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**WHO TURNED UP
THE HEAT IN THE
FURNACE?**

**"THAT'S THE GOAL, THE
GOAL IS TO PUT OUR NAME
WITH THE TOP ONES."
-COACH SCOTT KOSKIE**



BC Federation of Students AGM Held, Responds to Tuition Hike Threats

BY QUINLIN OSADCZUK

The University of British Columbia Okanagan's students are long-used to finding themselves in the throes of idiosyncrasy. This university is one of great renown and prestige thanks to its name, yet it is often ignored by its Vancouver campus which grants it that renown.

Perhaps the greatest idiosyncrasy of all is that UBC has a reputation as being the pre-eminent rich kid's school in the province. That reputation may be well-earned in Vancouver, yet the population of UBCO is not made up of cosmopolitan 20-somethings so much as a messy array of international students, engineers from the prairies, and a hodgepodge of everything else which helps to create a deeply distinct campus. Not exclusive to this campus, however, are the dual crises of affordability and austerity.

As the BC provincial government prepares to receive a review on its post-secondary education priorities and policies, it has been made overtly clear that practically nothing is off the table in terms of cost saving measures. Premier David Eby's NDP government has motioned that in order to address the province's \$11 billion budget deficit, they are looking to cut as much of the fat as possible to minimize the damage.¹

While they have promised not to touch education and other similar services, there is the aforementioned ongoing review of post-secondary education which will likely do exactly that, including the possibility of a rather alarming change: tuition increases per year are currently capped at 2% per year, but if the review finds the cap to be unnecessary,



Image provided by Jenelle Davies

then tuition could increase by however much the province finds to be necessary.² Evidently, for many student organizers and the average student, this would be an unwelcome change, and so it is in that spirit that the British Columbia Federation of Students (BCFS) met in Richmond at the beginning of February for its annual general meeting (AGM).

I attended that AGM as a delegate for the SUO, invited to observe the inner workings of the BCFS and follow what actions our union is taking to oppose the upcoming review and to help solidify our various locals into a cohesive movement. In practical terms, this has meant electing four directors-at-large, a chair, a secretary-treasurer, and an Indigenous caucus chair, establishing new demands and goals in pushing the government to support actions like a rent

freeze and further measures to construct affordable housing, and demanding the government neither raise nor remove the 2% tuition cap.

What was much more informative, however, were the individual conversations I had with union representatives from across the province: be it their deeply experienced staff who have served with unions for decades or newly-elected nurses serving as faculty representatives, it made for a unique environment of people from across the province. Given that environment, I spoke with various figures in the BCFS, and what was most striking was the fact that Local 12 (that is, our SUO) and most of the BCFS were members of merely a provincial union rather than a national or international union — surely banding together with more unions would

provide more leverage to push back against the provincial government's possible removal of the tuition caps?

What I found out from the more experienced members present at the AGM was as follows: while the BCFS has stood as an alliance of BC-based students' unions, the BCFS' own experience with national organizations has always been more prickly, to say the least. Case in point, the BCFS and all BC-based students' unions in the nationwide Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) were expelled outright in 2018 over a litany of complaints, including local campuses not being permitted to host referendums to leave the CFS, various breaches of CFS bylaws, and other similar complaints.^{3,4}

The BCFS has since stabilized, currently playing host to at least 14 campuses across the province, also having added a prospective new local at this year's AGM (the Northern Undergraduate Student Society).⁵ Given that context, a new conversation arising among many union locals is on the topic of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), a national students' union which seems to be challenging the position of the CFS.

While most BCFS members are not also members of CASA, some (like the Camosun College Student Association) maintain membership with both organizations. Nevertheless, as the future of post-secondary education as a whole remains deeply uncertain in the face of the imminent provincial review, every student of UBCO is finding itself bracing for impact, as is the BCFS.

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A Recap of the 2026 SUO General Election

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN

On March 9th, 2026, UBC Okanagan students gathered in the Well to hear the results of the Student Union Okanagan's 2026 General Election be delivered by 2025-2026 SUO President, Peter Idoko.

Not only did this election have a comparatively low number of candidates running, but turnout for the election was lower this year than last. In 2025, 20.2% of students voted in the SUO General Election; whereas this year, only 17.6% of students voted.

The prevalent sentiment among students is that things have run well in the past year, and big change within the SUO is not a priority for most. Despite this, it is still important for the new board to carry on this good record and inspire new leaders to step forwards next year and join the executive board.

This year's election was unique as four of the five executive positions only had one candidate running. With four positions uncontested, these candidates had to earn votes from the student body to ensure they would be elected into office.

Vice-President Campus Life was won by Guransh Sandhu with 915 votes. Rhetoric on campus life at UBC Okanagan always seems to come back to one event: FROSH. This past year, the SUO opted to host a variety of concerts throughout the academic year — promising three different concerts, yet only delivering one — instead of one big concert at the beginning of the year. Sandhu wants to listen to student's ideas, but also hopes to bring more light to student talent in the future. Continuing to offer diverse events is also important for Sandhu as he steps into this new role.

Vice-President of Finance and Ad-

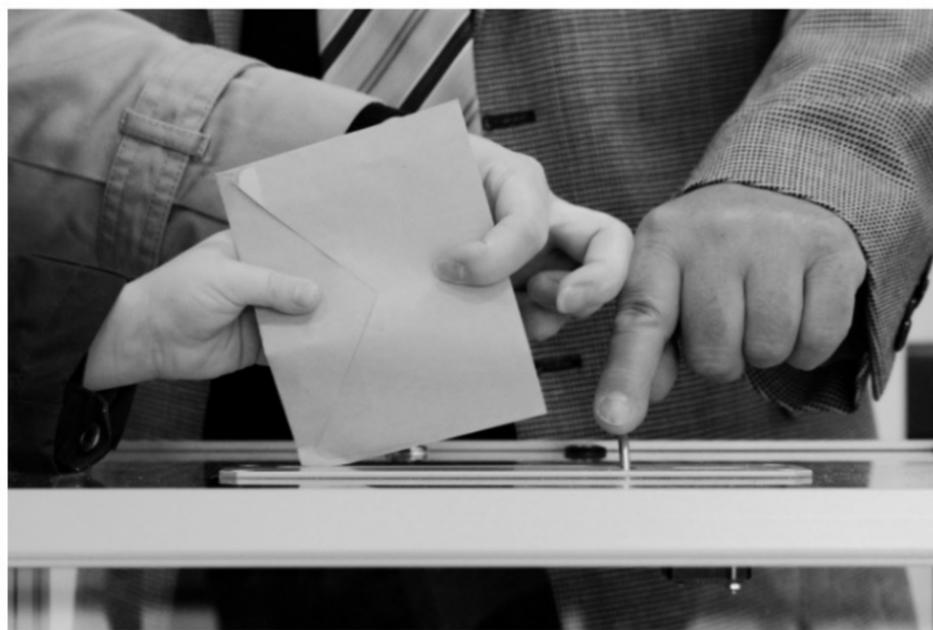


Image provided by Arnaud Jaegers

ministration was won by Shreya Patnaik, who gathered 960 votes in her favour. Patnaik is continuing to maintain financial transparency within the SUO. Ensuring that funding is being allocated where students want it is a goal of Patnaik's, along with keeping things clean and organized to ensure a smooth year ahead for the SUO.

The position of Vice-President External was won by Naden Qually who amassed 972 votes. Qually is entering this position with a student-first mindset, and wants to advocate for different student needs. With affordability crises emerging across the province, he hopes to make change for the benefit of students. Further perfecting the Community Meals and Pantry programs alike are a big focus for Qually as

well.

President was won by Olivia Lai, who earned 1054 votes in support. Continuing initiatives she began in her previous role as Vice-President External, Lai is fighting food insecurity on campus and wants to protect the 2% tuition increase cap for students. Supporting students is Lai's top priority and she hopes to keep up mental health initiatives, furthering transparency, and building strong connections between the Okanagan and the SUO.

The race for Vice-President Internal was quite close this year with four different candidates running, all aiming for various goals such as supporting clubs on campus and increased transparency. The position was ultimately won by Quinlin Osadcuk, who gar-

nered 447 votes in his favour. Osadcuk plans to focus on increasing communication with clubs, advocating against tuition hikes, and maintaining accountability within the SUO.

The SUO's Director at Large position had four open positions which were won by Laisa Pertet with 473 votes, Ashley Kyei-Badu with 435 votes, Fikayo Adeleke with 425 votes, and Oliver Hale with 422 votes.

Different faculty representatives have also been elected, with Liam Wallace representing the Faculty of Arts and Social Science after getting 235 votes. Neela Rader will be representing the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies after getting 61 votes. Ali Wasti will be representing the Faculty of Health and Social Development after getting 89 votes. Amanda Bolton will be representing the Faculty of Science after getting 352 votes.

This year's referendum question asked if students would agree to an increase in the price of the mandatory U-Pass fee from \$63 a term to \$71 a term to ensure the stability of the U-Pass in the future. This referendum was successful, and there is no longer a risk of students losing access to their U-Pass benefits all together if this referendum had been overturned.

The election results from this year appear to reflect a level of trust that students have for this new executive committee. With ongoing worries of the 2% tuition cap in BC being removed, it is of utmost importance for the executive team to focus on representing students, and remaining accountable for their actions while doing so.

Who turned up the HEAT in the furnace?

WORDS BY SAMAIRA TALWAR

PHOTOS BY SABHYA ARORA



On Sunday, March 1, 2026, the UBCO Heat Men's Volleyball season came to an end. That day, the air inside the UBCO gymnasium didn't feel like just another sports match. If you looked closely, you could feel, in the air, the pressure of years of sweat, hardwork, and a community finally finding its voice.

When the final whistle signalled the loss for our volleyball team, the silence of defeat lasted only a split second. Immediately after, a roar sounded so deafening, that you would have thought we had just won the National Championship.

I sat down with Head Coach Scott Koskie to understand what went into creating this loud, proud atmosphere in the gym that day. Because in sports, you are often taught that losing is the end. But looking at Koskie, and looking at this team, it felt more like the start of something great.



When 1,200 people decide to collectively care about the same thing at the same moment, there's a specific kind of magic that happens.

"If you feel nervous, that means it's important," Koskie told his team, who were dazzled by the sea of familiarity in the crowd. "It was almost overwhelming to watch the whole university connected top to bottom. Friends, family, coaches who trained the guys as children, even the Dean and Associate Vice President."

When asked about how this pressure affected the players' game, Koskie said, "We play to win, obviously. But sometimes the result isn't all that's important. We were a part of creating something that was beyond sport."

The connection between the players and the audience manifested itself in a strange, natural rivalry with Manitoba's Number 7, Karil Dadash Adeh. Students holding up signs that said "You're in our house Number #7!" The Bucket Bros in the front row chanting, shirtless guys with 'GO HEAT' written on their bodies, all showed how important a home-court advantage was to our team in the fire of a playoff run. In fact, Koskie mentioned how "Number 7 does not mind it very much either, he enjoys all kinds of attention, positive and otherwise. It was motivating for him."



UBCO's crowd didn't just come to spectate, they participated. They cheered as loud as they could, clapped as hard as possible, and they mirrored the energy they'd seen online from other schools. Koskie describes it as "tasteful", but it was electric. About the targeted jabs at Adeh, he said, "If you don't mind dishing out energy, then sometimes you have to take it."

For Koskie, this weekend was a collision of his present and his past. After being with the Manitoba Bisons for years, games like these, against his alma mater, are often a psychological tightrope. Although UBCO Heat has now played against the Bisons nine times since Koskie joined the program, he mentioned having to "emotionally coach himself," especially last year during the playoffs in Manitoba, the first time Koskie had to coach an opposing team in the Bisons' gym.

There are a mix of emotions that exist in knocking out, or being knocked out by, the place that raised you. But Koskie wasn't coaching for his history. He was there for the exhausted young men in front of him who had just played 14 grueling sets of volleyball in a single weekend.



The scoreboard reflected a rare six point run given up, just a few points short in the final set, that led to the loss of the game. The human side, however, is much heavier.

"We played almost the maximum amount of volleyball one can play. The guys gave literally everything that they had. They were completely exhausted," said Coach Koskie, with a protective pride in his words, along with some disappointment. "There's a certain satisfaction and pride that comes along with that."

On the defeat, Koskie commented, "We felt like we had more. That part was disappointing, that it ended where it ended. But there's a good cliché there, that you don't have any regrets after trying your hardest. But that's where we landed. We did everything we could do, we gave everything we had but we were a few points short. That was sad, but at the same time, it was a proud moment to get as far as we did."



It's easier to say you believe in your comeback, it's a different story altogether to believe in it. Yet, the Heat had absolute faith in themselves. When everyone expected them to fold, they took the third set.

"It is also about how many people we got together. As a team, we show a lot of diligence and care in how we train, interact with people, and compete. So the environment in the crowd that weekend felt really supportive. People really cared about us, what we were accomplishing, and what we wanted to do." According to Koskie, that validation is what kept the crowd on their feet, delivering a well-deserved standing ovation, amidst and even after the Bisons celebrated their win. "The effort that they showed, we hopefully showed it back to them. We cared just as much about the game and the school as they did. That made it a really meaningful experience."

As the Hangar emptied out, the legacy of the 2025-26 season remained etched in everyone's hearts. This season was huge for the UBCO Heat and according to Koskie, "It's really what we continue to do with it. But this season has really brought us to the forefront. We took a big step forward this year. That's the goal, the goal is to put our name with the top ones. But we're certainly not there yet. And we don't just wanna be one and done."



Last year, the goal was just to make the playoffs. This year, the goal was to host them. Next year? Koskie doesn't hesitate in dreaming big: "The top four. The National Championship."

On March 1, 2026, the Heat didn't just lose a game. They proved that they belong in the conversation with the top names of Canada West. They showed to everyone watching, in person and on their screens, that in a community like Kelowna, sport is personal.

The standing ovation wasn't for the score on Sunday. It was for the sheer human effort of a team that refused to go out quietly. The season might be over for now, but the heartbeat of this program is louder than it has ever been.

For Koskie, his holy grail boils down to one simple thing: "To get to the top."



The Final Stretch: The Strategy Season Before Graduation

BY JUHI SARVAIYA

The final semester before graduation feels like a group project with your future self. Your calendar turns into a weird mix of final required courses, revisiting resumes, job applications, and the slow panic of realizing you are about to lose the structure of university life.

This stretch is the most daunting and exciting part of the university experience. It is bittersweet, filled with memories, ambitions, and the uncertainty of what comes next. Everyone talks about graduation like it is a sentimental milestone. Fewer people talk about what the final stretch actually looks like day-to-day. What are graduating students prioritizing? What are their goals and fears? What are they trying to accomplish before donning the cap and gown?

In conversation with students in their final year of Computer Science, Psychology, and History, here is what the behind-the-scenes version of graduation season looks like.

For Mithish Ravisankar, a Computer Science student and aspiring software developer, the main goal post-grad is simple: secure a job of his liking. His final semester is heavy with capstone classes, directed studies, and project-based lectures, but most of his energy is going toward what happens outside the syllabus. He hopes to work in the AI industry, so he is building personal projects, preparing for interviews with a lot of LeetCode practice, and trying to be intentional with his networking by meeting professors after class or setting up coffee chats with recent graduates.

When asked what the most stressful part of this semester is for him, he said:

“Dealing with the uncertainty of my future, especially as an international student. Even figuring out where I’ll be staying post-grad.”

His biggest regret is that he spent the first half of university studying far more than



Image provided by Sabhya Arora

he needed to. Looking back, he wishes he had enjoyed the lighter semesters, taken more risks, and met more people.

Fourth-year Psychology student Khushie Nanavaty described a very different version of the final semester. Her course load is lighter as her focus reaches beyond April. As someone interested in pursuing therapy or PR marketing, her main focus is preparing graduate school applications. After graduation, she plans to go back home, gain work experience, and build an iron-clad application for graduate programs in the United Kingdom. She is also trying to make the most of her last semester in Canada by spending time with friends and exploring Kelowna.

When asked what she wished she had done differently earlier in her degree, Khushie said:

“My biggest regret is not being familiar with

campus resources. I came a semester late, so I didn’t get an orientation program on how everything works. It took me a while to figure out the abundance of resources available on campus, from interview and resume prep to how helpful it can be to be proactive with clubs.”

For History major Simar Sandhu, the final semester is shaped by two things: a heavy course load and a clear plan for what comes next. She has taken four to five classes every term since her first year because she wanted to finish her undergrad within four years, which means the “final stretch” does not suddenly become lighter just because graduation is close. She plans to go to graduate school full-time, so her main priorities are grades, preparing for the next academic jump, and trying to find peace in the middle of all of it.

When asked what she regrets in university, Simar shared,

“I wish I had been more disciplined. I procrastinate and thus have had many experiences leaving assignments and tasks to the last minute, which was stressful! If I were granted a redo, that is the first thing I would work on.”

Then there is the version of the final semester where the job prospect is already answered. Computer Science and honours student Om Mistry has secured a full-time Data and Software Specialist position in Calgary after a smooth 16-month co-op. With that stress off his plate, his final term is about refining skills for the role he is stepping into and actively expanding his network. Group projects and deadlines still exist (and still suck, as group projects always do), but he does not want to spend the entire time focusing only on academics. For him, the last term is also about spending time with friends and occasionally dancing in the studio on campus.

When asked what advice he would give someone heading into their final year, Om said,

“Say yes to experiences — go travel for that hackathon and meet new people, or go for the networking event that everyone thinks is boring. Do things that will add to your personality outside of the classroom.”

For all of them, the final semester is a blend of nostalgia and strategy. Whether it is building a portfolio, preparing for grad school, or making the most of the last few months before leaving Kelowna, everyone seems to be doing the same thing in different ways — taking concrete steps towards whatever comes next while trying not to lose themselves in the process.

Are We Really Running Out of Sand?

BY CONNOR BRAKE

If you were to take a walk through the Sahara or Arabian desert you would be surrounded by sand — so much so it would fill up your shoes. Because of this, you may think that the world has infinite sand to spare. However, the cruel irony of geology is that not all sand is created equal.

While we are surrounded by sand dunes and beaches, the construction industry is starving for specific sands. This shortage is no longer a small environmental concern, but rather a global economic problem requiring a multi-industry paradigm shift. This bottleneck has birthed “sand mafias,” destroyed ecosystems, and forced nations into complex economic conditions.

The primary reason for this shortage comes down to physics. Desert sand is shaped by wind. Over thousands of years, the wind tumbles and grinds small rocks against each other, polishing them into round pebble-like shapes.

For the construction industry, small round sand is practically useless. To make concrete, angular or jagged sand works much better. Jagged rocks can better fit together like awkward puzzle pieces. Circular rocks on the other hand, tend to slip when stacked and thus cannot build reliable structures.

Jagged sand is typically found in riverbeds or floodplains as opposed to beaches and deserts, but it is also much harder to find in the desired quantities.

Worldwide, the demand for sand consumption has tripled in the past two decades.¹ This is partially driven by the unprecedented

construction boom in Asia and Africa. In the early 2010s, China required more cement — and by extension, sand — than the United States used during the whole of the 20th century.² Every skyscraper or parking garage requires thousands of tons of sand, making it the second most extracted material on the planet after water.

Beyond vertical growth, the usage of sand also extends to the very ground we walk and drive on. Nations with limited geography such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have used millions of tons of sand to create construction projects on the ocean.³

Furthermore, as we only become more dependent on technology, materials like high-purity silica and glass have become essential to daily life.⁴ This has only added to the pressure on an already finite resource, attributing to an even higher increase in sand demand. Some countries such as Kenya and Uganda have faced such large shortages of construction sand that sand has become a commodity.⁵ This has led to the rise of “sand mafias” or cartels who use violence intimidation to control the trade of sand.

Moreover, sand mining and excavation disrupts natural ecosystems where the sand is found, often causing irreversible damage. Specifically, sand mining can increase the rate of coastal erosion, cause river alterations, habitat destruction, and potentially contaminate the environment.

As the sand needed becomes increasingly scarce, the global construction industry is undergoing a large paradigm shift. The era of a

heavy reliance on natural geological processes for sand is ending, being replaced by engineered and circular solutions.⁶

The most obvious solution is Manufactured Sand (M-Sand).⁷ Unlike naturally occurring sand which has to be extracted from ecosystems, M-Sand is produced by crushing rocks into smaller pieces. This process allows engineers to more readily control the size of sand they want for a specific application.

Furthermore, “urban mining” has become a rather popular method of producing sand.⁸ By taking concrete from old buildings and crushing it, you can get “new” sand. This method has been so successful that recycled glass has become a very promising solution, a complete substitute for silica sand.⁹

Perhaps the most exciting breakthroughs in the world of construction sand are occurring in labs. A 2025 collaboration between the University of Tokyo and Norwegian University of Science and Technology has successfully developed a “botanical sand concrete.”¹⁰ This was done by mixing a bit of desert sand with wood fibers and other plant based additives under intense heat and pressure. By doing this, a new durable material suitable for construction projects like walkways has been created.

On another note, researchers at Rice University have created a graphene derived from metallurgical coke that could potentially replace sand entirely.¹¹ The novel concrete is 25% lighter but just as tough as traditional mixes. While still in its infancy, this innovation represents a future where natural sand can be

fully replaced.

Although sand may seem like an infinite resource, it is not. We have historically treated sand (just like many other natural resources) as a limitless commodity, but the ecological damage it causes has detrimental effects.

By moving away from the destruction of river ecosystems, we help to ensure a more sustainable future. From the result of embracing new innovations, we can build a much more resilient world that no longer depends on mining sand.



Image provided by Pauloleong2002

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Harmony or Dissent: How Music Portrays Democracy in the USA

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN

Politics have long been explored through art. Instead of grovelling at the feet of politicians and judges for change, artists craft ways to stir others to action. Sometimes they let unseen issues turn into something you cannot rip your eyes from. Art is a means of moving people through emotion; it has continually been used to guide feelings of the individual towards a certain conclusion, whether it lands correctly or not.

From 1930s jazz to 2010s progressive rap and everything in between, music has long reflected attitudes towards the state of democracy in the United States of America. In their 2025 list of the best protest songs, Rolling Stone stated that: “for some marginalized groups, the simple act of creating music at all can be a form of speaking out against an unjust world.”¹

Upon proposing to record a sung rendition of the poem “Strange Fruit”, Billie Holiday was rejected by her record label as they thought the lyrics would be too controversial. Instead of bowing her head, Holiday jumped to the independent Commodore Records who would let her record the song, which was released in 1939.

The contents of the song were perceived as contentious due to the blunt metaphor for racialized violence towards African Americans in the USA. The victims of lynching are compared to slowly rotting fruit hanging from trees in the South:

“Southern trees bear strange fruit / blood on the leaves and blood at the root / black bodies swinging in the southern breeze / strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.”²

The poem “Strange Fruit” was originally written by Jewish American Abel Meeropol in response to seeing photos of the lynchings of African Americans in the South. Photos of lynchings were shockingly common form of memorabilia in drug stores and pharmacies.³ Black men were the primary target of lynching, and continually lived in fear of being accused of violating Jim Crow regulations and facing unjust repercussions. Perpetrators of lynchings very rarely faced any form of consequences for their actions; systemic structures such as all white juries sheltered these heinous crimes from ever properly facing the law.

“Strange Fruit” was important in the advancement of rights for African Americans as it brought attention to ongoing issues during the post-Reconstruction era. Lynching and other forms of racialized violence were prevalent, but rarely made the news. Holiday’s choice to speak out was a brave choice: others who had protested in this era lost their jobs, were barred from performing, and faced social oppression.

With a bitter perspective on social justice, Holiday still manages to capture the essentiality of speaking out against what is wrong, even at the risk of drastic consequences.

Sitting idly by while injustice burns on causes change to become stagnant. Gil Scott-Heron’s 1971 song “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” addresses how social change cannot occur while the affected groups remain immobilized, waiting for someone else to get their hands dirty in the name of freedom. To Scott-Heron, transformative change will not be featured on the evening news, after viewer’s advertisements, or any form of mass media; it will occur on the streets and requires involvement.

In Scott-Heron’s youth, he was very politically active and felt the impact of the Kent State Massacre, where four students were killed during a protest against the Vietnam War.⁴ The massacre sparked widespread student-led strikes across the country for the violation of the right to protest.

“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” takes advantage of advertising slogans from the era, like “the revolution will not give your mouth sex appeal,” which was from a tooth-



Graphic provided by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

paste advertisement; or how “the revolution will not make you look five pounds thinner,” a common weight loss advertisement slogan.⁵ These lyrics reject distractions that keep people glued to screens instead of participating within their community to enact change.

Scott-Heron sings that “there will be no highlights on the eleven o’clock news,” that there “will be no re-run,” and that “the revolution will be live.”⁶ Stressing the importance of active participation in politics is crucial in this piece, showing that if you do not participate there will be no chance for you in the future. Participating comes with engaging with reality, not some cut down version of the truth.

If you tuned into the 2025 Super Bowl LIX halftime show, you may remember Kendrick Lamar’s reference to Scott-Heron’s song, opening by stating “the revolution ‘bout to be televised / you picked the right time but the wrong guy.”⁷ Lamar’s performance focused on systemic injustice and empowering African Americans, and the reference to Scott-Heron’s song is a signal that change can still be made in spite of systemic barriers.

It certainly is ironic to reference a song which critiques corporatism and advertising during an event notorious for its costly advertisements and overpriced tickets. However, choosing to encourage participation in social change at the most watched television broadcast in the USA every year is a bold choice.

Offering an outsider’s perspective, Canadian singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen wrote the song “Democracy” in 1992, offering a commentary on the idea of the USA serving as a laboratory for the democratic experiment. Cohen’s writing does not shy away from a critical view of work that still needed to be done to kick democracy into high gear.

The lyrics of “Democracy”, such as “[it’s coming] from the fires of the homeless / from the ashes of the gay” condemn the causes behind the growing homeless population during the late 1980s, as well as the poor governmental response to the AIDS epidemic and rising stigma against queer Americans.⁸ Commentary on social cleavages “that [go] down in every kitchen / to determine who will serve and who will eat” evaluate the racial divide in the service industry and the place of women in the home.⁹

To Cohen, these instances of inequality show where democracy stems from. Gaps between justice and injustice, equality and inequality, freedom and unfreedom, are all the spots where democracy is most needed — as he sings in his 1992 hymn “Anthem”, “there is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.”¹⁰ In a 1993 interview with MTV, Cohen proclaimed that democracy is “not coming from the legislature, not from above; but from the bottom, from a crack in the wall, from a hole in the air, imperial, mysterious, an amorous array.”¹¹

As “Democracy” was written during

the fall of the Berlin Wall, Cohen writes with the perspective of democracy being something that the USA can give to other nations. This perspective at the time came from watching the USA’s consistent pressure against Soviet expansionism during the Cold War period, and Cohen stated in an interview:

“[Democracy] is the great gift of the Americans — to this veil of tears in which we live — this suggestion that there might be a kind of life that is not brutal, meaningless, and insignificant; a world in which there really is a sense of fraternity, equality, and justice. Now as far as we are from those ideals, there is something in the American psyche that holds onto this and that comes up with glimpses of that kind of illumination.”¹²

Staying true to his disapproval of the imperfections of the practice of democracy in the USA, Cohen sings “I love the country but I can’t stand the scene,” and that he is “neither or right,” trying to remain non-partisan in his take on the American case of democracy.¹³

This perspective remained hopeful as things were looking up for the expansion of democracy across the globe, but unless institutions and individuals remain committed to change for the good, it will not come.

In one of the most famous anti-American protest songs, Green Day wrote “American Idiot” in 2004 after former President George W. Bush’s response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The song critiques the War on Terror, which featured a restriction of liberties of American citizens for the sake of safety.

Lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong sings “welcome to a new kind of tension,” inviting Americans into the new norms forming in the country such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), kickstarting the war in Iraq, and increased security out of fear of more violence.¹⁴ The song fears the consequences of these measures, seeming to question if these changes are in line with the American ideal of freedom.

Concerned about growing xenophobia in the USA, Armstrong sings: “now everybody do the propaganda / and sing along to the age of paranoia,” encouraging people to form their own beliefs instead of blindly trusting government narratives. Especially in a period of high tensions after a national tragedy, utilizing the paranoia of the vulnerable can be dangerously effective.

In recent years, the song has been repurposed to protest against President Donald Trump. At various concerts after Trump’s first term in office, Armstrong changed the lyrics “I’m not a part of a redneck agenda” to “I’m not a part of a MAGA agenda.” Armstrong is openly critical of Trump, and sees him in line with this American idiot character he has crafted in his musical work.

Even though much change has occurred in the USA since Holiday’s era characterized by extreme violence against African Americans, alongside widespread systemic injustices

embedded into American institutions, there are still plenty of ways the American context can improve its implementation of democracy.

While having lyrics rich with meaning, the value from Childish Gambino’s 2018 song, “This is America,” is ever present in the music video. Childish Gambino, whose real name is Donald Glover, draws attention to modern issues faced by African Americans in the USA, critiquing gun violence, systemic inequality, and the reception of African American culture.

The music video, directed by Hiro Murai, contrasts peace and unrest by depicting Glover dancing with youth while violence ensues. Fires burn, a church choir is massacred, and angry mobs charge at out-of-frame targets. Glover is shown at the beginning shooting a man playing a guitar, portraying the unnecessary violence perpetrated against African Americans. Police cars in the background of the video serve as a reminder of the police brutality that African Americans disproportionately face.

This imagery alongside the music questions if the viewer will remain ignorant of the ongoing issues, or if they will speak up to make real change. The music video means to stir unease in the viewer, making them reflect on systemic challenges present in the USA and beyond.

One attitude remains consistent throughout these eighty years of music: for change to happen, action must happen. Do not let injustice go ignored, speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. There is no such thing as a perfect regime, but that does not mean a state should not seek equality and freedom for its citizens. Direct action is what matters most — cheering from the sidelines is a great way to win a sports game, but not a fight for social justice.



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Jacqueline Breaks Boundaries in Opera

BY GABRIELA CHAN

At its most basic, an “opera” is a dramatic work set to music and song.¹ However, this genre of musical performance has notoriously been associated with ideas of elitism and extravagance. Picture a posh concert hall with velvet seats; in the middle of the stage, a white woman in a ball gown sings an elaborate score, most likely composed by a white European man.

I had always thought of opera as an upper-class art form that had not evolved far from its Eurocentric and classical roots, so when my creative writing professor posted a Canvas announcement saying that contemporary opera company Musique 3 Femmes (M3F) was coming from Montreal to Kelowna, I thought, “Contemporary opera?”

The opera *Jacqueline*, which was originally commissioned by Tapestry Opera in Toronto, saw its fifth production last month in a collaboration with Opera Kelowna that was presented at the Rotary Centre for the Arts on February 27–28, 2026. That week, Kristin Hoff and Luna Pearl Woolf from M3F visited UBC Okanagan and hosted a series of activities to introduce students to contemporary opera. After participating in those activities, I received a complimentary ticket to watch *Jacqueline*.

Composed by Woolf, libretto written by Royce Vavrek, and directed by Michael Hidetoshi Mori, this opera is about Jacqueline du Pré, a legendary British cellist from the 1960s. It features Marnie Breckenridge as du Pré and Matt Haimovitz on the cello; it narrates du Pré’s early rise to fame and the detrimental impact of multiple sclerosis on her career and life.

The piece turned out to be nothing like the stereotypical picture of opera illustrated in the first paragraph of this article. For one, it had a female composer — Woolf



Image by Dahlia Katz, courtesy of Tapestry Opera

currently works with M3F and Hoff to spotlight women in opera, addressing longstanding issues of gender inequity within this field.²

Also, *Jacqueline* was presented at a regular local theatre and included no fancy costumes. Breckenridge wears a simple white dress in the opening act and later adorns a chestnut cardigan. It is only in the final act that she changes into concert attire — a red silk dress — symbolising the continuation of du Pré’s musical legacy despite the fact that she can no longer perform.

The titular cellist’s vibrant personality and emotional intensity is captured in Breckenridge’s impressive vocal performance. In Part I: Star Birth, the soprano singer-actress lies face-up by Haimovitz’s feet while maintaining a stable and resonant high note. The two performers give us nothing short of a grandiose musical experience, but as a contemporary “chamber opera” — smaller in scale and shorter in duration than “grand opera” — *Jacqueline*

defies tradition with accessible storytelling and creative stage design.

At the end of Part II: Super Nova, right before intermission, chairs hung on wires rise in the background as du Pré vocalises her agony. She has been diagnosed with a disease that hijacks her ability to play, the symptoms of multiple sclerosis including severe muscle pain, fatigue, and blurred vision.

That striking stage set-up is maintained and built upon in the second half of the show, where a chaotic pyramid of chairs looms at the back of the stage. Haimovitz ascends up the pyramid, taking his cello to the top. Above him hangs a record sleeve of du Pré’s album. Behind him, the curtains close gradually before the pained female protagonist, sitting centre-stage and directly below Haimovitz’s position, takes her dying breath in the lone company of her cello.

In addition to the evocative visual

composition, *Jacqueline* employs sound effects of crackling vinyl and a cello orchestra recording to immerse the audience auditorially. The piece exemplifies how modern opera production does not shy away from contemporary trends of fine arts. It makes use of modern stage equipment and technologies, which has led to the increasing precedence of the director, sound designer, and lighting artist in the operatic field.³

At the same time, the composer and the librettist remain vital roles in contemporary opera. The libretto (the text of an opera) marries the musical score to birth a story. Compared to theatre, opera has little to no spoken dialogue. Everything is told through song, so the libretto must be succinct and narratively effective. It is the composer, however, who steers the story’s tone and emotional trajectory using rhythm, tempo, and melody.

Jacqueline advances the artistic agency of women in opera, and has provided a platform for the multiple sclerosis (MS) community. Many MS patients and members of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada attended this opera. “I was deeply moved by an email from one man who has been living with the disease for many years and was impacted by the show on Saturday,” Woolf tells me.

It is encouraging to see companies like M3F and Opera Kelowna working together to break boundaries in musical performance. As contemporary opera creation continues to evolve, we as audiences must also stay curious about various genres of art, especially those that have been coated in stereotypes for centuries.

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Jesus is Camp!

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

For much of my life the musical theatre genre had been one I avoided. The campiness that runs rampant through the writing and art design all seemed far too much. Possibly adding to this fear of camp was a Catholic upbringing, both in school and at home. The Catholics favoured the modest, and so did the aesthetics of my life at that point.

There were lines you could not cross in Catholic settings, things that could not be joked about. The Bible was one of these things. Later, I realized our school also thought being queer was one of those things. Our Religion classes talked about classic Bible stories like the prodigal son, the mustard seed, the good Samaritan, and others while simultaneously dising abhorrence and marriage equality. While we read these stories and I pondered my own identity, I had an epiphany: *Jesus is camp*.

Far be it from me to sound like a Bible camp counselor, but I had found something very deep-rooted in the Bible that was theatrical, especially when juxtaposed with the demure masses I attended each Sunday. The stories were so dramatic, with every action taken by Jesus being ripe with symbolism and often bizarre. Beyond the Bible itself, the pageantry of the papacy with its opulent architecture and clothing flying in the face of the Franciscan brought even more substance to this lingering feeling. This feeling about Catholicism lay under the surface until I watched *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Jesus Christ Superstar is a musical written by Tim Rice and composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The film adaptation



Image provided by Sabhya Arora

directed by Norman Jewison is the version of the story I watched, which came out in 1973. Due to the decade, much of the costuming is very over-the-top, with colours, patterns, and bell bottoms everywhere. The music itself is reminiscent of rock, and draws on the rock opera genre that was popular at the time. All the colour and flash of the musical was on full display. It was entirely different from anything I had previously associated with Christianity.

The ancient sacred text of the Bible is one many believe should be altered drastically, that those words are meant to be followed exactly. In Christian minds, this absolute text contains all there is to be known about morals and guidance. *Jesus Christ Superstar* makes the bold decision to change a lot of what is directly said

about the story of the crucifixion. Judas is still the backstabber and skeptic who ultimately causes Jesus to be arrested before the crucifixion, but the musical takes special care to look at Judas and form a more understandable reason for his betrayal.

The song “Heaven On Their Minds”, which Carl Anderson belts beautifully in the film, is a song criticizing Jesus for losing sight of his original messages and instead putting the focus of his teachings on the afterlife. The song was so poignant to modern day discourse about Christianity and the people who follow it. The messages of the Bible are lost on those who only wish for salvation. I quickly found that upon the release of the original musical it had fallen under scrutiny from Christians for straying from the original story.¹

The sacredness of the Bible prevented them, at the time, from seeing the modern day importance of the portrayal of the story. The film is now considered a ‘cult’ classic, and the message rings true for many Christians. However, it was only after a long time that they arrived here. *Jesus Christ Superstar* is a film that rocked people’s perceptions of the crucifixion story because it reframes the historical context of the Bible to fit with modern discussions — discussions about how people see Christianity and the issues that can come with an improper understanding of the messages it tries to teach.

The truth is, the Bible as a text is difficult to directly apply to modern scenarios. It promotes slavery and extreme sexism in a time nobody on earth was alive to be in. As Western society progresses forward, one would expect that the religion that was used to justify its inception would progress alongside it to guide people’s morals. It is difficult to move on from the past when modern Christians often refuse to examine the death and destruction their religion caused during colonization across the world.

I wish there would be more creative interpretations, recreations of the stories in the Bible like in *Superstar*. But in order for those to exist, the fundamental structure of the Church must be uprooted and material reconciliation to the countries and societies harmed is achieved.

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Bias & Narrative

BY AIDEN MALCOLM

Bias is unavoidable in nearly every field. However, even today it is treated as something that can be dismissed. It is another part of writing that can be improved on, an ambiguous version of diction. Major news outlets proclaim their stories as “free from bias” and deride competing networks for their biases. This claim simply isn’t true. Bias is an irremovable fact of life, definitionally part of the models we construct to tell stories as long as storage remains limited.

Bias is a prejudice, both conscious and unconscious, that imparts a specific perspective on a story. It need not be intentional, nor malicious. It is not lying about something, which is a different and much worse problem.

The only time something can truly be unbiased is when it is definitionally so. For example: it is 9 degrees Celsius outside. This is a single data point, an abstraction that does require context, but a finite and knowable amount, a self-contained human-defined attribute. All context which is required to understand that information, like what temperature is a measure of, is a knowable and communicable amount of data. Unfortunately, stories are not single data points, but a combination, and shaped by an amount of data which is not communicable. This is what makes a story, the combination of data points which form a narrative.

Narratives, understood here as a sequence of events retold to convey



Graphic provided by Iso Maanad Rodriguez

meaning, as much as they appear to be so by humans, do not form naturally. While events might happen in a sequential order regardless of human existence, it is humans that ultimately derive meaning from these stories. We define who the heroes and villains are, whether a victory was a glorious win for all things good, or the ultimate triumph of evil.

A story is shaped by what is included but is defined by what is not. Bias stems from this fact. As long as storage space and recording techniques remain unable to exactly replicate a given situation, bias will creep in. We cannot include all relevant details in any story we tell, as a complete recreation would involve extreme space to record the most minute de-

tails, people must leave some details out. This contextual information shapes the story in immutable ways, subtly shaping perception. People must make subjective decisions on what to not include, and this is the origin of bias.

This is exemplified best by newspaper stories. Newspaper stories, since they are stories, must always omit something. Take someone covering a murder scene. They go to the scene of the crime, and record details they believe are relevant. Say these are the estimated time of the murder, the suspects, what could have been used as the murder weapon, and a brief description of the scene of the crime. While this seems unbiased, and the information that is included is not necessari-

ly biased, the story remains biased. This is because the writer had to leave details out of the story. These details, whether they were the murder victim’s economic situation or the fact they owed someone \$50 000, form some part of the story. Ultimately, the devil is in the details.

Some would say that none of it matters. If everything is subjective it ceases to be a useful category, and we should simply redefine it. This is not the case. Individual, and even a collection, of data points can be objective as long as they lack a narrative, so there remains a useful distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Even within the dimensions of subjectivity, however, there is still meaning, and important distinctions can be made. Subjectivity is not a monolith, but a continuum.

As such, subjectivity must be acknowledged to preserve the integrity and truthfulness of media. This can be done in the form of positionality statements; instead of acknowledging privilege, storytellers who seek to keep bias from their work could acknowledge potential sources of bias. With bias acknowledged consumers can move past the currently meaningless objective versus subjective distinction. If a news network lies, it will not be able to hide behind the label of “bias” or partisanship but instead be forced to acknowledge what is subjective interpretation and what is a lie.

Old Spice, a Cowboy Hat, and “You Are My Sunshine”: What a Memory Café Looks Like

BY JUHI SARVAIYA

What makes you, “you”? It is not just your face or your personality; it is your memories. The people you love, the songs that get stuck in your head, the stories you carry, all those little experiences shape how you move through the world. Now, imagine that very foundation starts shifting over time. This is the reality for many living with cognitive decline and dementia.

On March 2, 2026 the Memory Café took place in the UNC Ballroom with over fifty attendees. The event welcomed people with cognitive decline and dementia, their families, their caregivers, and community members to connect and learn about supports, so that we as a society can become more dementia friendly.

Memory Cafés, according to the program organizers, are designed for connection and not pity. They are meant to make dementia feel less like something that is whispered about in private, and more like something we can talk about, learn about, and respond to as a community.

The afternoon started with reminiscence therapy, a non-pharmacological approach that uses sensory cues like photos, music, and physical items to help people recall past experiences. Each table had printouts of scenes and objects, and people took turns sharing what it reminded them of, be it a person, a job, a childhood memory, or a smell.

One man shared how a picture he saw reminded him of the smell of Old Spice and a one-night stand from decades ago, making the room erupt in laughter. You realize how many memories live in everyday things, and how quickly they can



Image provided by Sabhya Arora

bring someone back to themselves, even if only for a moment.

From memories, we moved into something more playful: improv. Each table was given a physical object, and the task was to build a story together using the classic improv rule, “yes, and.” There were cowboy hats, measuring instruments, fruits, and more. The point was to practise responding with openness instead of correction. “Yes, and” is one of many improv games that help caregivers understand how to be more present with a dementia patient.

Barb Stewart, the program manager and organizer, described the cafés as more than a one-off gathering. “Memory Cafés are participatory action research pilots,” she shared. “As action, we are searching for more ways to build dementia-friendly communities. We are close-

ly looking at what works, what does not work, and getting answers from the community. We are on our knees searching for answers because it is a pressing issue now.” You could sense the urgency in the room. Dementia is not an abstract topic when you have watched someone you love live through it.

This was highlighted in Postcards from Yesterday, a short musical by the Showtime Theatre Company from Penticton. The play explores memory loss not only as an individual experience, but as something that changes relationships. The musical uses familiar songs, and it was heartwarming to see people in the audience join in when “You Are My Sunshine” and “Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera)” played. The play creates comfort through familiarity while making room for memory to surface.

The musical was followed by a brilliant Q&A panel with researchers, caregivers, people with careers in gerontology, and someone who has been living with dementia for ten years. The panel focused not only on medical care and facilities, but also on the community aspect — what makes an environment safer, kinder, and more usable for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

Everyone present in the audience was attentive and enthusiastic about understanding how communities could help. They spoke about the need for better facilities and programming, but also more subtle issues that shape everyday life, from stigma and education to accessible support groups and the emotionally overwhelming experience that caregivers go through while trying to keep everything afloat.

Pamphlets and resource cards covered every table, providing information about dementia, cognitive decline, and caregiver support. It was information you could take home, but it also showed that this is not a problem families have to figure out alone.

One line that was shared during a discussion struck a chord: memory is not just what happened, it is what we carry with us. The love, the laughter, the stories. Even when details shift and things become vague, the meaning does not disappear. Memory Cafés run across BC. They offer a model of what it looks like when a community chooses to respond, not with ignorance or avoidance, but with programming, conversation, art, and genuine care.

This Is Home: Remembering Tumbler Ridge After Tragedy

BY ERIN SAWICKI

Tumbler Ridge is known for its mountain landscape, fossil beds, waterfalls, and the sense of safety that comes with small town life. It is a northern British Columbia community shaped by resource work and outdoor culture, where people recognize one another at the grocery store and children grow up playing in the same parks.

For many who grew up there, including myself, it is home. I spent my childhood riding ATVs on forest trails, jumping into Flatbed Falls in the summer, and meeting friends after school in neighbourhood parks. Life there felt uncomplicated.

That is why news of the recent mass shooting has shaken residents, former locals, and communities across the province.

According to authorities, the incident occurred on February 10 at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School, my former high school. Emergency services responded quickly. Police later confirmed that six people were killed at the school and more than 25 others injured. The suspect was found deceased at the scene. Two additional victims were discovered off site, and three people were airlifted for treatment, one of whom later died in transit, bringing the total death toll to ten, including the shooter. Investigators say the situation has been contained and that inquiries into what led to the attack are ongoing.

With a population of just over 2,700, Tumbler Ridge is the type of place where news normally travels about hockey games, school events, or small town happenings. That was underscored this week when Trent Ernst, a long-time local reporter and former publisher of the



Caroline Attwood on Unsplash

Tumbler Ridge Newspaper, remarked that only days earlier the paper had run a story about a family of ducks walking through downtown. I grew up with his daughter and have known the family for years, which made that detail land especially hard.

This was not the kind of headline anyone expected to see.

When I first heard the town was in lockdown, I immediately began texting friends to find out what had happened and to make sure they were safe. Those messages spread outward to people I had not spoken to in years. Former classmates, neighbours, and friends who had long since moved away were suddenly talking again.

Checking in meant more than casual concern. It meant hearing about teachers who had been working that day, classmates who had been inside the school, families waiting for news, and people beginning to learn who had been killed. In a community this small, names travel quickly. The same words appeared again and again in conversations.

I cannot believe this happened. I am devastated.

Students from Tumbler Ridge now studying in Kelowna or elsewhere will recognize that pattern. Phones buzzing between classes. Group chats lighting up. Calls home to parents and siblings. Distance does not make a hometown tragedy feel smaller.

Messages of condolence have poured in from across the province and the country. Local leaders thanked first responders and offered sympathy to families who lost loved ones. Prime Minister Mark Carney and British Columbia Premier David Eby released statements following the attack. "This is a devastating day for our community," Eby said. "Our thoughts are with everyone impacted, and we are committed to supporting those who are grieving."

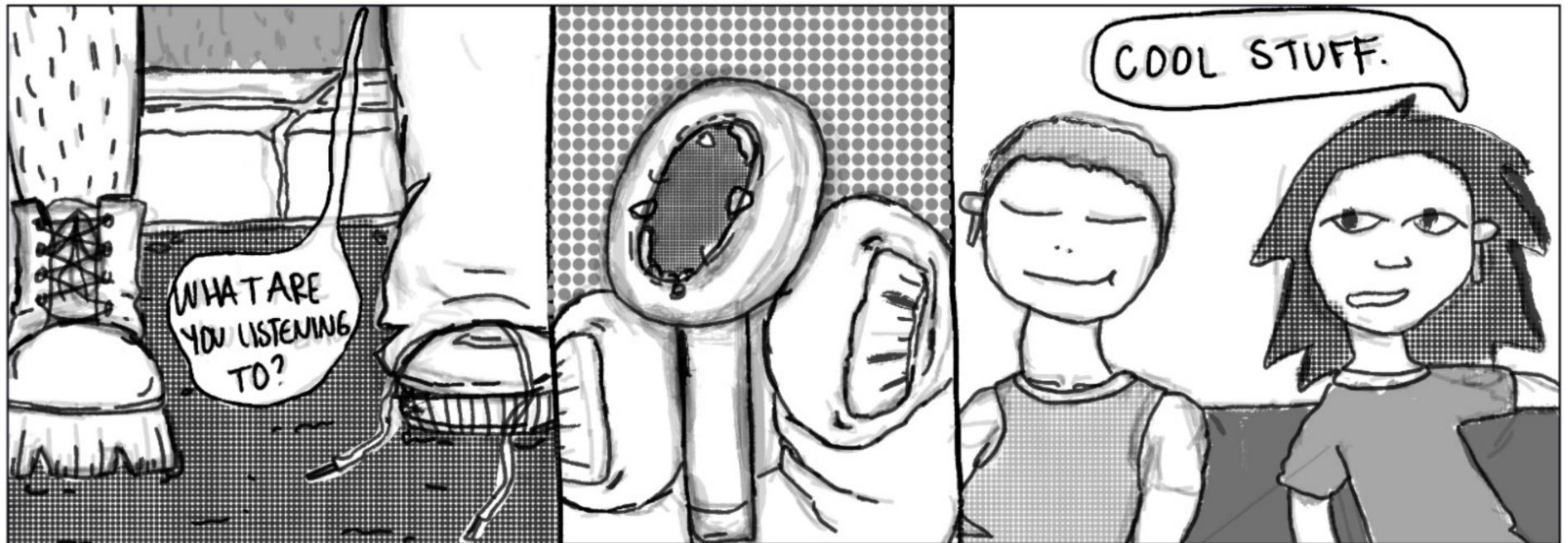
Reading about the events from afar feels surreal. These are streets I once walked and classrooms I once sat in. Tumbler Ridge is where I learned what community meant, where strangers became neighbours and neighbours became family. It is difficult to imagine such violence unfolding there.

Former residents across British Columbia and beyond have echoed that disbelief online.

In the days ahead, investigations will continue and more details will emerge. For now, Tumbler Ridge is left to mourn not only the community itself, but the many people who remain connected to it long after moving away.

What will endure is what has always defined the town, the way people show up for one another.

For students from Tumbler Ridge now studying away from home, on this campus and others across the province, the grief is not distant. It is personal, and it is shared by all of us. I will be praying for Tumbler Ridge.



Graphic provided by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

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CROSSROADS

by Brendan James

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