

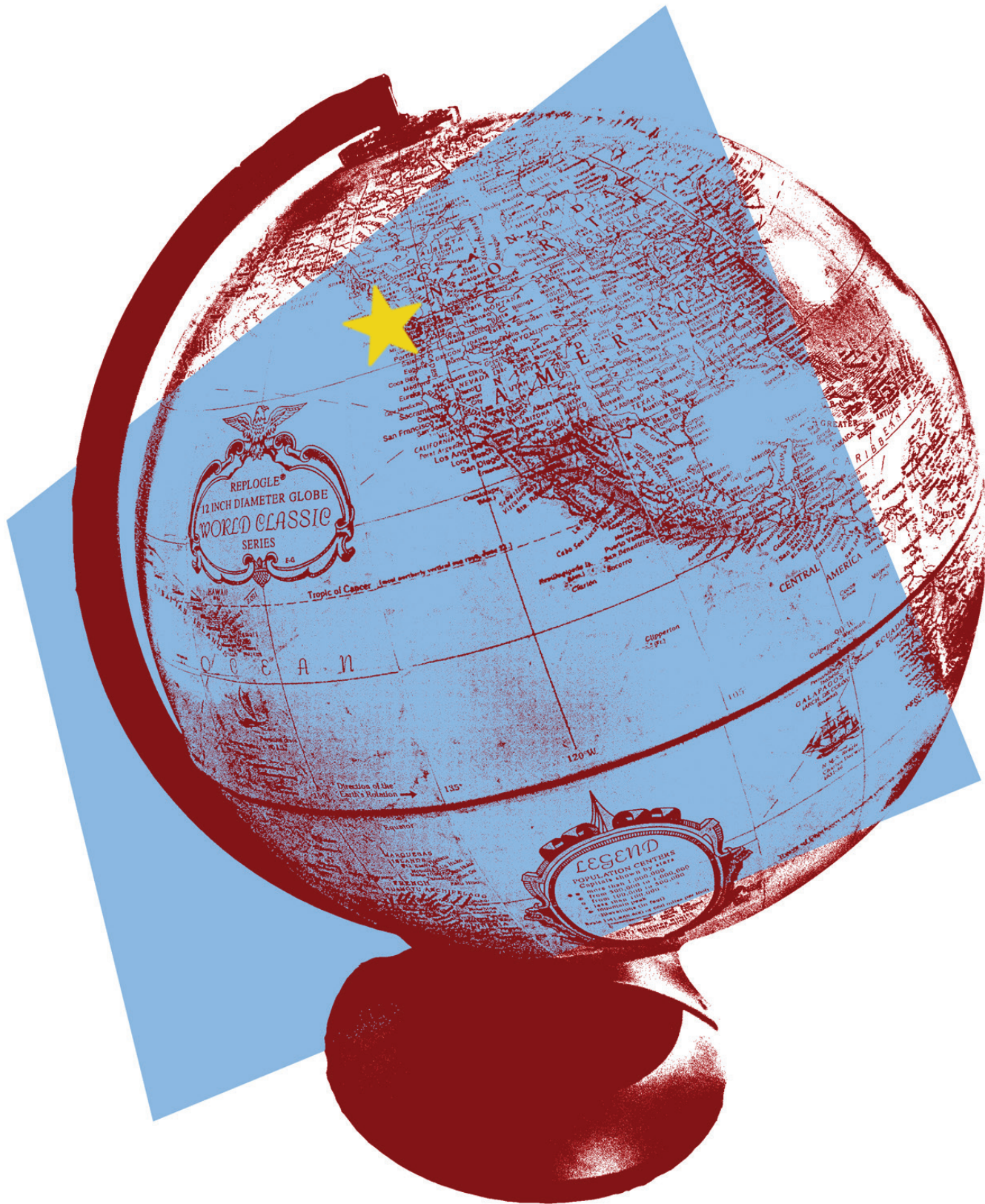
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NEXUS

camosun's student voice since 1990

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editor's letter Writing in vain

Most evenings when I am required to perform writing for job, for sport, or for the sheer goal of doing more, I do not. The writing doesn't function. It staggers in such a way that empties the words and fills itself with unregulated fervour that allows for little to be understood or admired. The words I write when required, and it seems that we are always required to write at least one thing or two at a time, an assignment, an angered letter, or a post-it note, are forced out of friction and fatigue.

Indeed if I were to be untruthful I would say writing for me has only ever been a pleasant act. But, I am not being untruthful, and writing has always been a violent act that takes more from my personhood than what is financially required of my contract. The process by which I write is transactional—might I just finish this then I may sleep, or eat, or put on a simple-minded television show for the simple mind I leave behind after sitting across a document for very many hours. There is a hope that once I finish there is no more writing to ever be done in my lifetime.

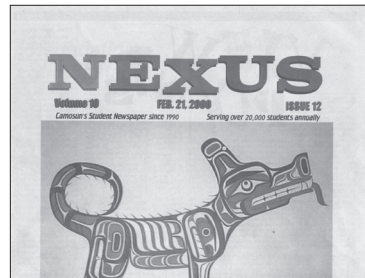
Most times, the "process" by which I write is dominated by the sight of my keys, mapping out words and unmapping them (for this, I get my nails done pretty so the unmapping doesn't appear so wounding). Like spelling out secrets with a document back and forth, I pry away at stilted intrigue, desperate for what may come of the "process." But writing is a medium that demands patience and resentment and pressure. Writing happens not simply because it did but because through patience and resentment and pressure, it still did.

Why I write, and continue to weather the medium, is for what I find of myself when pushed into the lair of uncertainty and for who I find within its tensions and resistance. For these are the days which are met with intimate reflection, and a profound personal reconciliation with writing, and its "process." But, too, and indeed more so, there are days with which all that is found of myself is a bitter urge to abscond.

Lydia Zuleta Johnson, student editor
lydia@nexusnewspaper.com

flashback

25 Years Ago in Nexus



LYDIA ZULETA JOHNSON
STUDENT EDITOR

Safety net: It's a dangerous world, they say. Bombs, electrical storms, and hostage situations loom over the cautious. The Big One is said to arrive any minute, and many, if not most, are unprepared. But Camosun was, and they were prepped for *all-things* crisis. In our February 21, 2000 issue, we covered what Camosun had covered (and what it didn't) in the case of serious emergency. Located on seismically active land, "all bets are off" in the case of major earthquakes, said then Camosun safety manager Carter MacDonald in this issue. But in the case of hostage-taking, severe weather, and bomb-threat concerns, he suggests referring back to the holy book: the Camosun College Emergency Preparedness and Procedures Handbook.

Cheap date: The universal college student diet famously consists of three foods: noodles, beer, and aspirin. But what if, for only \$22.95, a student could dine in luxury? This issue, we covered the Classroom Restaurant taking patrons by storm. And it's no wonder: a four course meal under \$100 is hard to come by. With the labour of Professional Cook Training program students backing the kitchen, the restaurant was well-equipped. The Classroom Restaurant is still running at Camosun's Interurban campus, with new pricing (\$64.95, plus tax and gratuity), but one can still expect a 4.8-star experience.

Lumberjacks and limericks: There are offbeat writers, and then there is Brian Brett, a lumberjack prose poet with a deep admiration for food and the "c" word. In this issue, *Nexus* writer Lisa Hamilton spoke with the daring writer on his series of readings, "I Want to Serve Food to Strangers," at Camosun. The series is staged as a meal, and for dessert, Hamilton says, Brett "indulged the crowd with a taste of the erotic." Indeed it was erotic: Brett's magic steamed up Wilna Thomas 234, says Hamilton. Beware.

open space

Interurban parking a disaster and only getting worse

JAXSON SMITH PETERSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Over the last few years, parking at Camosun College's Interurban campus has become one of the biggest inconveniences facing the student body. This is the worst it's ever been, and there are no signs that the college is planning on doing anything to fix the issue.

Before the fall 2024 semester started, several rows of parking spots in the lot behind the Alex & Jo Campbell Centre for Health and Wellness building were changed

moving forward is. The Camosun website states that upwards of 14,000 learners attend Camosun, either at Interurban, Lansdowne, online, or some combination of the three. The website also includes that there are over 2,300 trades students, which will surely benefit Victoria and surrounding areas moving forward. But even taking public transit into consideration, there's still a serious lack of parking for trades students.

This leads them to the other parking lots, further exasperating

Some students have taken to parking on the grass by the parking lots. And while it gets you to class, you just might have to deal with a boot on your car and a hefty fine when you return.

to staff parking. This may be helpful for staff, however, it made the situation worse for students. Out of desperation I have on occasion parked in one of these new staff spots, risking a ticket just to make it to my midterm on time.

It seems that I am far from the only person who is acting out of desperation to get a parking spot. Some students have taken to parking on the grass by the parking lots. And while it gets you to class, you just might have to deal with a boot on your car and a hefty fine when you return.

If you're a student reading this who primarily or exclusively has classes at the Lansdowne campus, you have no idea how good you have it. I have had several classes at Lansdowne during my time at Camosun, and not once have I been unable to find parking. It's such a refreshing experience to not have to show up 30 minutes early to find a spot; sometimes I'll go there just to study.

Back to reality at Interurban, where the entirety of my program

the issue for students in other programs. I don't mean to point fingers at the trades students, as the opposite is also true. Many students in non-trades programs will head over to the lots by the Bhalla Centre for Trades Education and Innovation or the Jack White Building.

It's a vicious cycle, leaving every person fending for themselves while just hoping to get to class on time. I truly don't think it's unreasonable that students with a 10:30 am class should be able to find a parking spot if they show up at 10:00 am. However, the reality is far from that.

So, what's the solution?

There are a couple of options. The college could look into leasing the chained off and unused parking lot at the Vancouver Island Technology Park

Or, they could invest in the growing student body who waste several hours of valuable studying time every week driving around in circles by building another parking lot.

Either way, something needs to be done.

Something on your mind? If you're a Camosun student, get in touch with us with your *Open Space* idea! Email editor@nexusnewspaper.com. Include your student number. Thanks!

NEXUS

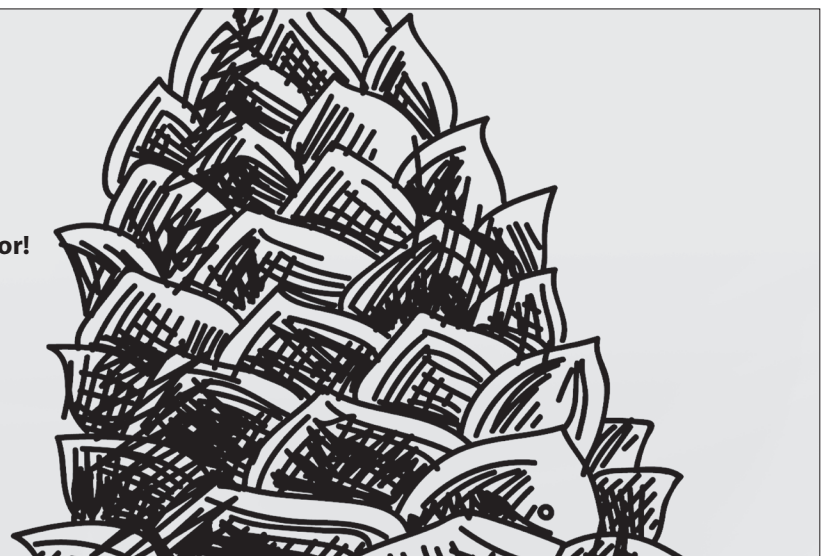
camosun's student voice since 1990

Something on your mind? Write a letter to the editor!

Email editor@nexusnewspaper.com.

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college

Camosun projects \$3-million deficit this fiscal year, president says “we can get to the other side”

GREG PRATT
MANAGING EDITOR

Dealing with a \$5-million loss of revenue from international tuition, Camosun College has announced a projected \$3-million deficit for this fiscal year, which ends March 31. The college expects another \$5-million loss of tuition next fiscal with a further drop in international student enrolment, creating a cumulative \$10-million loss.

Camosun president Lane Trotter says that the deficit is linked “clearly” to international student numbers.

“At the start of this current fiscal year, almost a year ago, we were looking at 2,200 [international] students then, and that was based on the trends that we saw of students coming in,” says Trotter. “For next fiscal year, which starts April 1, we’re looking at 1,200 international students. So how things changed so rapidly in that year is in September 2024, our numbers were just over 1,800. In January, just a month ago,

our numbers were approximately 1,600, and then as we look at... the number of students coming in and the number of students who are graduating and leaving, we’re projecting 1,200 next year. So that’s a swing of 1,000 students. The impact on that is very dramatic and very immediate, which is where that cumulative \$10-million—at least \$10-million—deficit comes from.”

Camosun’s budget this fiscal year is \$179 million; approximately 45 percent of that comes from a grant the college gets from the province, while tuition makes up 33 percent, almost \$60 million. Of the 33 percent, international enrolment accounts for \$34 million, or 19 percent of total revenue.

The college is mandated to run a break-even budget, so it implemented measures such as an essential spending freeze (no travel expenses reimbursed, no Christmas party), keeping vacant positions unfilled, and instituting layoffs. In a February 5, 2025 email to em-

ployees, the college wrote, “The layoff process started in fall 2024 and is still ongoing. Unfortunately, there is not a firm timeline of when it will end.”

Trotter says that while the 2024/25 and 2025/26 fiscal years will run at deficits, Camosun’s proposed plan to get back to a break-even budget—a plan it has to have if it’s running a deficit, and must be approved by the minister of post-secondary education and future skills, and the minister of finance—should see the college with a balanced budget for the 2026/27 fiscal year, something that, as of now, Trotter defends as feasible.

“I’m going to use a word that sometimes reporters hate: it *depends* on factors we don’t know,” he says. “With what we know right now, we think we can get to the other side, and we’ve done this without cancelling programs. We’re working with other agencies on some of the services that we were previously looking at, and we’ll work with those

“The impact [of international enrolment] is very dramatic and very immediate.”

LANE TROTTER
CAMOSUN COLLEGE

agencies to work together to deliver those services, because that’s also within their mandate.”

Trotter admits that the cost-cutting decisions have been difficult, and says that it’s been hard on morale.

“These are colleagues, and friends. These are people we’ve known for a long time,” says Trotter. “And it’s not just them—it’s their families that are being impacted. We worry about all our colleagues and employees at this institution... I wish there was another way forward, but we have to align our expenses to the revenue that’s coming in, and that’s what we’re doing, and... Yeah, that’s what we’re doing.”

The college “doesn’t have a lot of manoeuvring room,” says Trotter, as it’s looking at a \$10 million cumulative loss in tuition.

“This is all happening when we were just named one of the top employers in the province,” he says (see *News Briefs*, below). “And the level of irony in that is significant.”

Trotter says that he understands that Camosun students are worried, and he stresses that despite rumours of programs being cut, that’s not the case.

“Continue to take your courses and programs; we have no plans to cancel courses and programs,” he says. “If you’re in a program, you will finish that program.”

services

Peer Pods program offers support to students



PHOTO PROVIDED

Camosun Peer Pods student facilitators; the program was launched this semester.

SANTIAGO VAZQUEZ-FUERTES
SENIOR WRITER

Camosun College has launched a new program to help students feel supported as they transition into post-secondary life. Many students struggle with loneliness, stress, and mental-health challenges—Peer Pods is designed to address these issues and give students a sense of belonging.

Camosun students lead the Peer Pods groups, which meet each week for one hour. The meetings range from workshops to more relaxed

hangouts, with occasional guest speakers. Camosun director of Student Affairs Laura Mitchell and Astronomy and Physics instructor Christopher Avis created Peer Pods after seeing the success of a similar program at another institution.

“The idea actually came from something we did at Concordia University in Montreal when I was there,” says Mitchell. “That was during pandemic times, when we heard from our students that they were feeling very disconnected, and it was really hard for new stu-

dents to make friends and meet one another.”

Initially, they planned to launch the program for the fall 2025 semester, but after analyzing some surveys on how students are struggling, they’ve decided to launch it for this semester.

“There’s been a few surveys done,” says Avis. “Through counselling and through the student experience survey that speaks to the kind of mental health, loneliness and isolation... So this is kind of an initiative designed to try to address some of that.”

There are sessions at both campuses; the “pods” meet at least once a week.

“It’s led by student facilitators... and the idea was to kind of create a space of safety and authenticity,” says Avis. “We wanted it to be led by students, but the students are supported by folks in the orientation and transition staff so that they have someone to reach out to if there’s something that isn’t working well or there’s a student in crisis.”

Although experts come to talk to students in some of the sessions, Avis says that the pods do not feel like lectures.

“[We alternate between] sessions that are kind of more around skill building and sessions where the group just gets to hang out and forge those social connections,” says Avis. “Even with the skill-building sessions, we’re trying not to make it too much like a lecture... We want it to be like a dialogue. The idea is also that the Peer Pods facilitators are going to be plugged into these resources so that, hopefully, they can be like mentors for their students and guide them toward the appropriate people.”

Avis adds that the facilitators are more than capable of helping the students go through their struggles and help them succeed.

“This doesn’t work with the wrong people in it,” he says. “And they’re the kind of people that just seemingly have this gift for putting people at ease.”

Avis says that the program is

taking any feedback to improve and help the students.

“I would invite students that are curious about it, that actually have some ideas about what students need, to let us know through the facilitators how we can better meet their needs,” he says.

Mitchell says that thus far the feedback they’ve received has been positive but that they’re open to suggestions wherever students see fit.

“We’ve had some really nice emails and connections so far from students saying how happy they are that this exists,” says Mitchell. “So we will be really closely evaluating it this semester so that we can make sure that we are meeting the needs of the students and their reality.”

For those unsure of joining, Avis says Peer Pods is welcoming to all.

“I think there’s probably something really validating and reassuring to hear other people talk about some of the things that you’re struggling with,” he says.

Registration for Peer Pods is open on the college’s website.

NEWS BRIEFS

Camosun creates Black History Month book guide

During the month of February, the Camosun library is featuring an online guide to literature celebrating contributions by Black Canadians. The guide, put together for Black History Month, features a range of fiction, non-fiction, and children’s books available year-round in the library. Books are accessible and on display at both Interurban and Lansdowne campus libraries. See the guide online at camosun.

libguides.com/blackhistorymonth for more information.

Trade programs receive \$1-million donation

The Camosun College trade programs have received a \$1-million donation from Highstreet, a Kelowna-based real-estate developer, to support the programs’ education initiatives. The donation will go toward trades student financial awards and bursaries for women in trades. Additionally, the money will support opportunities for high-school students to engage

early with trades, provide a trades summer program aimed at students Grade 7 to 9, and offer funding to students who have already completed Foundation training through the South Island Partnership.

Camosun named one of BC’s top employers

Camosun College was recently named one of the top employers in the province in an annual competition. The list of 100 employers, put together by employment-periodical publisher Mediagroup Canada

Inc., acknowledges companies that excel in recruitment and retention. On the list of winners this year, it mentions that Camosun, who has 1,066 full-time employees, “provides generous mental health practitioner coverage as part of the health benefits plan, to \$3,000 annually.” See the whole list at canadastop100.com/bc.

Crystal Pool Referendum passes

On Saturday, February 8, the preliminary results for the Crystal Pool Referendum were

announced. A majority, 58.71 percent, voted in favour of the City of Victoria borrowing up to \$168,900,000 for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre. Additionally, 60.57 percent voted for Central Park North, over Central Park South, as the location for the development. The total registered voter turnout was 21.18 percent.

—LYDIA ZULETA JOHNSON,
STUDENT EDITOR AND GREG PRATT, MANAGING EDITOR

LYDIA@NEXUSNEWSPAPER.COM

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instructors

Nominations open for Camosun Teacher Recognition Awards



PHOTO PROVIDED

Instructors at last year's Teacher Recognition Awards ceremony; 2025 will be the fourth year of the awards.

SANTIAGO VAZQUEZ-FUERTES
SENIOR WRITER

Nominations are open for Camosun College's fourth annual Teacher Recognition Awards, a ceremony that celebrates teachers who go above and beyond to ensure their students have success.

Camosun's Teaching and Learning Council created this award as a way to celebrate great teachers.

"A few years ago, we were trying to think of a way to acknowledge all the great work that our colleagues do," says Camosun Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning education developer Martha McAl-

ister. "We thought, 'Why don't we create an award and really focus it on having a chance for students to let us know and to acknowledge the great teachers that they have?' So that was the idea. We wanted it to be very democratic. Everybody who's nominated gets acknowledged, so it's not competitive."

Initially, McAlister didn't know if the students would get behind the awards. However, the reaction surprised her.

"We've been so amazed," she says. "We had no idea that students were going to be so keen to share beautiful, heartwarming, uplifting

stories about their teachers... At first, we thought it might be more colleagues and fellow instructors that [would be] putting forward nominations. We didn't realize that students, who are so busy right now, take time out of their busy lives to acknowledge their teachers; it really means a lot."

Twenty-seven teachers were nominated the first year the event took place, 28 in the second year, and 40 last year. McAlister says it's important to recognize great teaching.

"So many of the teachers I know are very hard-working and

"We've been so amazed. We had no idea that students were going to be so keen to share beautiful, heartwarming, uplifting stories about their teachers."

MARTHA MCALISTER
CAMOSUN COLLEGE

don't often get to have that kind of positive feedback so directly," she says. "I think, especially these days, there's a lot of challenges going on in post-secondary. There's a lot of stress and this is just an opportunity to focus on what's good."

McAlister sees this ceremony as a rare opportunity for students to directly give meaningful feedback to teachers who have made a difference in their lives. Also, the awards have evolved throughout the years, allowing the students to have more power. McAlister says the biggest change was to make the the previously staff-led nominations student-led. By allowing these changes, the Teacher Recognition Award is now more reflective of student experiences (for a nomination to be valid, at least two students have to submit it).

"At first, we made it so that it was for staff people to submit the nomination," says McAlister. "But when we saw the response from students, we realized, let's just open it up... So that was a big change we

made to make it more accessible for students. We also made the word count, so they need to submit a testimonial about why they want to nominate their teacher [that's] between 100 to 250 words."

A great teacher could change a student's life for the better. McAlister says some students have been close to quitting, but teachers have been able to help them get through their struggles.

"We've heard from students who have said that their teachers were life-changing for them," she says. "Students may be going through a difficult time, and their teachers just going that extra mile, to reach out and provide extra support to the student, that made such a difference. Sometimes, students have said they were ready to quit, and the teacher really believed in them and helped them through a difficult time."

Nominations will remain open until Friday, February 28. The date of the award ceremony has not yet been determined.

sobriety

Reflections in recovery

JASMINE WAGSTAFF
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It's a weird feeling, being 22 years old and two years sober. I never thought I would get this far, but I'm very grateful I have.

My drinking started young, but really picked up in high school. I still managed to do well in all my classes, so I wasn't too worried at first. However, I had this nagging feeling that something about my relationship with alcohol just wasn't right. That maybe I shouldn't need vodka in my morning coffee to make my hands stop shaking or be hungover every other day of the week.

My friends knew I had a problem long before I did. I was hurt when they started calling me out, but I'm grateful now that they cared so much.

I first sought help with my drinking when I was 17. I did counselling, tried out meetings; all the usual things. I still didn't think alcohol was the problem—I thought my mental health was the thing that made my drinking worse. Turns out I needed help with both.

I was stuck in a cycle for a few years before I managed to seek proper help. I would drink too much for months, quit for two or three months, think I could manage it, and start drinking again. Eventually I realized I was running in circles and I wanted to finally quit for good,

My friends knew I had a problem long before I did. I was hurt when they started calling me out, but I'm grateful now that they cared so much.

but it took about a year until I could do that.

When I was 20, I had an apartment that I shared with a roommate and I was spending all my spare money on alcohol; it wasn't long until I had to dip into my savings to keep up my habit. That's when I knew I needed help and I couldn't do this on my own.

I finally told my therapist that I thought I had a problem and she gave me some extra resources to reach out to. That was the jumpstart my recovery journey needed.

The first year was, to put it gently, rough. My main coping skill was gone and I had to learn how to deal with all the feelings I had been avoiding over the past few years. It felt like my mental-health issues got worse, but those feelings were always there. All that changed was that I wasn't burying them anymore. The cravings were intense those first few months, but I learned how to resist those urges. I stayed in my little recovery bubble—all I went to

was work, therapy, and meetings. I learned a lot of skills to help me cope with everything going on in my life and I slowly began putting myself back together.

During my second year sober, life got busy: I started school, I was still working. I didn't put as much time or effort into my recovery as I did at the start. It was a big change for me and I was really scared at first. In college, I was surrounded by all kinds of people; I wasn't in my cozy recovery bubble anymore. I had to relearn how to socialize with people and manage the new stresses in my life.

I'm open about my recovery journey and I hope that my experiences can help others reach out for help if they are also struggling. And I'm grateful to all the people who've helped me get to this point; they helped me realize that I couldn't do this alone. I've worked hard to get where I am now. I've just passed the two-year mark and I've never been as happy as I am today.

eyed on campus

Getting artsy



GREG PRATTI/NEXUS

Camosun student and Nexus writer Ray Nufer's photography is on display in the Young Building this month along with art from other students.

burlesque

Isle of Tease returns to showcase diversity in burlesque

“You will see a very unique energy throughout the week.”

CHERRY CHEEKS
ISLE OF TEASE

ACACIA TOOTH
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Isle of Tease has become one of the most anticipated burlesque shows of the year. Event co-producer Cherry Cheeks says that Isle of Tease, which brings together performers from local and afar, means a lot for the island burlesque community.

“I’m always excited for the local performers... [They] get to be on a theatre stage and get to connect with the bigger community outside Victoria,” says Cheeks.

Cheeks says that the idea to produce a large-scale show came from the talents, devotion, and love from three locals who knew that Victoria needed a chance to be on the burlesque map.

“[Starting] in 2019, Gala Vega, Champagne Sparkles, and Misty Moss were the producers,” says Cheeks. “Victoria had been having this really cool gradual

and fast growth in the burlesque community.”

In 2023, Cheeks was invited to co-produce Isle of Tease. With her passion in creating and decolonizing spaces for POC individuals to thrive and be uplifted, she says they are curating a festival that showcases performers from diverse experiences and identities.

“[We include] accessible workshops, and a quiet area for people to decompress,” they say. “Intersectionality is something that I am personally very passionate about.”

The headlining performer this year is San Francisco’s Frankie Fictitious, who will be taking the stage in Victoria following her Australian tour. Other performers include local talent such as Vancouver Island’s daddy of drag Eddi Licious, New York’s Brooklyn-bred bombshell Queerly Femmetastic, and Vancouver’s sapphic angst La Dame

Derriere. Cheeks says that the small change from three headliners to one is a decision that benefits all.

“This year we shifted to have one main headliner and some feature spots that are for some new up-and-coming performers starting to get their name out there,” they say.

This year there are 42 performers, including 11 locals and MCs; Scarlet Delirium, Missy Ink, Winter Sinclair, and Tomboy Selleck are a few others performing. Aside from the performances, there are opportunities to learn from the performers at workshops. Mx. Pucks A’Plenty, Obscura Fox, Misty Moss, Khushi, and others will be sharing inspiration and knowledge.

There’s also a community that steps up to help every year. Last year there was a total of 40 volunteers involved with the fest, and that number is set to be around the same for 2025.

“This year it is really awesome because so many people started reaching out to us offering support, looking to fill positions to help with planning the festival,” says Cheeks. “I am excited and keen for this year to see the turnout with the audience and how many people are excited to continue to support us.”

While building safe spaces is a priority for Cheeks, there are other driving forces behind the fest.

“You will see a very unique



PHOTO PROVIDED

San Francisco’s Frankie Fictitious is headlining this year’s Isle of Tease.

energy throughout the week,” they say. “It’s really important to emphasize the importance of diversity and highlighting diverse experiences, whether POC, people with disabilities, [or] queer identifying.”

Isle of Tease
7 pm Friday, February 21
and 7 pm Saturday, February 22
Victoria Conference Centre
isloftease.com

survival

How to form and cure a headache

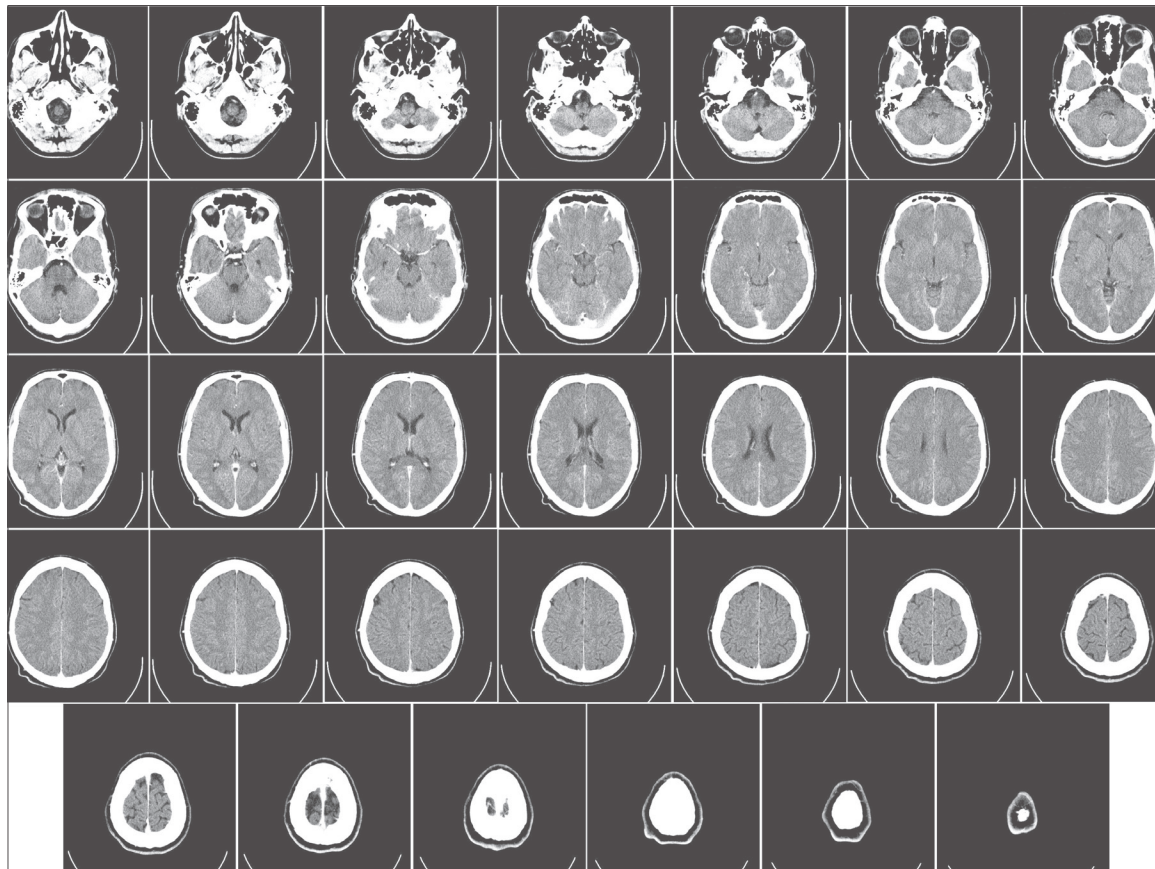


PHOTO PROVIDED

A computed tomography of the brain, from the base of the skull to the top of the skull.

LYDIA ZULETA JOHNSON
STUDENT EDITOR

For the past decade, the conditions have tired the body. They’ve tired the mind, most particularly. For the past decade, the world has been imposed on its consumers far more than they would like, and a collective headache has spread a throbbing dull discomfort. The occipital lobes have been shot by the blaring blue light of mass media, and the somatosensory cortex has

seen better days before the sun stole the Earth. And when one even attempts to step away from the conditions, maybe they visit a forest or a lake, or if they’re desperate, a nap, the deep sounds of a roaring highway pierce through the mirage of tranquility.

But it isn’t all bad. There are moments. There are whispers of aspirin softening the tensed collective frontal lobe. There are moments where one escapes. And when they

come, it is most often in the form of guilty pleasures.

Below crumpled receipts and forgotten dinner mints, floating, isolated, lonesome in the corner of one’s bag or purse or knapsack, is, if they are lucky, one loose cigarette, flaccid, with lint packed in with the tobacco. Where it comes from cannot be sure. Taken off a friend or passerby during a particularly demanding time, or perhaps it isn’t even the cigarette that is unfamiliar

There are whispers of aspirin softening the tensed collective frontal lobe. There are moments where one escapes.

but the bag. In any case, the cigarette, beyond where it originates or its implications, is affirming to the mind untreated. The cigarette is not *healthy* by the standards of those who invented the term, and healthy life is certainly what most critically look to for false assurance of long-term security, but health in the form of dread is no better than heart disease. To cure a headache there must be sacrifices. To find solace from all existential conditions there must be compromise. And to reduce any additional troubles long term, use a match, not a lighter.

If the home one resides in is smoking-friendly, or perhaps is at least forgiving, burning a solo cigarette while submerged in a scalding hot bath may speed up a patient’s headache pain relief from far too many hours of contemplation. Indeed a bath too deep for movement, and too hot to ponder is medicine in an oversaturated world. A bath bomb may be too topical, so reaching for bath salts or bubbles poses less as an *aide-memoire*. There are severe cases of 21st century headaches, with which one is too long exposed to cruel *politik* on the internet that they begin engaging in apathetic tendencies. In these cases,

becoming increasingly ubiquitous, a dose of spending the entire day in the bath is permitted, and in fact necessary to ease their tension and anxiety.

Many people find the hours around dinnertime pose the most threat to their headaches. But it has been long established to cure an anxious mind by a sleeve of saltines. Rather than skittering across the kitchen, aimlessly trying to find the produce one purchased the preceding week and discovering it moulded in the crisper, reaching for an entire sleeve of saltines is as beneficial to one’s health as it can be. Musing on serious issues, ones not only facing today but future issues that face many, is bad for the appetite, too, so the limited variety of flavours and colours and textures found in saltine crackers aids both in digestion and repression.

Finding balance, they are saying, is in mode. Chic even. Choosing, with intention, to take the escalator rather than the stairs, but doing so rather than seldom travelling upward. This is how one must operate to keep the mind in stasis. Choosing here not for the remedy but the sedative, and the sedative over madness.

ACROSS THE

The spark that

Story by Leia Grace Elaine

The decision to move to Canada probably started many years ago without my even realizing it. Looking back, I've always been a nomad, independently chasing my dreams within my home country—the Philippines, a nation of 7,641 islands.

I was 19 when I decided to leave my hometown and explore life beyond my comfort zone. In another province, 1,048 kilometres away, I took the criminologist licensure examination to pursue my dream of becoming a police officer. And during this time, while I was immersed in my studies, one of my lecturers offered me a teaching job, empowering me with the words: “You know how to simplify the concepts... you can teach.”

Fast forward: I spend 13 years teaching as a criminal justice professor, I complete my master's degree and doctorate to pursue the highest education possible in criminology. I move to four different cities alone, assimilate into other cultures and learn new languages—different languages, because my home country has 210 dialects. Back home, moving just two hours away from one city to another often meant facing an entirely new language barrier, making every move both a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

After completing my doctorate with the highest honours, I assumed life would be easier with executive-level education, but that was probably one of my biggest mistakes. Life got busier. I taught at three schools, advised six criminology researchers, and the work-life balance I had dreamed of seemed so far away. I wanted to stop, take things slowly, travel abroad, and see what life looked like from afar.

But then my brother was hospitalized for a week; public hospitals were full, and private hospitals were the only option. My savings were wiped away in the blink of an eye. And while I tried applying for an executive position, I was only met with rejection as the other applicant was male. Despite not having completed a PhD—the primary qualification—he was perceived as a better leader due to toxic masculinity embedded in the workplace culture.

I found myself wanting a break from teaching to save my sanity. So when I got married and the conversation about moving to another country came up, I simply said, “Sure, let's do it.”

Taking the leap

After submitting my resignation letters, I felt a fleeting moment of freedom at the thought of starting something new. Leaving my friends and family behind was nothing unfamiliar for me—I had already been following wherever my job took me across the archipelago for 13 years. But, reminded of the words my mom said to me—“I raised you to be brave... but I never thought you would be so brave that you'd only visit me once a year”—it was entirely expected that when I told her I was moving to Canada, she smiled and said, “So, no visit once a year now?”

We considered several countries, but Canada had the most straightforward student-visa application process. There were many resources online, along with thousands of vloggers documenting their journeys. When it came to choosing a city, Victoria topped the list when we Googled “warmest place in Canada.” Camosun College was not initially my top choice, but their international counsellor, who responded quickly to inquiries, made all the difference. Camosun felt welcoming.

In the summer of 2023, we finally boarded the plane to start our new beginning. I knew it wouldn't be easy—life rarely gets easier, we just grow stronger.

A world of surprises

Iknew deer only from Christmas fiction and songs, but there it was, right in front of me: a real deer, standing at a pedestrian crossing on a highway—the first of many culture shocks I would experience.

Leaving buses, I noticed people saying “thank you” before getting off. I was confused—should we say it too? Was it mandatory? The bus driver even responded with “Have a good day!” That level of courtesy was something I had never experienced back home.

Drinking water straight from the tap was another challenge. My brain was conditioned to believe that one sip could result in an instant trip to the hospital. Back home, the water-purification industry is a booming business and will likely remain that way for years to come. Memories of budgeting my salary to buy filtered water during my early working life revealed to me how fortunate I was to be in a country where I had access to clean water.

One of my first connections in Victoria was through the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association, which arranged a Filipino summer picnic at Beckwith Park, where I was happy to see people from my country and enjoy familiar foods like chicken adobo and pancit. It was also my first time using a public washroom that provided free sanitary products. I took a picture and showed it to my friend back home, who was just as shocked as me—these are small reminders of what people often take for granted. This country offers services that are considered rights for many, but back home, they are seen as privileges. There are tourist spots in the Philippines where you literally have to pay for washrooms, especially in public parks.

Missing home, finding my place

Since I was used to being away from my family, homesickness did not hit me until a few months later. I remember passing by St. Andrew's Cathedral and hearing a Filipino Christmas song—it made my eyes well up with tears. I finally realized how much I missed my country: the way people get excited for the holidays, the kids singing Christmas songs on the streets, and how the season brings hope for the new year. It was my first Christmas away from home, and I was studying while working three jobs at the same time—two on campus, and one in a local bookstore. We didn't do anything special for the holidays. New Year's came and went with no grand fireworks. New Year's Eve was silent, just another day, unlike the grand celebrations back home.

Despite this, Canada is incredibly diverse, and it was comforting to know that many people around me were also new to this country. As someone who had experienced discrimination in my home country due to different languages and dialects, I was familiar with the fear of being an outsider. I thought English was the only common language here, but I was pleasantly surprised when I became active in the Filipino community centre and found myself surrounded by fellow Filipinos, all speaking different dialects. It was reassuring to be in a room where three dialects were being spoken simultaneously—and I could understand all of them. It felt like home. The years I spent moving around the Philippines finally paid off, unexpectedly.

It amazed me how the centre, established by volunteers in 1991, had grown into a solid community. The Bayanihan Community Centre in Victoria was named after the Filipino tradition of *bayanihan*, which means helping each other. This tradition

THE PACIFIC

It led me here

Unarce, contributing writer

comes from an old practice where neighbours would lift and carry an entire house to help a family move. Many rural homes in the Philippines are made of bamboo, wood, and nipa palm, making them light and easy to relocate when needed. The centre was living proof of our collectivist culture—the inclination to form groups, organize events for the common good, cook food, and share meals while reminiscing about life back in the Philippines.

It made me consider that if these people made it, if they were able to succeed in this country, then maybe I had a chance too. Even now, I look forward to visiting the centre, knowing that someone will surely ask, *Kumain ka na? May pagkain pa diyan*, which means, “Have you eaten? There’s food over there.” A small gesture, a large embrace.

Work, friends, and growth

I was comfortable speaking English until I realized that conversational English was entirely different. At first, it was difficult to translate my thoughts and keep a conversation flowing. To overcome this, I volunteered at numerous events while waiting for classes to start. I signed up for whatever was available; my first volunteer role was as a traffic enforcer along Belleville Street during the Tour de Victoria cycling event. That experience taught me a valuable lesson—always check first before signing up. I didn’t expect to direct traffic without knowing the traffic rules.

Once school began, I accepted a position with the Camosun College Student Society (CCSS), which gave me the opportunity to connect with students and form new friendships. At Camosun, it was a blessing to be in a diverse group where we could ask questions without fear of judgment.

I also fulfilled my dream of working in a bookstore; I worked alone, preparing hundreds of items to be sold every day, finding new homes for old books. My grades were good; work was fun. I was living the good life.

But I had to leave that job when I was accepted for a co-op position with the British Columbia Public Service under the Ministry of Government Communications and Public Engagement (GCPE) as an HR assistant. The interview was challenging, but the support from the Camosun Career Lab was paramount. I booked an interview practice session, which was so exhausting that the real interview felt 100 times easier. Even now, I am convinced that I wouldn’t have gotten that job without the mock interview.

With the GCPE team, I was able to comfortably discover my limits and boundaries. Based on my experience back home, situations where I’ve been required to extend a deadline would have led to a memo or indirect blame on the employee. Whereas a new workplace culture could have been daunting, I learned to accept seeking help not as a weakness but as a strength.

I was also elected as the CCSS sustainability director. I was afraid of losing, so I didn’t print any campaign materials or post on social media. I figured that if I lost, at least only a few people would know about it; that would make it easier to accept. I only reached out to close friends to vote for me, and I was surprised when a friend from a different country created a campaign poster for me and shared it on Instagram. That moment already felt like a huge win.

Fortunately, I won the election and was given the opportunity to organize sustainability events, expand my network, and provide social spaces where people could connect while also helping the environment.

Reviving the Muslim Student Alliance at Camosun was also one of my projects; receiving a Camosun international student scholarship as a reward for my good grades and volunteer work was another highlight. As well, I was accepted to participate in two major projects involving women and leadership with a non-profit organization, where I presented research results related to immigrants.

By December last year, I reflected on all the milestones I had reached in such a short time, made possible by the support I received and by the work cultures I was lucky enough to find myself in. I was in a workplace where receiving comments like “You look darker today” didn’t exist and I was in one that didn’t require me to appear a particular way.

I felt confident in my path and in my environment—working hard felt like it was finally paying off.

Blending cultures and blending in

Moving to Canada made me proud to represent my Filipino heritage, but it also humbled me to be part of the Canadian mosaic, where culture is shared. I remember asking my neighbour’s permission the first time we had karaoke in our apartment, offering Filipino food in exchange, which they happily accepted.

We participated in new celebrations, such as Halloween traditions, which I had never experienced before. Back home, Halloween was more about commemorating loved ones who had passed away. We would visit cemeteries, cook their favourite foods, and share memories of them. So, don’t blame me that I first assumed that wearing costumes or trick-and-treating would feel weird. Did I ever have that wrong. On Halloween, I begged a friend to let me join her son for trick-or-treating. That night was unforgettable. The excitement of waiting for people to open their doors and hand out candy, the adorable costumes, and the happiness on people’s faces was absolute bliss. I regretted not having this experience as a child.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons I learned in Canada is how easy it is to say sorry; thank you; have a great day. Words are powerful, and I hope people find comfort in hearing them. Because I won’t ever get tired of saying “thank you” to bus drivers and them responding with a “have a great day!”

Looking back, moving forward

When I was invited to share my story, I was clear that I wouldn’t write about my struggles but rather my growth. Maybe it’s because the challenges I encountered here were nothing compared to the hardships back home, where I constantly felt division between the rich and the poor, where even basic human rights come at a price. I will forever be grateful for all that this country has provided for an outsider like me.

Looking back, every choice I made, every risk, challenge, and unexpected turn led me here. Canada was never part of my plan, but it became where I rediscovered myself. Moving here isn’t just about adjusting to a new life; it’s about letting go of who I am and making space for who I can become.

I still miss home, but I’ve also built a new home here through the friendships I’ve made, the small wins that remind me I’m on the right track, and the moments of kindness I see every day.

For anyone thinking about making the big move, it won’t be easy, but you’ll be stronger than you ever thought possible. Keep your heart open, and you’ll realize that home isn’t just a place—it’s something you carry with you.

stage

The Killing Game tragedy encased in absurdist hilarity

LANE CHEVRIER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Absurdism is a philosophical movement arguing that the universe is illogical and meaningless, and absurdist theatre, such as Eugene Ionesco's *The Killing Game*, highlights this through a study of ridiculous human nature in response to extreme tragedy.

Although written in 1970, *The Killing Game*, being presented through UVic's Phoenix Theatre, will feel familiar to modern audiences as it revolves around an outbreak of a deadly epidemic that mows through a French city, cutting its citizens down like wheat before a scythe. Scores of theories arise about the origin of the disease, whether it be a natural disaster or a "planned accident," a conspiratorial plot.

The play is directed by UVic theatre professor Conrad Alexandrowicz, who believes that the real arrowhead of the work is lodged in a biting critique of human judgment within overwhelming situations.

"Over the course of working on this piece, I realized that it could be about a different kind of crisis," says Alexandrowicz. "It's not really about a deadly epidemic, it's a satire on people's folly, bad behaviour, criminality. It could be something else that [Ionesco] had chosen to reveal all these things. It presents a very dim view of humanity, indeed."

The real-life roots of absurd-



DEAN KALYAN

The Killing Game uses absurdist comedy to address serious issues; the play runs at UVic's Phoenix Theatre this month.

ism have a much darker history, emerging in the wake of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Senseless horrors such as this are so incomprehensible it creates a void of trauma within a culture, and absurdist comedy is a way of resolving the unresolvable.

"The Holocaust was kind of the ultimate absurdity because it was kind of like a factory, an in-

dustrial operation that produced a negation," says Alexandrowicz. "It didn't produce goods, it produced this vast emptiness, where millions of people have been killed for no reason, except they were of a particular ethnicity, race, political opinion, or religious belief."

The crux of comedy in absurdist theatre is that some tragedies are so beyond our comprehension that

the result of our inability to process it is uncontrollable, inappropriate laughter, says Alexandrowicz, and this phenomenon is underscored in the satire of *The Killing Game*.

"The absurdist were very much about the way the comic and the tragic are intertwined, it's not an either/or proposition. We laugh at things that are horrible sometimes, and I've really tried to go as far as I

could with that idea," he says. "Of course we laugh at all this ridiculous activity and nonsense and insane beliefs that people hold. It makes people dropping dead mostly hilarious, and I'm really pushing the comedic aspect of this because I think that's what [Ionesco] intends us to experience."

Theatre-goers who are expecting a traditional story should look elsewhere, says Alexandrowicz, because *The Killing Game* features a non-linear narration with little consistency or coherence, and this ridiculous, unpredictable chaos is iconic of absurdism as a philosophy. However, this doesn't mean that the production will be unenjoyable, says Alexandrowicz; indeed, quite the opposite, as a tremendous amount of fun can be found in satirizing the ridiculous ways that humans fail to cope with unimaginable trauma.

"We're all having a rollicking great time doing it, and there's tons of laughter going on," he says, "so I think it will actually be a really great night out at the theatre for people."

The Killing Game
Various times,
Until Saturday, February 22
Various prices, Phoenix Theatre
phoenixtheatres.ca

stage

Queen Maeve explores forgiveness through fantasy



LAURIE RUBIN

Director Diana Budiachenko (left) and Gloria Snider, who plays Queen Maeve.

RAY NUFER
STUDENT EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Director and set designer Diana Budiachenko is a lover of creating abstraction and fantasy through her theatre productions, so it makes sense that she was excited to take on *Queen Maeve*. Theatre Inconnu's production of Governor General Award winner Judith Thompson's play is a perfect fit for Budiachenko.

"When I read it for the first time, I felt that it is very much my kind of text; it is dark in a way, sarcastic,

hilarious, and it's a perfect balance between reality and a completely different world," says Budiachenko.

Working on this show really provided Budiachenko—who has a master's degree in theatre directing from Ukraine—the chance to delve into the fantasy-like otherworld of the main character's alter ego.

"It's about a woman in a nursery home. It's about her relationships with her caregiver, whom she happens to like; her daughter, whom she can't forgive her past mistakes; and

her grandson," says Budiachenko. "She has dementia, and when she is triggered, she transforms into powerful Queen Maeve."

Budiachenko previously worked on a similar theatre show, *Yaga*, about an eastern European witch.

"This reminds me a little bit of the Ukrainian Yaga, in terms of [being] very powerful, and intimidating at times," she says.

Budiachenko says that, to her, the main theme of *Queen Maeve* is forgiveness.

"Usually when you're in a difficult situation like this, you have two choices," she says. "You can either forgive and work on it, or you take a different route and you accuse that person."

The ordinary-woman-turned-warrior-queen has a pain-stricken and emotionally strained relationship with her daughter, which Budiachenko notes is a staple of Thompson's work.

"Judith Thompson is famous for somewhat dark scripts with complicated characters," she says. "I think this [play] is classic Judith Thompson."

As a director, Budiachenko is inclined towards artistic representations of reality, rather than re-creating reality as we know it. (This will be Budiachenko's first experience working with Theatre Inconnu, and her third production in Victoria.)

"Theatre, at least in the UK

"Theatre, at least in the UK and Europe, is inclined towards the abstract."

DIANA BUDIACHENKO
QUEEN MAEVE

and Europe, is inclined towards the abstract," she says. "We were taught not to copy reality, but to create the environment in which your audience can immerse."

This belief is based in creating an immersive experience for the audience that captures their imaginations.

"I think it's true for all the forms of art—it's the same as painting," says Budiachenko. "[Theatre] kind of takes you away from everything. Any form of art fulfills you in a way that nothing could replace."

Budiachenko says that rather than talking to a set designer and possibly having conflicting ideas or miscommunications, it's easier for some directors to imagine themselves where they would put their actors, how they will move, and how their set will cooperate with their vision.

"My mentor was a set designer and director, so most of the time, when we discussed place—or what we were going to stage—we had to come up with the set design," she says. "It was part of our training."

Time was the main challenge for

Budiachenko in putting the show together; the timeframe for staging a production here is around two months, with around three or four rehearsals per week.

"In the Ukraine, I had a lot more time to stage a production than here. I'm still adjusting to the new reality of how it works," she says. "I'm trying to adapt to what it's like to stage here within the frames and limitations I'm given."

Budiachenko is excited to bring Thompson's fantastical narrative to the stage and to the hearts of the audience.

"For me, theatre is a miracle," says Budiachenko. "When you get immersed in a very different atmosphere, and you feel that miracle is happening, that's a good theatre to me."

Queen Maeve
Various times,
Wednesday, February 19 to
Saturday, March 8
\$12 student tickets,
Theatre Inconnu
(1923 Fernwood Road)
theatreinconnu.com



PIECES OF PERFORMANCE

BY ACACIA TOOTH

Gender witch Brujo Mars/Minx Latinx representing on stage



PHOTO PROVIDED

Venezuelan burlesque performer Minx Latinx also performs as Brujo Mars.

“I want other fellow Latinos, no matter where they are from, to also be proud and celebrate our culture.”

BRUJO MARS/MINX LATINX
BURLESQUE PERFORMER

ACACIA TOOTH
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

They claim themselves lovingly as a gender witch, but audiences know the reigning Venezuelan drag king and burlesque beauty as Brujo Mars, or Minx Latinx (also known as Monika). When they started performing in April 2022, they set out to represent Latinos on stage and share an important story.

“I am extremely proud to be Venezuelan,” they say. “I want other fellow Latinos, no matter where they are from, to also be proud and celebrate our culture.”

They aren’t just active on stage: hairstyling is a passion and love of Monika’s. By providing love and confidence to others, they have also been able to find it in themselves.

“Being a performer has absolutely influenced my day to day,” they say. “I’m more confident and less afraid of being in new spaces where there’s people I don’t know.”

Performance has influenced their life as much as their family has influenced the performances they put on. Carrying their dad’s memory with them, they embody the love and spirit of their father in the persona of Brujo Mars. After losing him they found a perfect way to celebrate the memories that will always carry on. *ColourVision* is a

great production produced by local king Noah Lott that has given POC performers a place to show their heritage and represent their culture and themselves on a stage that’s filled with support for another and the audience that attends the show.

“[One that stands out is] my *ColourVision* [number] dedicated to my dad,” says Monika. “I lost [him] to suicide almost three years ago.”

Another influence on their drag has been none other than their wife and drag king Chelsea (Fierce Brosnan). By being a regular attendee and supporter of Chelsea, they saw the awe of the crowd and knew it was time for Latino representation to be centre stage. With the support of Chelsea and experience in the drag community, there was no better time than now. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t nerves involved.

“I’m pretty nervous regardless of if I’m doing drag or burlesque. I eat... Have a coffee,” they say. “Make sure I have everything I need ready to go and listen to my songs a few times. Nap if I can.”

It’s been an up and down couple of years with the loss of local venues, which has impacted communities on so many levels. While we have our chosen families and ones we can count on, there’s always a reminder

that we need to be good to each other. These times are tough, and the pushback in politics try to stand against who we are as individuals.

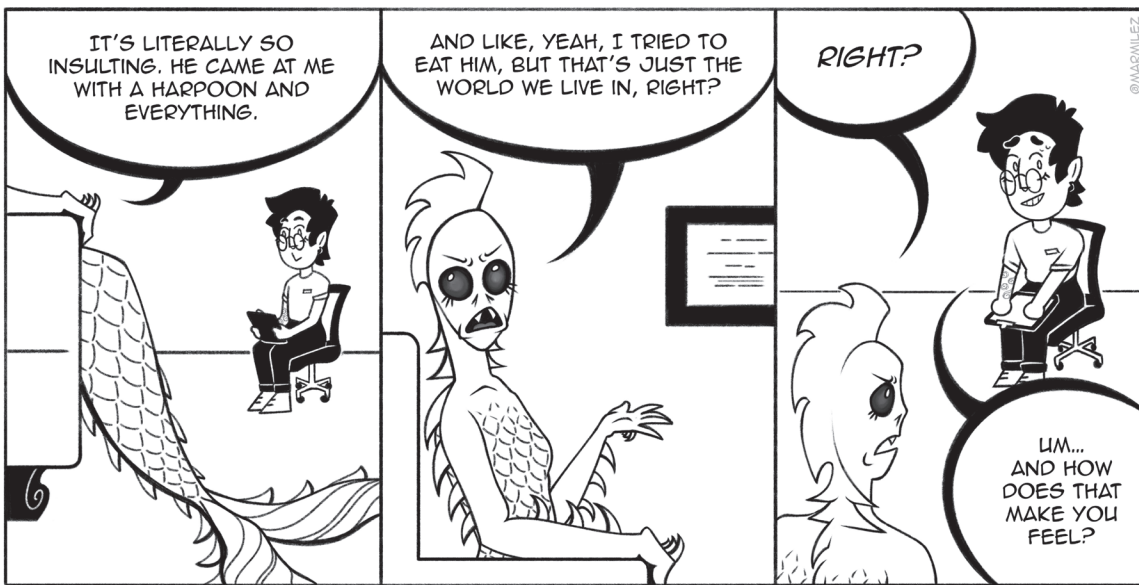
“I think more community solidarity in general would be amazing,” Monika says, looking at the future of performance through all of this. “Ask each other questions and holding space.”

There will always be spaces where white voices and colonially educated voices will take the forefront, but we need to be listening to those who are marginalized and spoken over. People who say they are true allies need to stand up and support.

With the US taking a stand on immigration that hopefully will not pour over into Canada, it’s worth noting that our voices unified can create change and hope for the future of others. Monika has worries for fellow Latinos and immigrants who may be in danger of deportation and harm. With administration ending the protection of Venezuelans, it’s worth taking a moment and recognizing that we are all deserving of kindness, equal opportunities, and love.

You can follow Monika on Instagram at @brujo.mars and @minxlatinx.

Dr. Mythic - Miles Roever



Meanwhile... - Nelson Bath



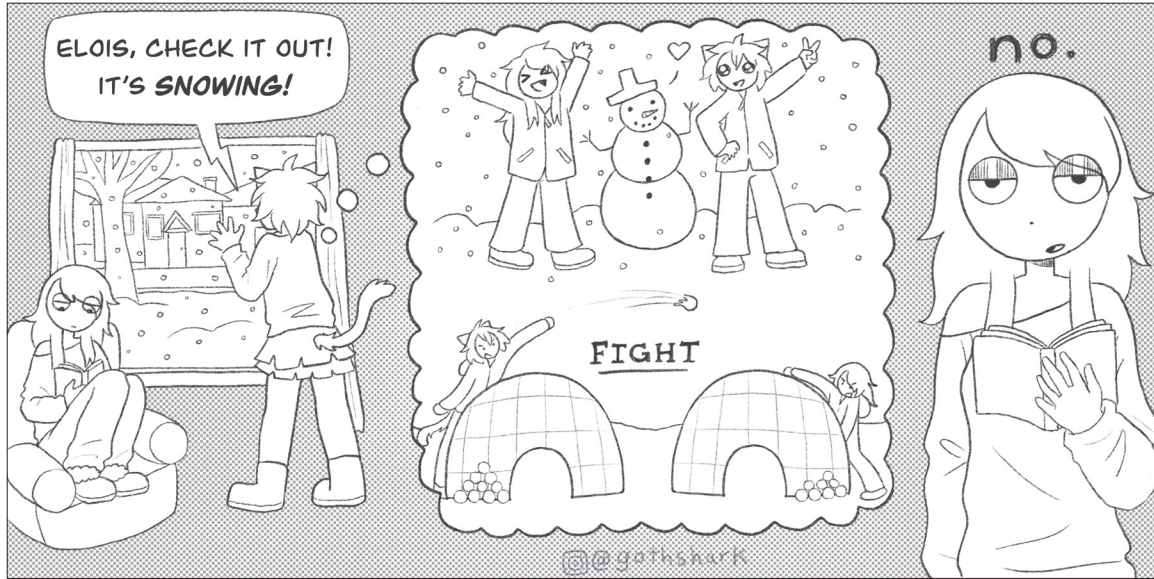
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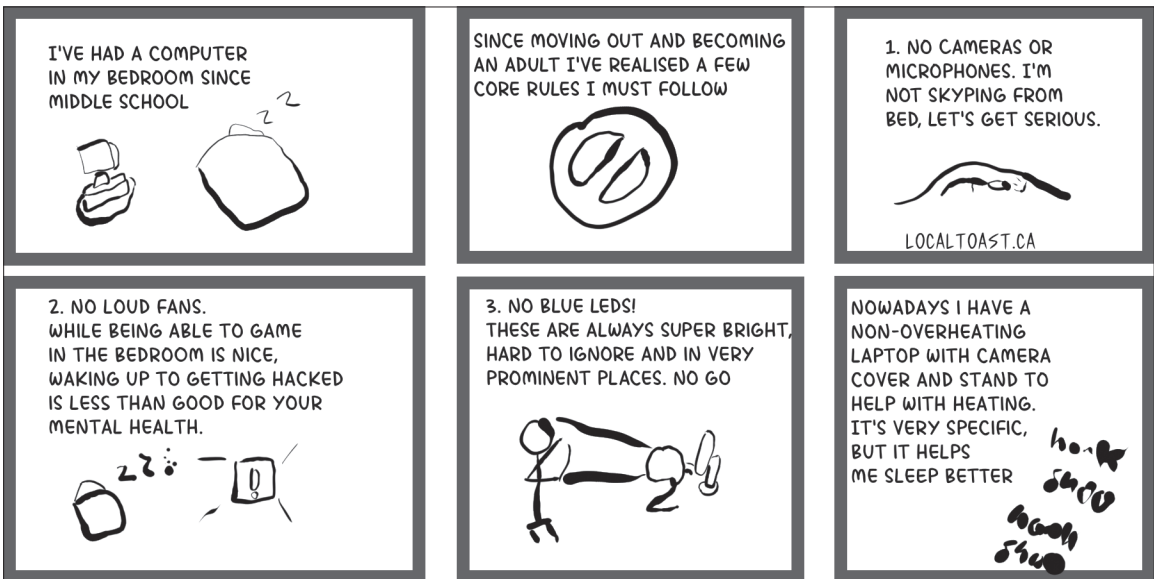
Ruby Rioux and the Bats from Saturn - Ray Nufer



Natural Selection - Emily Welch



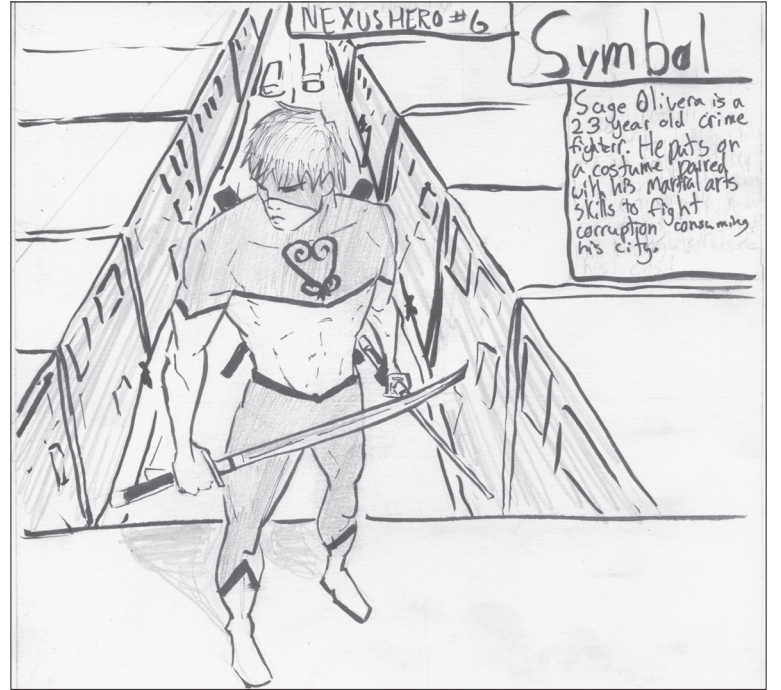
Localtoast: The Daemon That Lives at Localhost - Ben Belland



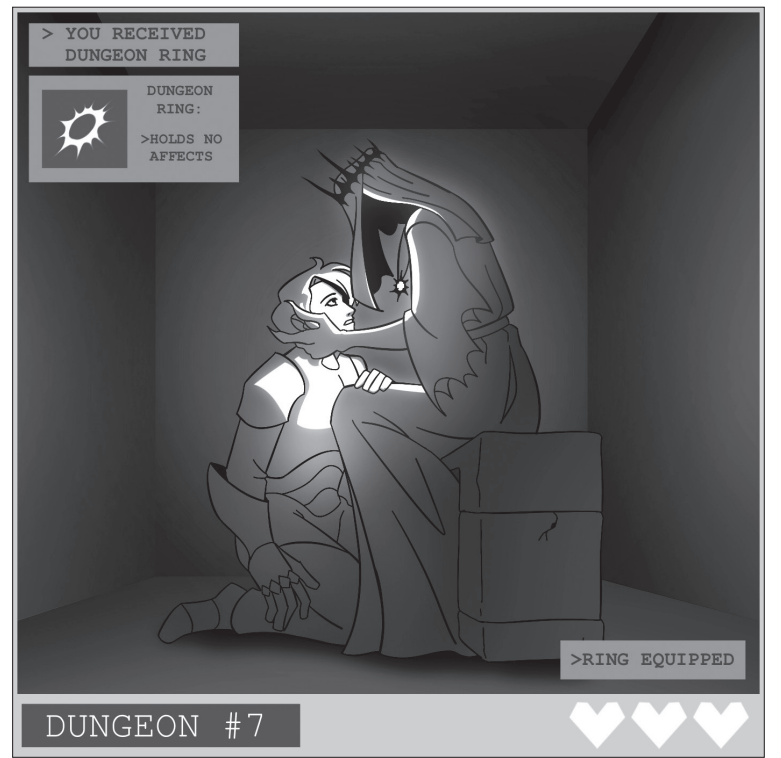
Weird Dog Ink - Felix Best



Nexus Hero - Declan Reilly



Tile Crawler - Jay London



contest

Find the hidden Nexus and win



GREG PRATT/NEXUS

We've hidden this copy of our last issue somewhere at the Lansdowne campus. Bring it in to our office to claim a prize from contest sponsor Arsenal Pulp Press, who have donated an assortment of books for you to choose from. Nexus HQ is located at Richmond House 201 at Lansdowne.

NEXUS

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LYDIA'S FILM CRITIQUE

BY LYDIA ZULETA JOHNSON

Pink Flamingos

What *Pink Flamingos* leaves one with is an absurd extension, a manifestation, of these habits and conditions being performed or desired already off-screen.

"Kill everyone now. Condone first-degree murder. Advocate cannibalism. Eat shit. Filth is my politics, filth is my life."

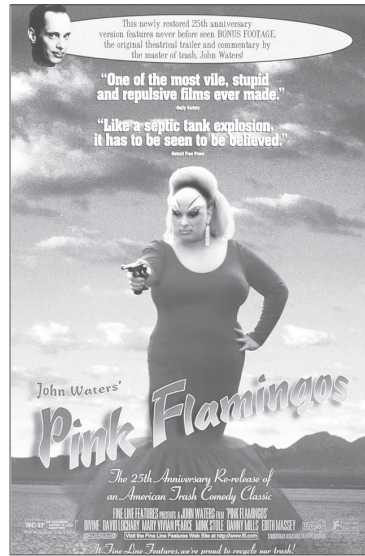
Should one try to vindicate *Pink Flamingos* (1972) from its vile cruelty to all which is good, they may fall flat. But should they instead embrace its vile cruelty, welcome its offenses, and affirm their own derangements, they may find themselves vindicated and the film therapeutic—as it is, more than a film, medicinal.

There is a crowd for it. Whatever "it" is—filth, trash, shock. They watched it in grindhouse theatres, and when those were replaced with booming Cineplexes, they moved to the privacy of Pirate Bay for their fix. Mostly it features gore, nudity, and harsh language. But, sometimes, when the crowd is lucky, when they've already done enough damage, they also get something with real heart. And, as if receiving a gold star for their conviction, they get Divine.

She plays "the filthiest person

alive" in *Pink Flamingos*, as she's been awarded by its fictional tabloids. And it's well deserved; there would be few that could even compete. But there are two, and they are "jealous perverts" Raymond and Connie Marble (David Lochary and Mink Stole) who will do all that is in their power to rob her of the crown. In the meantime, however, she throws elaborate parties and wears deli meat between her legs.

Director John Waters made a point of naming *Pink Flamingos* "an exercise in poor taste." In plain terms, that is all particular scenes can certainly amount to. And all the rumours are true. Yes, Divine picks up and ingests the defecation of a dog left on a sidewalk. Yes, the chicken was killed in that such way. Yes, indeed, it is disturbing and unholy. But, what we often leave out in the discussion of immorality is where these similar symptoms already exist—in politics, in Hollywood, on the internet, and, at times, in our own interpersonal relationships. What *Pink Flamingos* leaves



one with is an absurd extension, a manifestation, of these habits and conditions being performed or desired already off-screen. Truly vile cruelty, yes. Cathartic, yes.

There is a common question from those not entirely won over by Waters' audaciousness, unsure of *why* one would push the envelope for the sake of pushing the envelope. What they fail to grasp, or perhaps what they most fear, is if never pushed, if never even tried, there is no discovery, and there is no meeting what lies beyond social norms. Traversing past the zone of allowed behaviour is the medicine of sanity, and when we find ourselves enthralled with such transgressive indecency, this is how we are sure we exist beyond etiquette. Pushing the envelope is, in essence, the human response to an envelope. That is, one designed already in poor taste.



FELLAS, LET'S FIGURE IT OUT

BY JAXSON SMITH PETERSON

Intentional communication

In my last column, I discussed the concept of intention and how we can use it to shape our behaviours and actions. I want to use this edition to zoom in on a facet of intention that is ever so important: thinking before one speaks.

Intentional talk is not something that comes naturally to all of us. Oftentimes communication is

To put it plainly: preparing for conversation. It's understanding the purpose of the conversation you are about to have and creating a mental list to refer back to when things start getting dry.

In a more formal setting, such as a job interview, it never hurts to do some research on the person you plan on speaking with.

Intentional talk is a self-focused practice to help you have deeper and more authentic conversation.

more off the top of our heads and freestyled, which can be limiting in some aspects.

Intentional talk can help you to further a conversation in a way that benefits you; it can eliminate the awkward silences and pauses when you lose your train of thought. Intentional speech helps you to filter your communication so that only the important things get said.

As a point of clarification, when I speak of intentional talk I am not referring to a perfect script that you have designed for every conversation—that won't work, because that's not how conversations work.

Intentional talk is not meant to be a form of manipulation or deceit toward the person you are communicating with; rather it is a self-focused practice to help you have deeper and more authentic conversation.

People love to feel important and smart, so you should keep that in mind and have some questions in your back pocket to ask the interviewer.

Speaking intentionally with adequate preparation is a valuable skill that will help you in networking, the ever-important tool that's often talked about as we prepare for post-college working life. The people you want to network with or have mentor you are likely very busy, so prepare appropriately and don't waste their time.

Whether in personal or professional communication, the last thing you want to do is make a boneheaded remark that just slips out. So take some time and think before you react.

Good luck, and remember, unprepared communication is the enemy of great conversation.



REASONS TO LIVE... IN VICTORIA

BY ALEX HANUSE

Chinatown—The Bubble Tea Place

A national historic site, Victoria's Chinatown is famous for being the oldest surviving Chinatown in Canada. The closely built brick buildings create a labyrinth of inner courtyards, alleys, and passageways, giving Chinatown its mysterious allure.

This neighbourhood was originally dominated by three import-export companies, including Kwong Lee & Co. Founded by Lee Chong, it was the second largest company in Canada in the 1860s after the Hudson's Bay Company.

Although a cultured community with temples, schools, theatres, a hospital, and much more, Chinatown was known by other settlers as "the forbidden city" and housed brothels, illegal gambling clubs, and opium dens. Fan Tan Alley was named for the traditional Chinese game that was popular amongst gamblers at the time.

After the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which was built mainly by Chinese labourers, the Canadian government introduced immigration laws that were aimed at forcing the Chinese population out of the country and impoverishing those remaining. When The Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed in 1947, Chinese immigrants followed economic

opportunity out of Chinatown, leaving many buildings sitting empty and run down.

In the 1980s, the City of Victoria and the citizens of Chinatown began a "revitalization program" in an attempt to preserve the neighbourhood.

In the late '60s, before the program and before the bright-coloured lanterns lined Fisgard Street, my mother and her friends would pool their allowances for a bowl of chow mein. Whoever had better chopstick skills would get the most food. Any remaining money went toward bars of ginseng soap and other small treasures.

Five decades later my mother is still in love with Chinatown. Five minutes after the birth of my child, she abruptly declared she was off to Chinatown for noodles, and goodbye. Shocked, my husband quietly asked me if she was kidding. Unfazed, I assured him she was not.

Two years later, my child is obsessed with the "eyeballs" in bubble tea, which are balls of tapioca or coconut jellies. The Bubble Tea Place at 532 Fisgard Street has operated since 1999 and boasts Victoria's largest selection of original flavours. During the winter months, a hot chai bubble tea is especially comforting.

When asked which flavour they wanted, my toddler responded "purple." To my delight, the purple bubble tea was flavoured with taro, a starchy root vegetable that takes on a beautiful purple hue when steamed.

Having recently experienced the flavour of taro in a purple donut from Friends and Family Bake, located at 3 Fan Tan Alley #101, I was excited to try it in a bubble tea. Slightly earthy with a nutty, vanilla flavour, this drink felt comfortably familiar.

Chinatown has always been an inspiring place to discover something new, or find something old. A few of my favourite stores include Bamboo Beads and Bling, where you can find rare and exquisite jewelry-making supplies; Best of Both Worlds Imports, for furniture and home accessories; and the classic Dragon Village, where Chinese dishes, cookware, gifts, and swords are stacked to the ceiling.

Visit the Victoria Chinatown Museum (located at 10 Fan Tan Alley) to learn more about the history of Chinatown and current cultural activities.

Experience the beautiful and enduring culture that pours from the storefronts like the heady incense that is constantly burning.



DROPPING THE NEEDLE

BY SANTIAGO VAZQUEZ-FUERTE

A lonely Valentine's Day

Spending Valentine's alone was not part of the plan, but after my three-year relationship ended I find myself riding solo through the month of love. However, music became my companion, like an embrace, a place to vent, and even an escape from reality. Here are the best albums to help you get through different stages of a breakup.

Right after a breakup:

If you're still in that raw phase of the breakup when you might feel angry or resentful, there's no better album than Olivia Rodrigo's debut, *SOUR*. The album is unapologetically direct and it has hits like "Traitor" and "Good 4 You" that will help you scream your frustrations out.

For something more reflective but just as emotional, you can listen to the ultimate breakup classic: Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*. Songs like "Go Your Own Way" capture perfectly the essence of a recent breakup.

For lonely nights:

When loneliness creeps into your bed at night, put your headphones on and close your eyes to listen to Radiohead's *Kid A*. This album will give you an otherworldly experience, feeling like you are all alone in space with its eerie production. Great to disconnect from reality for 47 minutes.

When you miss your ex:

Are you constantly checking your phone hoping it's them who messaged you? Listen to *Blue* by Joni Mitchell. There's nothing like this album to reflect on love lost. The album is personal, making you feel like Mitchell is narrating your own heartbreak.

Similarly, *Blood on the Tracks* by Bob Dylan delivers vulnerable emotion with poetic storytelling. Songs like "If You See Her, Say Hello" mirror perfectly the pain of love slipped away.

For moving on (or longing):

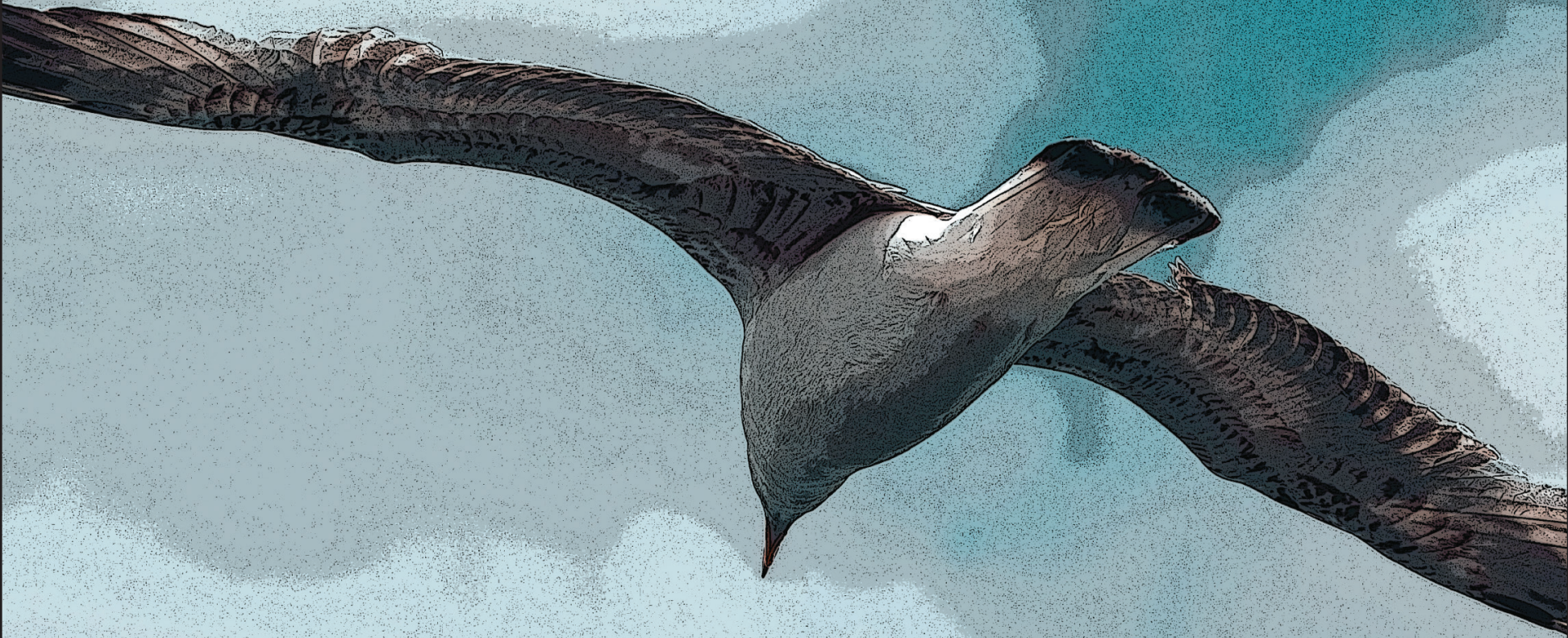
At some point, you'll decide to either move on or hold on to the past.

All Things Must Pass by George Harrison is the perfect album for grief. Written in the wake of The Beatles' breakup, the album reflects on loss, but remains hopeful of better things to come. It reminds you to cherish the moments behind you, and, as Liam Gallagher once sang, "don't look back in anger," rather learn from what's been lived. Songs like "I Live for You" and "Sweet Lord" turn heartbreak into something almost beautiful, a life lesson rather than a loss.

Breakups are tough, but music will always be there for you, even when no one else is.

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