake; not for the sake of my parents nor my grandparents. It was only after I let go of social expectations that my path of self-discovery took off. I was actively reclaiming and redefining the predetermined set of rules that were gatekeeping my cultural identity. I did not realize it then, but there was never a need to ‘fix’ anything — my language, identity, or celebrations — in the first place.

There are many times when it feels so much easier to ignore the feelings of hollowness and aimlessness, but ignorance can only get a person so far — culture will always impact some part of our lives in one way or another. What matters in the end is how we choose to move forward in spite of internal strife. The idea that I need to meet a superficial set of criteria to be ‘Chinese enough’ is a disservice to the life I have led so far. Wherever I am or whenever it is, people will still hold me to their expectations of what a Chinese person is, and I will be damned if I have to give them the satisfaction of being typecast. I am Chinese. I am Canadian. These two identities should be allowed to coexist. How I embrace them is up to myself alone, and all I can say for certain now is that wherever I go, I am still a Chinese-Canadian, and that is okay.



SPORTS ANALYTICS

The success of sports analytics

Kaura Sankaran
Section Editor

Data analytics is the science of analyzing raw data and using extrapolation techniques to draw conclusions from that data. The outcomes and conclusions drawn from this process are often applied to other life situations or reorganized to allow for human consumption. Data analytics is a growing field, with various uses, potential financial opportunities and upcoming jobs. Outside of business, the most prominent use of data analytics is within the sports industry.

Like business analytics, sports analytics is useful in all aspects of all sports. In basketball, it can find who allows the fewest points in the most minutes, or in baseball, analytics can determine the player with the highest batting average in the most at-bats. In football, it can track how many yards a team gains when two receivers are on the field, whether you should punt on fourth-down, or how many interceptions a quarterback throws when a certain linebacker is playing. In almost all professional sports, analytics can determine who deserves

a raise or contract extension based on their performance over a certain number of minutes, games or years.

Sports analytics has expanded to the extent that an MIT-run event called the Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, or the SSAC, is coming up on its fifteenth anniversary. The conference typically has representatives from over 120 professional sports organizations worldwide, coming together to discuss the future of sports analytics and how it has made a difference in players' careers and organizations' legacies. In 2016 at the SSAC, retired NBA champion Shane Battier noted that analytics was "extremely significant" and "changed the course of his career." At that same conference, the Golden State Warriors General Manager, Bob Myers, spoke about data analytics as a tool that can reveal a lot of information about players and how to run his team. The Warriors not only took home the "Best Analytics Organization" at that conference but began a dominant reign within the NBA, winning three of four consecutive titles, showing just how crucial sports analytics can be to a team's success.

Data analytics has contributed in two major ways to the Warriors' success. The first was through rest.

The data showed that resting players and taking them out of the game earlier was not only beneficial towards preventing injury, but also enables a player to have more longevity in his career. The second was through the recognition of the importance of three-pointers. Although the NBA as a whole has become more favourable towards three-pointers in the last ten years, the Warriors were ahead of the game, drafting Stephen Curry, a key piece to their three-point gunning offence, in 2009. They also led the league in average three-pointers attempted when going 73-9, setting the best record in NBA history in 2016. Their Major League Baseball counterparts, the Oakland Athletics, also recognized the difference analytics could make as they hired Billy Beane as their general manager in 1997. Beane managed to turn a small market team that could not afford to reel in superstars into contenders by creating depth and signing low-salary players who could get on base instead of trying to sign players who hit 90 home runs each season. His management style led the Athletics to several playoff appearances, a historic 20-game winning streak and both a book and movie commissioned about him under the title Moneyball.

Professionals aren't the only ones who use sports analytics; amateur, high school, and college coaches are buying into the use of analytics and are furthering their teams' success by adjusting athletes' rest or picking plays to run based on the data they have collected. Local competitive basketball teams, such as the North Toronto Huskies, have asked parents to collect stats to determine players' efficiency and have utilized it when choosing who to start or put in late in the game. Such teams have ranked among the top ten teams for their age-group out of 50+ teams. Third-party companies like Fusion Sport and Hudl Sportscode have also started to appear to help smaller teams manage their data, maximize their performance and minimize their injury.

In the last twenty years, highly analytical teams such as the New England Patriots, the San Antonio Spurs and the Boston Red Sox have endured great success with 14 championship titles between the three. The fact of the matter is that sports analytics, and data analytics as a whole, is an emerging market and those who accept and embrace this change in approach to sports will not only be able to make more money, but will have a leg up over the competition.

BASEBALL

The 2020 World Series

After 32 seasons of falling short, the Los Angeles Dodgers have won their seventh World Series Championship, their first since 1988, ending one of the longest championship droughts in the MLB.

Tristan Swartz
Contributor

The Dodgers won the 2020 World Series after Julio Urias got Willy Adames of the Tampa Bay Rays to strike out, looking to record the final out of Game 6 of the 2020 World Series to win the game 3-1 and become the World Champions. The Dodgers, who have won the N.L. West for the past 8 years, going back to 2013, have finally ended their share of falling just short after being in, but losing, 2 of the previous 3 World Series.

The World Series was played in Arlington, TX in the Texas Rangers new Globe Life field, which first opened this season and was used as a bubble to limit travel due to Covid-19. It was also used to host one of the National League Divisional Series or the NLDS, as well as the World Series as one of the neutral sites chosen by the MLB. It was among San Diego, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and Houston, TX which also served as neutral sites during the postseason. The Dodgers finished the modified 60 game MLB season (which was shortened from the traditional 162 game season due to Covid-19) with a record of 43-17, the best record

in the MLB, which led to only the 14th time in the past 50 years where the team with the best record in baseball ended up winning the World Series.

The Dodgers didn't have the best World Series though, especially after Game 4, which was one of the wildest World Series games in history. The Dodgers blew a 1 run lead with 2 outs in the ninth by a series of multiple errors. The Rays had runners at first and second base when Brett Phillips of the Rays, who hadn't gotten a hit in over a month, hit a single to Center Fielder Chris Taylor. Taylor bobbled the ball momentarily before recovering it and throwing it home. The Rays' runner at third base tripped and fell midway between 3rd and home, losing his advantage, so the Dodgers only had to do two things: was hold the ball and get the runner back to third, possibly tag him out, which would send the game to extra innings since the runner from second had already scored. Instead, the cutoff throw went home to Dodgers Catcher Will Smith who didn't realize the runner wasn't coming home, so Smith tried to do a swipe tag at the plate and accidentally let go of the ball in the process. It rolled away from home plate. Normally the Dodgers' pitcher would be behind the plate to cover any wild

throws or missed catches. In this case, the Dodgers' pitcher, Kenley Jansen, wasn't there to backup the play so the Rays runner, who had tripped, came into score ending one of the craziest games in World Series history. It was an exciting finish to the game for Rays fans, but left Dodgers fans in tears.

Luckily for Dodgers fans, their team was able to come back to win games 5 and 6 and claim their well-deserved 2020 World Championship. The Dodgers did have some issues while celebrating their championship as third baseman Justin Turner, who tested positive for Covid-19 earlier in the game and was taken out of the game immediately upon learn-

ing about the positive test, decided to go back onto the field to celebrate with his teammates even after being told to self isolate. MLB investigated Turner's decision to go back on the field but decided not to discipline him for his actions after some miscommunications about having to self isolate and Turner's remorse for his actions.

2020 was one of the strangest seasons in the MLB's 151 year history and one can only guess what will happen in 2021. However, we can look forward to the fact that pitchers and catchers are set to report to Spring Training on February 11th - only several short weeks away.



Image courtesy of www.si.com

FOOTBALL

No bubble, no problem?: How the NFL has navigated the season through a pandemic

The National Football League (NFL) opted to carry out their season without a bubble, which brought on a set of challenges for teams and management.

Elena Vlitass
Section Editor

Unlike many other sports leagues such as the NBA and NHL, the NFL carved their own path to play their season without a bubble. The NFL played their season similarly to any other year, with teams travelling on a weekly basis for games, with some organizations even allowing a reduced number of fans in compliance with local rules set by state officials. While the NFL has taken many steps to reduce outbreaks of COVID-19 in the league, they have faced a range of challenges when outbreaks occur, such as containing the spread, rescheduling games as well as accusations some teams are receiving favourable treatment over others.

At the beginning of the season, players were given the option to opt-out of the season as a result of the pandemic. A total of sixty-six players opted out, including a Canadian born Kansas City Chiefs guard, Laurent Duvernay-Tardif, who opted out in order to help on the front lines as a doctor. He is currently working at a long term care facility in Quebec, as the healthcare system is in dire need of staff to meet the needs of patients at this time. Many other big-name athletes such as New England Patriot, Dont’a Hightower and Philadelphia Eagle, Marquise Goodwin also opted out. This left many teams in need of filling roster spots for the season, which provided many young players with an opportunity to showcase what they can do.

Earlier in the year, many people in the public were shocked to hear that the NFL would play their season without a bubble and weren’t sure how they would be able to do so without major outbreaks.

However, NFL executives and their health advisors worked with their players and government authorities to design a season that would permit them to play without a bubble.

NFL players and staff have been tested daily for COVID every day except gameday up until recently, when the league also introduced rapid COVID testing on gameday as a further step to reduce outbreaks of COVID in the league. This plan unfortunately wasn’t as foolproof as it seemed, as, after just the fourth week of the season, the Tennessee Titans experienced an outbreak large enough warranting their team quarantine and their game to be rescheduled. Soon thereafter, many other teams also began to experience outbreaks, including the Baltimore Ravens, and the New England Patriots. While most teams have had 1 or more players with COVID, not all games needed to be postponed as due to the daily testing, many teams were able to contain the outbreak to just a few players.

Some controversy struck the league around this matter in week 12, when the Denver Broncos experienced an outbreak of 8 players and 2 staff, leaving them with no quarterbacks available to play. Although the league rescheduled games multiple times for other teams, they refused to reschedule this game for the Broncos, forcing them to play without a quarterback on their roster. Instead, the team was forced to sign practice squad wide receiver Kendall Hinton to play quarterback for the week. This was particularly frustrating for the organization given the Ravens and Steelers were able to have their week 12 game postponed a total of three times until that Wednesday. Had the Broncos’ game been pushed until Tuesday, instead of Sunday, two of their quarterbacks would’ve been eligible to play, however the league did



Illustration by Virgil Seo
not make this change. Many players and fans, even from other teams, didn’t feel this was fair and accused the league of giving some teams favourable treatment over others. The Broncos have also had their season significantly altered to accommodate other teams and other games that needed to be rescheduled causing them to lose their bye week. After this game, the league implemented a new policy to allow teams to be able to sign a quarterback on another team’s practice squad for the game, as a large part of the issue for Denver was that the league barred them from signing a new player or allowing their own coach to quarterback the game.

Besides a few outbreaks, many teams have also been penalized for breaking the league’s COVID policies. Many head coaches such as Vic Fangio, Kyle Shanahan, Pete Carroll, Sean Payton and Jon Gruden have each been fined \$100,000 for violating mask policies set by the league. Each of their respective teams was also fined \$250,000 for this violation.

Early in the season, a few teams allowed a limited capacity of fans, generally between 20-40% of the normal attendance, to spectate the games and as the season went on, slowly more teams also started to allow a limited number of fans to enter the

stadium. However, as cases have shot up, many teams have slowly pulled back to a point where only a few teams such as the New Orleans Saints and the Kansas City Chiefs are allowing fans.

Despite not having a bubble throughout the season, an option for having a playoff bubble is being considered, similar to what the National Basketball League (NBA) did. In the regular season, whenever a large portion of a team got COVID, that game would be rescheduled. As so few teams are competing in the playoffs, postponement of these games would be highly disruptive, not only for timelines, but for the mental and physical preparedness of the players. In addition, it would be very difficult for many players to return to perform at a high level that is required in the playoffs after facing COVID, as many players that have had it have reported that it was difficult for them to return to play after battling the illness. Cleveland Browns star Myles Garrett stated, “(COVID-19) kicked my butt...I was in pain”. Given the high stakes of the playoffs, key players not being available or not at one hundred percent will be a huge challenge for teams, making a playoff bubble a favourable option.

The NFL has served as an experiment of how even high contact sports leagues like football can continue to play through a pandemic. While not everything went perfectly, for the most part, the league was able to keep most players, staff, and spectators healthy through their many policies. With the development and roll-outs of COVID vaccines, many organizations hope to be able to return to the normal structure soon. As the season comes to an end and playoffs begin, it is everyone’s hope that the league can continue to play and that other major leagues will soon be able to safely welcome fans back to their stadiums.

BASEBALL

Negro Leagues become Major League

MLB officially considers the Negro Leagues as part of the Major League and more than 3400 Players as Major Leaguers.

Tristan Swartz
Contributor

On December 16, 2020, Major League Baseball finally decided to recognize the Negro Leagues. This includes all of its more than 3400 players, and all of its records, becoming part of Major League Baseball. The Negro Leagues that are now considered as part of the MLB include the (I) Negro National League (1920-1931), the Eastern Coloured League (1923-1928), the American Negro League (1929), the East-West League (1932), the (II)

Negro National League (1933-1948), and the Negro American League (1937-1948). The Negro Leagues now join a few other professional leagues, which are considered as part of the MLB, such as the American Association (1882-1891), the Federal League (1914-1915), and a few other leagues alongside the current American and National Leagues.

The Negro Leagues were created in the 1920’s, because in the late 1880’s Major League Baseball decided to ban all African Americans and Latin Americans from playing in the MLB, until Jackie Robinson broke the colour barrier in 1947. After 1948, the majority of the Negro Leagues ended but a few others continued

throughout the 1950’s before they also came to an end.

Of all the players to play in the Negro Leagues, 35 of them have been elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, since 1971 including some of the greatest players of all time like Satchel Page, Cool Papa Bell, and Josh Gibson. The records which will now be considered as MLB records are only of those from the Negro Leagues regular season, which was much shorter than a typical 154 game MLB regular season at the time. The Negro Leagues usually played several exhibition games on top of their regular season, and those exhibition games will not be counted

for MLB records; this will cause some records to drop, like Josh Gibson’s 800 total career home runs. Additionally, because many of the games in the Negro Leagues were not officially or formally scored, there are plenty of missing statistics and records.

Now with MLB officially considering the Negro Leagues as part of the MLB, We can now consider the stories of Josh Gibson’s home runs along side Babe Ruth’s and Sachel Page’s domanance on the mound along side that of Cy Young without the debate that it wasn’t the MLB. Although few of the 3400 plus players who played in the Negro Leagues are still here today, they will now forever be considered Major Leaguers.

o o humour

MOVIE RANKING

A definitive ranking of the Barbie movies

In the words of the oh so wise Barbie herself: “You can be anything.”



Illustration by **Suhani Sharma**

Sarisha Panday
Section Editor

Barbie, the most talented, beautiful and iconic figure of many people’s childhoods, has branched out to so many types of media and touched so many hearts she honestly deserves a Nobel Prize. I remember many a night spent at my father’s computer, sliding the library rented disk of ‘The Magic of the Rainbow’ into the DVD player. The timeless movie that never failed to put a smile on my face and teach me about the importance of proper character-building. Barbie is always striving to improve and become more aware of the issues that young girls face. Even now, she has a Youtube channel where she educates young people about modern issues, including ones surrounding race, gender and bullying. Today, however, we’re not here to talk about her incredible history. No, this is serious business. Today, I am here to definitively rank the Barbie movies from worst to best. I am well aware I will get a lot of flack for this, but I also know that I must speak my truth. I’ve made a name for myself as a fire-starter and I must continue to carry that burden, and maybe even get into some arson, who knows. I won’t be including some of the newer titles as I haven’t really seen all of them and I can’t really judge them the same way. I’m worried they might be better and I’m not sure if I would be able to handle the mental strain that comes with that.

10) Fairytopia: Magic of the Rainbow
While not being the first or the most epic of the three Fairytopia films, I found this the most exciting. Sequences where Ella and the other fairies learned the ‘Flight of Spring’ were comical and seeing them dance on crystals suspended in mid-air before bumping into each other had me rooting for the underdog. I put this so low on the list because, while it was a lovely finish to the series that showed Ella becoming a confident young fairy, it would have to be the blandest on the list. Lazy animation coupled with lazy storytelling made it a little less memorable. Mermadia (a film within the same franchise) was not nearly as compelling but it definitely looked better, possibly because of the later release date. Glad they learned from their mistakes.

9) A Fairy Secret
One of the better new films. This saw the introduction of Barbie’s nemesis, Raquelle. She’s been a favourite of mine for a while, ever since she was brought to light in The Dreamhouse series, what with her dramatic attitude. I enjoyed seeing her get a redemption arc, it felt like she deserved to be recognized for her insecurities rather than being ridiculed for them. This was another movie with bland animation but was consistently funny for six-year-old me. Something about fairies dressing up in chef disguises seemed to be a real ‘knee-slapper’. This one had to work to separate itself from Fairytopia, and giving it a modern setting did the trick. However, it did seem like the writers really layered the character development on thick. I can barely remember all the specifics now, but I think it definitely had a severe lack of hot fairies. And what is it with them ALWAYS doing Ken dirty? Poor guy was getting married off when just yesterday he was living a normal life.

8) Swan Lake
A lovely take on a classic tale. When younger me watched it I was constantly jealous of Barbie’s endless supply of sweets from her father’s bakery. Older me watches it now and realizes how bland the animation for the setting is. But one thing we can both agree on is that Barbie had some really incredible moments in this one. An awesome unicorn friend? Check. Some beautiful dresses? Check. Impeccable ballet skills? Check. An army of small creature friends that would lay down their lives for her? Triple check. The only downside being, of course, that she turns into a swan at night. This one gets points off for being an adaptation that brought nothing new to the table. Also, 80% of the movie takes place in a forest, so... Additionally, this movie is going to get criticized for the really uncomfortable implications of Rothbart and his daughter’s character designs. I could talk about them at length but that’s for another article. I always felt so sorry for her. I don’t think she deserved to get turned into a pig.

7) The 12 Dancing Princesses
I’d drafted a version of this article years ago and had heavily complimented the male love interest of the movie. In fact, my exact words were “Not gonna lie, Barbie’s love interest was the most attractive in this one. They animated him reeeally well if you know what I mean.” I just googled him and immediately retracted that statement. But I definitely felt that way as a kid. Maybe it was the Will Turner and Elizabeth Swann sort of “star-crossed lover” relationship he had with Barbie. Maybe I just have a deep-seated desire to date a man who makes shoes. I guess we’ll never know. But I love the personalized ballet shoes and the bit where they step on the circles on the ground to make music. This was a really beautiful movie. I enjoyed the scene where all the sisters teamed up and used their individual skills to save the day. This movie had to establish its large cast of characters and did this well. I wouldn’t say it was as captivating as Princess Charm School, but the ballet and family/sisterhood overarching themes make it a charming watch.

6) Mermaid Tale
Full disclosure; this is the movie that sparked my persistent desire to be a mermaid when I was like, 8. This had all the makings of a good Barbie movie. A sick soundtrack, some quirky friends, and a colourful, magical world. Let’s not forget the ingenious ‘Walking on Sunshine’ parody: ‘Swimming on Sunshine’. And ‘Queen of the Waves’? A bop. The scene where Meriah becomes her final mermaid form is by far... a lot like other transformation sequences, to be honest. I liked Mattel’s new take on their already established mermaids from Mermadia. That being said, A Mermaid Tale didn’t instill any incredible message in me, or at least one that I hadn’t already learned from another title. I do get the impression that this is the movie that sort of sparked a new era of Barbie films, and feels like a solid transition from the old formula of movies.

5) Princess Charm School
I can literally not tell you how much I ADORED Princess Charm School. A lottery to become a princess was literally the most exciting thing I could conjure up at a young age. The sequence where Blair and co. literally designed their own outfits was the first time in a long while that I had enjoyed a makeover scene (it’s predecessor being the Three Musketeers). The dresses in this movie were as incredible as always. I remember being so quick to pay for the doll that came with this film (not gonna lie, Barbie was looking extra cute this time around). This movie could have easily made the top three, if not for the fact that it doesn’t hold the same emotional/nostalgic value as the others. AND THE OPENING SONG HOLY CRAP. Like, yeah, I can tell you’re a princess, literally my dream. I’m seriously considering working in a cafe so I can make latte designs and secretly be the daughter of a king. God, I’m yearning, look away. And if THIS movie is in 5th place, you KNOW that this was a very difficult article to write.

4) Princess and the Pauper
This one takes the cake for “best musical numbers”. We had “A Girl Like You”, “The Cat’s Meow”, “How Can I Refuse”, “To Be A Princess”! For heaven’s sake, the soundtrack alone carried this movie to the top of the list (almost). Honestly, it should have received an Oscar for best soundtrack. Maybe we can give it a Noscar (haha get it? North Toronto + Oscar = Noscar?) Its message to “always do what you love!” really resonated with me. Or at least I think that was the message. Do you think Mr.Lyne will let me analyze the themes in ‘Princess and the Pauper’ for my English assignment? Anyways, the talking animals (consisting of a cat that barked and a dog who looked like he punched holes in his mom’s drywall) obviously wrapped the movie up in typical Barbie fashion. It was a very good adaptation in terms of catering to its audience, and while it didn’t talk about violent social inequality, it still inspired young girls and boys to follow their dreams. I had this movie on disk, so I used to watch it whenever life got too hard for an 8-year-old. And that was usually when I couldn’t get Burger King. Also, the bloopers were god-tier.

3) Three Musketeers
Okay, let’s just sit down and appreciate what a powerful movie this

was. Barbie stars as Corinne, who I believe is supposed to be the daughter of D’Artagnan from the original Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dums. This one was really all about girl power. Corinne and her gang are all fitted with some awesome homemade weapons and colour coordinated outfits. This, coupled with acrobatic feats and Barbie’s “be who you wanna be” message makes for an exciting and memorable film. Unfortunately, the critics didn’t seem to agree. I think they just hate #girlbosses. I also bought the doll for this movie and it was very cool, 10/10 recommend. Unfortunately the mask doesn’t come off and that made and still makes me sad. She might still be sitting in my closet right now, lost in its depths. I don’t have much to say about Three Musketeers, except that there were actually 4, so what’s the deal with the title? In short, it’s the sort of movie that you watch and think “Yeah that was really excellent.”

2) Diamond Castle
Gosh. What a beautiful movie, huh. The songs were once again top-notch, somehow hitting even harder than “How Can I Refuse”. I vaguely recall a scene where Liana and Alexa tearfully sing to each other at a moment of tension. It’s almost making me tear up now, as I am writing this. This movie was extremely memorable.

Others who’ve seen this can fondly recall the ‘jam and bread’ scene, see also, the part where a woman is trapped in a mirror. The dogs couldn’t talk this time, but they did dance, so I suppose that makes up for it. I think it really portrayed a lovely message of what friendship was and the power of song. But, we are seriously playing ourselves if we are gonna watch this movie and say the two main characters were NOT madly in love with each other. Cottagecore lesbian DREAM. Except that they were poor, I suppose. Honestly, I just remember waiting to go to the library to see if they had Diamond Castle, because it was literally my favourite movie on earth. I’m not too shy to say it might still be. Keyword: might. Anyways, please contact me if you’re looking to sell flowers in the forest with me, but you HAVE to be my aesthetic opposite.

1) Island Princess
What a wild ride, right? I’m proud to announce the first-place winner of Sarisha’s Barbie Movie Awards is...(drumroll please), I bet you already guessed it; Island Princess. Complete with some memorable songs, exotic animal buds and lovely dresses, this movie embodies the Barbie spirit. One cannot finish the movie and claim that “Here on My Island” isn’t stuck in their head. In Island Princess, Mat-

tel decided they’d branch off from the customary cat and dog, and give Barbie, or rather Ro, an elephant, red panda and peacock as companions. That decision, in my eyes, really gave it an edge over its competitors. It painted Ro as a strong, brave young woman who could help herself; evident in how she saved her love interest from a crocodile. This movie was very drama heavy. I think what makes this movie the best, is that it felt like, or at least to a young child, something quite grounded in reality, teaching us that family and teamwork is important. Also, that peacock themed clothing is absolutely stunning. I will say, the water animation makes my stomach turn in 2021, but I can’t fault them for working with what they had in 2007.

And that’s a wrap folks! It was a treat to reflect on the stories of my youth (and to see how they’ve likely shaped me as a teenager). If you disagree with me, please let me know, I’ve been itching to get into a fight. I’m grading for my brown belt soon and haven’t been able to spar over zoom, so it’ll be great practice. So, if you see me in the halls next year, accost me with your friend group. Nothing makes me happier than meeting fans who want me dead. Now, as a parting sentiment, in the words of the oh so wise Barbie herself: “You can be anything.”

MOVIE REVIEW

Trying to criticize “Clifford The Big Red Dog” live action movie? Think again

“This isn’t Clifford, it’s a dog covered in blood.”

Kiara Distin
Section Editor

Alya Seker
Copy Editor

Clifford the Big Red Dog. A childhood classic for most, but now? A childhood classic potentially ruined, yet again, by CGI. You may remember this debacle with the terrifying Sonic the Hedgehog live-action movie; the remake being slightly less terrifying after all the complaints from people on Twitter. Now, we get to go through the same thing again but with our favourite big red dog, Clifford. The official trailer came out on November 25th, and people had lots to say. For example, one Twitter user said “This isn’t Clifford, it’s a dog covered in blood”. Another questioned the whole existence of the movie, saying “Why not just keep Clifford a cartoon!?? That dog looks scary as hell.” Nevertheless, there are people who try to come to terms with the monstrosity, saying things such as “I’m not scandalized by the Clifford design like everybody seems to be, but I do think it was maybe a mistake to make him the exact shade of tomato-juice-red that makes him look like he was recently skunked”. Furthermore, Clifford’s size is a rioting matter. At around 2 meters, the dog is sickeningly shorter than the original 7.5 meters, making him the same size as many basketball players. Although this dog may not be able to fit in a bed, he IS able to fit in a house, which is an atrocious insult to

the original cartoon, in which Clifford wasn’t able to fit in any house he tried to enter. We think this calls for arson (shoutout grade 11 band). Paramount, watch out. We’re coming for you. On a different note, have you seen the behind the scene pictures of pre-CGI Clifford??? ABSOLUTELY TERRIFYING!!! That “dog” looks like bare muscle meat that could single-handedly cause the mass extinction of mankind as we know it. Not only that, but this thing looks like the fresh remnants of a dinosaur that should not have been dug up. If you are reading this and doubting us, we invite you to search for pictures of “behind the scenes of Clifford the big red dog live-action movie.” Then, and only then may you challenge us to a duel, but you will lose, guaranteed. 7:13 AM, next Monday, in the staff room. Square up, and don’t forget to bring your best Nerf Gun (we can assure you ours are better). Let’s take a moment, go back to English class, and compare and contrast. Do y’all remember the horrific tragedy that society was forced to endure back in December 2019? If not, let us remind you in two words: CGI Cats. This disgraceful depiction of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Cats, was so atrocious that it likely cursed 2020 and is the reason why we had to exist through this miserable excuse of a year. Frankly, we’re worried. Very worried. What if Clifford the Big Red Dog turns out to be as atrocious as Cats? Yet another parallel between the two movies is that both their release dates are at the end of the year (Clifford’s is November 2021). This movie can either curse the upcoming year or save it from annihilation. In short, this

movie alone will make or break 2022. But what if it does make 2022? That’s when we began to think about it. And we mean REALLY think about it. People have been overly sensitive about various movies and TV shows in the past, and for what? HMM??? Why must humans always feel the need to be so judgemental? Whether it be someone’s hard work, someone’s appearance, or even themselves. Let us paint a picture for you: we live in a society where our eyes have been trained to point out our flaws, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder. We know it’s kind of cliché, but it’s true. So simply stop being so critical! We’re all different with separate tastes, and that’s the beauty of it. Stop judging others, and their work and most of all stop judging yourself! Clifford would surely endorse this message along with The Beatles. Just Let Clifford/Yourself/Others/It Be (a standard tune in today’s repertoire). So, what if it does in fact save 2022? Well then, today’s critics will be doing a lot less talking. They will have to wake up and stare at their reflection every morning knowing that they had the audacity to criticize the saving grace of the new year. These naysayers woke up and chose violence; a risky move to say the least. And for that, they will pay; karma has a funny way of saying “hey”, and that “way” is ARSON (shout-out #2 to grade 11 band). To all the adults that may read this and scrutinize the movie: why! are! y’all! so! damn! pressed?!? How does a kids movie affect your lifestyle in any way whatsoever? Yes, you may be itching to rebut us with the classic “cLiFfOrD wAs a pArT oF

oUr cHiLdHoOd aNd iS nOw bEiNg rUiNeD.” Well, boo-hoo, we have a newsflash for you: shut up, this movie was made to make kids happy, not you. We are NOT saying that only kids can watch it, because you better bet your bottom dollar that we’ll be in the front row of the first screening. We are saying, however, that we have taken BBI-201 (business obvi), learned about target audiences, and can confidently say that adults are not the ones being targeted. May we also inquire, Who are you to say that the dog is not cute while we are here aggressively typing this sentence out with tears running down our cheeks at how adorable this dog is?????? Were you also not taught the golden rule in kindergarten? If not, let us educate you. The golden rule is to treat people how you would want to be treated. Now, tell us, what did Paramount ever do to you to receive such backlash? Just know that these little children likely won’t look at those puppy eyes with the same mindset as yours, rather, they will look at Clifford with love. So much love in fact, that he will end up being just as big a part of their childhood as he was to you and maybe he’ll even continue to grow bigger. Perhaps that is why they made Clifford so small; to leave room for him to grow with all the love that will be thrown at him through the glowing eyes of the children sitting in the movie theatre wishing that they had a Clifford too. You should know better, shame on you. Please kindly go sit yourself in a corner and reflect on your attitude. Thank you.

ONLINE LEARNING

What happens behind the black screen on a Zoom call... (Student Edition)

Normally, I sneakily eat my frozen fruits, and try to stop myself from laughing like a psychopath when I see something funny (a struggle of seeing a friend act weird when in the same online meet).

Victoria Man
Copy Editor

I can almost guarantee that every student has heard teachers say, “when I can’t see your faces, it feels like I’m speaking into a void,” pretty much every single day in class since the start of school in September. Now that COVID-19 deems it necessary for students to learn virtually, it means we all have to endure synchronous classes online, using platforms such as Brightspace, Google Classroom, or Zoom. From the teacher’s point of view, they are staring at a black screen filled with delicately selected profile pictures (that are truly concerning most of the time) and attempting to teach even though they know that their students are probably snacking on some chips and scrolling through TikTok. With a shake of their head and a sigh, they push through the afternoon and teach The Void. Sometimes, a teacher may require the students to turn on their cameras for class, but when this happens, the students widen their eyes in shock and are usually in one of these four common situations:

Munching on your favourite snack and not wanting the teacher to call you out for eating during class.

Completely out of it and scrambling to get out from under the covers of your bed while si-



Illustration by Ava Ireland

multaneously changing into clothing that aren’t your pyjamas.

Completely clueless, not knowing what the heck you’re learning, and not wanting to show your confused face so that everyone else in the class can see.

Experiencing phone separation anxiety (it’s okay... who doesn’t...) and turning on your camera would mean you’d have to put it away and stop checking Snapchat every three seconds.

Obviously, there’s no shame in going through one of the four breakdowns listed (or another sort of breakdown not listed). It happens to the best of us. However, more and more teachers have had enough of our blank screens. Multiple courses now require students to turn on their cam-

eras for class, and although it does allow for more engaged learning...I feel incredibly awkward when I completely zone out and get called on. Or when I have to ask where exactly I’m supposed to read from or what question I’m supposed to answer. Normally, I sneakily eat my frozen fruits, and try to stop myself from laughing like a psychopath when I see something funny (a struggle of seeing a friend act weird when in the same online meet). You can’t judge me for that. You literally can’t tell me that you’ve never had a moment where you had a horrible urge to laugh, thus moving your head awkwardly out of the frame, only to come back with tears in your eyes, shoulders shaking and hand covering your face.

Turning on cameras is simply

just too complicated of an affair to be able to completely expose what happens behind the black screen during class. Of course, if you are a teacher and you’re reading this...I’d just like to state that I truly believe that North Toronto C. I. students definitely do their best to listen and pay attention in class. However, some distractions (as expected) do present themselves at the worst possible times. Now that some classes require students to switch on their camera, instead of being greeted by The Void, we see each other’s “beautiful faces” (another commonly used phrase that seems more like a lie said by teachers). We definitely focus better with our cameras in certain cases, and a huge pro is that we get in our daily practice of repressing laughter (a skill that is a lot more helpful than one might think). And now that I have completely exposed what goes on behind The Void during class, I’ll just change my identity and move to some tropical island. Where you shall never find me ;)

Disclaimer*** For legal reasons, everything I say in this article is not guaranteed to be accurate for everyone and I’d like to disclose that I have not spoken to any students or teachers to get insight on this article... I would also like for students to refrain from throwing hands after I exposed each and every single one of us :) Aside from that, this is meant to be a fun read for jokes. I hope you enjoyed it!

ANIME REVIEW

Itadaki Seieki: a warm blanket for a cold winter

Itadaki Seieki really captures the true meaning of Christmas: being close with the ones you love, and spreading joy and cheer.

Nathan Cheng
Contributor

It’s that time of year: we all snuggle up in cozy blankets and watch romcoms until the break of dawn. But instead of watching “Switched at a Snowglobe Christmas Princess for a Christmas Prince: The Christmas Wish” for the billionth time, you should watch Itadaki Seieki instead.

Itadaki Seieki is an anime-romcom that’s only 30 minutes long, but despite such a short run time, it takes you on an emotional roller coaster full of twists and turns before ending with a bang. In most films, not all the jokes land but in Itadaki Seieki, every single one is an absolute BANGER. The writers knew when they had to be funny and when they

had to be serious. This keeps the plot smooth and elegant as you marvel at the wonderful sights before you. I was so moved and on edge the first time I watched Itadaki Seieki that I ended up going through half a tissue box. The voice-acting in both English and Japanese is otherworldly as it fully immerses you in the storyline, taking you away from reality. The animation and art style is visually pleasing, standing the test of time despite being 6 years old. Its art style is emotional, elegant, and expressive. It knows how and when to switch between serious and detailed, cutesy and simple. The jokes work best with the simple art style in a similar way to laugh tracks in sitcoms, except here you actually end up laughing. The serious moments work best with the more detailed style, allowing the characters to be more expressive and really let their feelings resonate with you.

The plot is simple: it’s a

wholesome story about a half-vampire falling in love with a nice boy. She writes him a love letter tricking him to come to the PE storage room alone. While she expects a hearty meal and he expects a heartfelt confession, they both find true love instead. “WeLl isn’t ThaT jUsT tWiLiGHT??” Yes, but actually no. Comparing the two doesn’t do Itadaki Seieki any justice; it’s like comparing the flavour of dry-aged steak to four-week-old bread.

Mozo111, a legend in the anime community, rates it a 10/10 saying “My kids absolutely love this cartoon, and they keep begging my wife and I to get them merchandise from this show. My sons have been fighting over who gets to use the family computer a lot recently, and I suggested they both use it at the same time because I know they’ll just be watching this cartoon. I imagine the story must be riveting and emotional, considering all the tissues that have

been used up while they watch it.”

With a towering 9.1/10 score on IMDB, Itadaki Seieki is an undeniable modern classic. It’s a film you can watch again and again, your love for the film only getting stronger with each viewing. There’s plenty of little nuances and details that can be easily missed on the first or second viewing, so it’s a great way to spend an afternoon, watching it over and over, finding new details to appreciate each time.

Above all, Itadaki Seieki really captures the true meaning of Christmas. There are some risqué elements and sensitive topics, but ultimately, the film uses its mature themes and ideas to further emphasize its wholesome message: being close with the ones you love, and spreading joy and cheer. So this winter season, watch Itadaki Seieki with your family and get ready for an evening you’ll never forget!

SERIOUS THEORY

What are the monoliths and where did they come from?

See, monoliths may be much more mysterious than we first thought (first impression = thick metal stick that looks like a juul). They may very well be devices that the aliens are using to survey the human race.



Photo courtesy of Insider.com

Alya Seker
Copy Editor

Alyssa Pather
Contributor

On November 18, 2020, Bret Hutchings, a helicopter pilot, left with his crew to count bighorn sheep from the air in Utah. Instead, they stumbled upon a long, silver structure: a monolith. Although this didn't come as too much of a shock considering that it was indeed 2020, it still managed to stir up some discussion. Not only did this metal structure randomly appear in the middle of nowhere, but it also disappeared and reappeared in countries across the rest of the world. The who, what, where, when, why, and hows regarding these monoliths remain a mystery. So, there obviously only one thing left to do: come up with insane theories that reach way beyond the boundaries of sanity.

One of the most obvious theories is that these monoliths are an art installation. John McCracken is a minimalist artist whose works have been compared to these monoliths. However, this man has been living happily 6 feet under us for nearly 10 years, making it impossible for him to have sculpted and removed the mysterious monoliths. But, there is always the possibility that other artists have made these structures in tribute to McCracken.

Moreover, these monoliths may be a reference to Stanley Ku-

brick's film, 2001: A Space Odyssey. The whole plot is based on the discovery of "a mysterious monolith that first appeared at the dawn of man." Once again, these structures could have fairly simple explanations, such as artists who might've gotten together to try and bring parts of this iconic science fiction film to life.

While it could be a huge pop culture reference, it could also be a social experiment. One of the many theories floating around is that the idea the monoliths came from a random citizen, wanting to collect their own analytical data on humans. This being said, there are endless possibilities as to what the creator's goal was. Maybe they were attempting to test how far mob mentality would go; seeing how many people would get involved and contribute to a seemingly useless project. They could've been trying to create a fun shared experience in a time of darkness; a mystery for us to solve together, and a chance for the world to be a part of something greater than themselves. But who knows? Maybe someone just wanted their chance at messing with society. Maybe they wanted to test the level of our stupidity and to see how quickly everyone would move on or how temporary the excitement would be. If this was a social experiment, they definitely succeeded in confusing us all.

And of course, we cannot leave out the most obvious yet most otherworldly theory of them all: little green people with several limbs and several eyes. Who are we to assume that Earth holds the only living beings in the universe? And who

are we to assume that we are safe? Do we really think we're that special? Newsflash, we are not. We're just big blobs of atoms that happen to coexist with one another. So, now that we've established that aliens are coming for us, let's dive into the several theories of what their intentions are.

The first and most pressing matter of them all is aliens trying to end the human race. How would they go about that you ask? Well, it's rather simple. See, the monoliths may be much more mysterious than we first thought (first impression=thick metal stick that looks like a juul). They may very well be devices that the aliens are using to survey the human race. This would imply that the aliens are in fact intelligent. We have grown up thinking that we are the most complex and evolved creatures, however, the most intelligent race would have never let "the dab" become a thing (2016 was a dark time in pop culture). This indubitably proves the fact that aliens could easily demolish every single one of us. There are many ways they could accomplish this goal, such as mass extermination. Obviously they would do this by pressing a button that says "kaboom", blowing up the Earth and erasing its existence. Another might be gathering enough data on us to shapeshift into human form and casually murder every single one of us, which although it seems like a bit of a stretch is still a possibility.

While this may be a fun thought, there is much more to unpack. Why do we automatically assume that aliens are bad or are trying to put

us in harm's way? They could be trying to contact us. Humans have been trying to communicate with aliens for decades, so why should we assume that they aren't doing the same thing? It's very possible that once they become aware of our existence, curiosity will take over. They could very well have the same fascination for otherworldly beings like us. Concepts such as human invasion, "Homosapien Phone Home", and an Area 51 equivalent where the citizens theorize about what human life their government is hiding.

Finally, the most unexplored theory yet: the aliens know something we don't and are threatening the government with it. Or furthermore, the government knows something we don't. The aliens may want to contact us with an incentive that roots deeper than curiosity. They could possibly be trying to send us messages via monoliths as a warning. The placement of the monoliths may not, in fact, be random. These structures have been spread throughout the world; from the USA to Australia, Belgium to Canada. Not to scare you all but, they are everywhere, and they may be watching us. What could this mysterious knowledge be? Is it that the government is planning to wipe out the human race? Or is it that the birds work for the bourgeoisie? We'll never know. Until then, we are left to wonder who we can trust. What if they've already arrived? And what if they wrote this article?

Horoscope

Ayush Verma
Contributor

Illustrations by Suhani Sharma



Aries, March 21- April 20:
Awesome Aries, how is virtual school treating you so far? Remember, where you are now is not your final destination, so do not be discouraged by a few minor setbacks! Keep going and try your best! Let your inbuilt discipline guide you these days! Make a schedule, stick to it and don't forget to have fun!



Taurus, April 21- May 20:
Amazing job with the recent updates to your daily routine! Getting stuff done is way more important than perfection, especially in times as difficult as these. Tackle tasks as they come and mark the important deadlines on your calendar and try to start your mornings with a positive quote. You're doing great!



Gemini, May 21- Jun 21:
How does it feel to be fully re-charged, Gemini? Nice, doesn't it? School can often be and feel like a lot but know that you are doing your best and you will succeed in the end! Success is the sum of the daily efforts, even if they are small. So keep that in mind and pace yourself!



Cancer, June 22- July 22:
Dear Cancer, keep doing you! It is very important to take care of yourself and ask for help if you need it. There are no dumb questions! Also, don't shy away from making new friends, try interacting with the new teachers and students around you, they are all here to help!



Leo, July 23- August 23:
Why hello there, Leo! Great work keeping on top of things, and good on you for taking those much-needed breaks! You are on the right path. Perseverance and hard work will take care of the rest!



Virgo, August 24- September 22:
Is your current motto harder, better, faster, stronger, Virgo? Remember that masterpieces are not rushed so take your time! With that being said, you are doing awesome! Be proud of yourself!



Libra, September 23- October 23:
Excited for the New Year, Libra? Of course, you are! Hopefully, you will soon be able to hang out with your friends in person! But till then, call them up and play some games. Get your tasks done as soon as possible so you can hang out online for longer! Stay awesome!



Scorpio, October 24- November 22:
Good job, Scorpio! In these hard times, resilience is the key to success and you are one of the most resilient people around. A minute has 60 seconds, so continue to use them wisely! Keep up the great work!



Sagittarius, November 23- December 22:
Happy belated birthday, Sagittarius! Fun is your area of expertise, so this month, if you want, you can organize a fun event for your friends and family, it would be appreciated! Do remember to find fun in the "boring" activities that you do daily, they will become a lot easier if you do so! Keep going!



Capricorn, December 23- January 20:
Happy birthday season, Capricorn and a very Happy New Year too! This month is as great as any other to start reading books. Read any book that you always wanted to read but were not able to find the time for. They will help you relax and develop new perspectives which will help you in school and daily life!



Aquarius, January 21- February 18:
Happy upcoming Aquarius season, Aquarius! This time of year is usually quite stressful, so make sure you take care of yourself and not procrastinate. Remember that slow and steady wins the race!



Pisces, February 19- March 20:
How is the innovative thinker in you doing today, Pisces? This upcoming month has a number of exciting challenges and rewards for you! Through your genius and creativity you will easily be able to complete them. Remember to tackle them one at a time!