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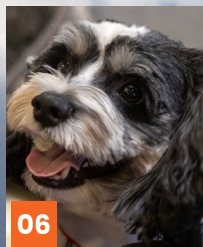
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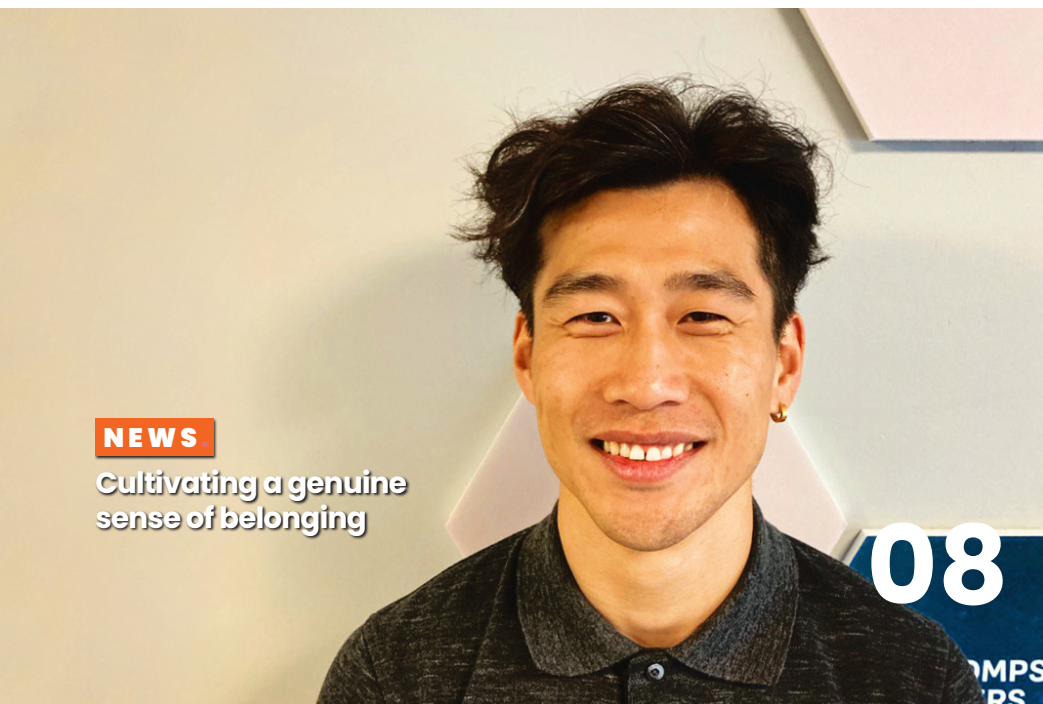
A new campus landmark, the WolfPack flag, was raised near the Campus Activity Centre in September. Photo Robert McAlaster



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the **Omega** theomega.news

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ROBERT MCALASTER/THE OMEGA

Paralympian gold medalist Greg Stewart (left) stands next to Olympic gold medalist Ethan Katzberg (right) in Kamloops.

Olympic Gold returns to Kamloops

In an emotional ceremony, Kamloopsians welcomed their champions home

DEIVEEK AGARWAL CONTRIBUTOR

Saturday, Sept. 21, marked a historic day for the city of Kamloops as its Olympic and Paralympic athletes returned home to a hero's welcome. The 2024 Paris Games were a resounding success for Canada, with 27 medals won. Among those celebrated were a number of athletes who made Kamloops proud.

The homecoming ceremony was filled with emotion and gratitude. MP Frank Caputo thanked the athletes and coaches for their exceptional representation of Kamloops on the world stage. MLA Peter Milobar highlighted the significance of Kamloops' sports facilities in producing such talented athletes.

Ethan Katzberg, the first Canadian to win gold in hammer throw at the Olympics, was a standout among the returning champions.

"My goal was to get on the podium...nothing else mattered," Katzberg said,

reflecting on his journey, the support of his coach Dylan Armstrong, and his determination to continue striving for greatness.

Armstrong, a two-time Olympic gold medalist himself, reflected on the intense training regimen that led to their success and expressed hope for future triumphs.

"It was a lot of work obviously involved," Armstrong said. "I think Ethan and I were gone away for a total of 7 months maybe for training camps so we really went after it and obviously it turned out very well... Ethan threw over 84 meters on his first try and you could see what happened to the rest of the guys."

For paralympic gold medalist Greg Stewart, the Paris games represented a chance to make up for a lost moment.

"There was nobody to celebrate with me [at the Tokyo games]," Stewart said, recalling the contrast between the empty stadiums of the 2020



Two gold medals hang around the neck of paralympian Greg Stewart

Tokyo Olympics and the atmosphere of Paris.

"This time my family was there, and my dad gave me the biggest hug of my life," he added, describing the joy and relief of sharing his victory with loved ones. Stewart also extended his gratitude to his coach, Dylan Armstrong, whom he called "the foundation of throwing in Kamloops," for his invaluable guidance.

While Kelly Olynyk, captain of the Canadian Basketball Team, was unable to attend, his absence was felt by the community.

Another notable absentee was four-time Olympian Catherine Pendrel, who was coaching in Harpar.

The homecoming event was a celebration of achievement, perseverance, and the power of community. It was a reminder of the incredible talent and dedication that exists within Kamloops and a source of inspiration for future generations of athletes. As the city looks ahead, there is a sense of excitement and anticipation for the continued success of its sports stars.

Ground broken for Indigenous Education Centre

Construction on the new \$22-million facility is expected to start soon

EAGLE ANDERSEN NEWS EDITOR

Ground was broken on Sept. 19, signalling the beginning of TRU's new Indigenous Education Centre, which is expected to be completed by 2026.

The groundbreaking was officiated by TRU's Secwépemc Cultural Advisor Ted Gottfriedson, who first introduced his daughter, Alexis Gottfriedson, to perform a Secwépemc prayer.

After this, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Kúkpí7 (Chief) Rosanne Casimir gave a brief greeting, followed by a welcome and an honour song performed by various Indigenous singers and drummers on site.

"We sang the welcome song, which is an important part of our traditions," Gottfriedson explained. "We also sing another song, an honour song. We sing it to honour our guests; we sing it to honour ourselves."

Next, Chancellor DeDe DeRose took to the podium, acknowledging the connection between the new building and Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.

"For many of our people, education has never been easy and our



*Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Kúkpí7
(Chief) Rosanne Casimir*

communities have carried the weight of painful histories of families torn apart by residential schools," DeRose, said.

"This event is significant because it signals a change in post-secondary education at TRU that's been a long time coming."

TRU President Brett Fairbairn also addressed the audience during the event. "We are celebrating the start of something deeply meaningful. I

believe that Secwépemc [people] have always understood that the land is a living entity that sustains and connects us," Fairbairn said.

The event concluded with the ceremonial groundbreaking.

While Fairbairn and Board of Governors Chair Hee Young Chung overturned the dirt with shovels, Casimir and DeRose were given two handcrafted pětse—traditional digging sticks used by Secwépemc women—crafted specifically for the occasion by Secwépemc artist Ed Jensen.

"These are traditional digging sticks of our people. These were owned by the ladies in our communities, and they were theirs forever," Gottfriedson said.

According to DeRose, once it is finished, the space will serve an important purpose.

"We are celebrating a space that, when complete, will welcome TRU's Indigenous students, faculty, elders, community and anyone who wants to be connected with Secwépemc values and ideals — a holistic living centre to learn, heal, grow and thrive on our terms in our way."



Professor elected to Royal Society of Canada

ANNA MONTANER STAFF WRITER

Last month, Roderick McCormick, a professor and BC Innovation Chair in Indigenous Health at Thompson Rivers University, was elected a Royal Society of Canada Fellow.

This recognition, the highest honour an individual can achieve in Canadian social sciences, comes from his years of research in Indigenous health, mental health, suicide prevention, capacity building and community wellness.

"When I was teaching psychiatrists in residency at Riverview Hospital, I asked what they did in their downtime, and they all said something related to nature," McCormick said. "And so I thought, you guys use nature in your own healing. Why don't you use it with your patients?"

The research has attracted more than \$50 million in funding, enabling TRU and McCormick to create a course

focused on nature healing called Healing from the Land. This grad-level course was intended for Indigenous students but was filled within days by students from a multitude of backgrounds.

"Most of these international students often know more about healing from the land than North American students, which is more of their tradition and is good to have in class," McCormick said.

Before he arrived at TRU, McCormick had the opportunity to train and work in different areas of education and health.

During his years as a high school counsellor in the Yukon, McCormick helped at-risk students create a peer support group with the purpose of preventing suicide. In the four years this program ran, there were no teen suicides registered in the province.

The importance of capacity building is

one area McCormick highlights. His contributions come from training mental health professionals to create an environment where Indigenous people can heal themselves.

"Empowerment, empowering people to realize that they can do research, and yeah, build capacity in Indigenous mental health."

While McCormick will continue to add to and work on his research, he recently joined a grant looking at climate change and Indigenous youth and will be conducting an experiment using his knowledge of Morita therapy, a Japanese therapy based on balance.

"On one side, you've got fears, but for every fear, there's a corresponding desire," McCormick said. "If you cave into the fear, the fear's going to get bigger and be even harder next time. But if you take action, the fear has done its job, and it diminishes."

Parking at TRU: New vendor, same frustrations

EAGLE ANDERSEN NEWS EDITOR

Students, old and new, are voicing their opinions about the state of the university's parking as the semester kicks into gear and the new parking contractor takes over.

Concord Parking became TRU's official parking vendor on June 1, following the expiration of the previous vendor's contract.

Zaryab Bin Razi, a marketing student in his final year at TRU, has been paying just over \$62 for his monthly general parking pass since acquiring his car last year. Initially, Burkhuri lived in residence and said parking was not a concern. He now commutes to campus and has changed that opinion.

"In the morning, it's a mess," Bin Razi said. "My class starts at 8:30, and I usually come to TRU at 7:45 just to find parking. The available spots [I located] are at the McGill housing, nowhere near the university."

Students like Bin Razi who have parking passes are not necessarily guaranteed parking spaces. According to TRU, "parking is on a first-come, first-served basis," which Bin Razi



FAIZAL BUKHARI/THE OMEGA

Several vehicles circle Lot H searching for a parking spot

found out firsthand.

"Two weeks ago, I was looking for a spot, and my class was about to start. I had to park my car in the premium parking and pay on top of what I pay [monthly]."

As of Sept. 18, TRU had sold 1,873 total economy and general parking passes and has confirmed that there is no cap on the number of passes that can be sold. Per

TRU, there are currently 1,895 combined economy and general spaces on campus.

According to TRU's website, pricing has remained fixed, and no recent changes have occurred with the parking infrastructure. However, physical pay stations on campus have been removed, and students are expected to pay via card by scanning QR codes posted around the lots.

If drivers lack access to credit cards, Visa debit, or smartphones, they can make their payment at the parking office located in the CAC.

TRU tells the Omega they have monitored parking lots at various times and have determined that the university will "often have space available until mid-morning and sometimes beyond."

Additionally, they said that the specific time of year may exasperate the issue.

"Parking challenges are always heightened in September when those seeking parking are not aware of the challenges and the necessity of being on campus early to secure a spot," a statement from TRU read. "This challenge has been the case for many years, and it eventually subsides as the semester progresses,"

For inquiries regarding parking on campus, students are encouraged to contact Concord Parking by phone at 250-828-5369 or email at tru@concordparking.com from Monday to Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

University provides Summit Drive overpass update

EAGLE ANDERSEN NEWS EDITOR

Following a summer consultation process, TRU's proposed pedestrian overpass connecting East Village and the main campus over Summit Drive now has a recommended location.

JP Steiner and Associates, an independent third party invited by TRU, completed a study on campus in June to determine the final location. Two separate studies took place over the past 12 years to study the proposed overpass, but TRU felt one more was necessary.

"We brought [JP Steiner and Associates] in to look at all the important aspects of bridge location," said Matt Milovick, TRU's vice president of administration and finance.

Based on their consultation, the original northernmost location,

preferred by the city, is the best site.

"The city's preferred destination was based on data which was essentially 12 years old ... it needed some refreshing," Milovick said. "[JP Steiner and Associates] confirmed that based on everything, the 2012 recommendation is still the right recommendation."

TRU sent the report garnered from the study to the city, and they are awaiting confirmation from the city on this final location.

City of Kamloops' Development, Engineering and Sustainability Director Marvin Kwiatkowski confirmed that the city has received the report.

"Once city council has had an opportunity to digest that [info], we're more than happy to make that

document public," Milovick said.

The project was originally estimated to cost \$10 million, with the city and the university splitting the bill. However, Milovick said he would not be surprised if that figure has increased since the original projection.

"We are still interested in contributing \$5 million to a project, but not much beyond that," Milovick said. "It may be that [...] we find a way to build a structure within that \$10 million envelope."

The project aims to decrease the risk of road accidents by giving pedestrians an alternative to jaywalking across Summit Drive from East Village.

"It's a win-win for everybody. It connects the university to city cycling infrastructure," Milovick said. "We want to be part of the active transportation solution in the city."

Petting the stress away with therapy dog Thursdays

ANNA MONTANER STAFF WRITER

For more than a decade, TRU students have enjoyed weekly cuddle sessions with different puppies. This initiative began thanks to the partnership between St. John Ambulance and TRU's Wellness Centre.

Every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at least three dogs and their owners can be found by the Starbucks in Old Main.

Volunteers encourage students to walk up and ask any questions they might have about their dogs. They also provide treats, making it easier for students to connect with the puppies.

According to the National Institute of Health, the psychological benefits of petting a dog include stress reduction, better emotional responses and better mood — all things university students could benefit from.

It benefits more than just the students; Bridget Jensen and her dogs have been volunteers since the program started in 2013.

"I love bringing joy to the students, and it's a win-win thing for the dog, for myself, and for all the students and staff," Jensen said.

Jensen used to volunteer with her golden retriever, Molly. After Molly's passing, she started bringing Daisy, another golden retriever with a striking

resemblance.

Daisy is nine years old and loves getting attention from the students. Her favourite activities include running around the hills of Kamloops, swimming and retrieving balls or sticks. She is also a volunteer for the Royal Inland Hospital's therapy dog program.

"I think she thinks of it as coming to work," Jensen said about Daisy. "Outside she's very active and running and jumping, but here, she puts on a different hat and just loves to make people happy, just like me."

Lacey is another dog often seen on Thursdays. The 9-year-old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is a little more timid than Daisy, but she will still show her playful personality, especially if there's a treat nearby.

Then there's Charlie, who will wiggle his way into getting a treat from anyone. He is also a Cavalier King Charles



FAIZAL BUKHARI/THE OMEGA

Therapy dog 'trading cards' featuring Daisy the golden retriever

mixed with another unknown breed. He loves bringing smiles to students and snuggling with people close to him.

Students who might be nervous around dogs should still give Therapy Dog Thursdays a chance, says Jensen. All dogs have gone through training and have been evaluated by the program.

Stop by and say hello to TRU's furry friends on Student Street or, if weather permits, outside Old Main every Thursday. If you have any questions, you can direct them to St. John Ambulance.



Students urged to respect training dogs

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH STAFF WRITER

Faculty from the vet tech program have issued a release requesting that all dogs seen on and around campus with yellow bandanas tied around their necks be left alone, as they are currently participating in a specialized training program.

Julie Cho, a program assistant with the animal health department explained that the yellow bandana is a visual cue indicating that a dog may be anxious, easily agitated or simply need space. While the instinct to pet these animals may be strong, allowing them to maintain a safe distance is crucial for their well-being and that of those around them.

These dogs are a part of the veterinary department's comprehensive training

program, which focuses on providing the necessary support and care until they are ready to be adopted. Typically taken in from rescue and shelter organizations, dogs in this program undergo thorough health and behaviour assessments conducted by faculty, staff, and students.

The program runs through the entire academic year, with each dog receiving training for one semester before being placed in permanent homes. "We train them for some fundamental behavioral skills," Cho said. "For example, walking on a leash near human and car traffic, sitting, and other basic dog-walking manners."

In addition to behavioural training, these dogs receive extensive medical

care including routine bloodwork, urinalysis, veterinarian physical exams, vaccinations, and other health-related services. While caring for the animals, veterinary students gain invaluable hands-on experience integral to their program requirements.

Given that the dogs are still in training, they may exhibit nervousness around unfamiliar people. As a result, the program emphasizes the importance of giving these animals the space they need as they navigate the campus environment. "Our students may welcome questions from other TRU students while on their dog walk," said Cho, "but they would appreciate [being] asked first."

Search for new TRU president continues

Brett Fairbairn, the current university president, will retire in June

EAGLE ANDERSEN NEWS EDITOR

The university's third and final public presidential search townhall wrapped up earlier in September in the CAC's Mountain room, with the committee hearing from faculty and students about who should replace TRU President and Vice-Chancellor Brett Fairbairn after he retires in June of 2025.

From highlighting the importance of Indigenous consultation to the need for fundraising, the few in attendance presented a variety of issues that they hope the next president will address.

"The goal of the open forum is to provide the search committee with a diverse set of perspectives to help us carry out the search for TRU's next president and vice-chancellor," Board chair Hee Young Chung said.

Forum attendee Mei Lin Cheung, from TRU's alum department, said she wants a new president to extend their focus past future and current students.

"It would be great if the next president had a lot of experience keeping up with TRU alumni and engaging with them," she said. "Because the network is so much bigger than those [...] currently on our campus."

Participants also discussed which of TRU's features should be highlighted to attract strong candidates.

"TRU is in a unique position right now," said Katrina Harding from TRU Giving. "With the beginning of an emphasis on research and with our relationship with BC Wildfire Service, it's really a unique opportunity to solidify what TRU is going to be on the world stage."

Before this final event, two virtual forums were hosted in the summer, one in July and another in August.

"We've had staff [and] students, all with different comments on what they would like to see in the next president," Chung said.

One of the primary concerns shared by students during the summer townhalls, Chung shared, is the need for "a president who engages the students more."

The presidential search committee is comprised of 17 members, including university staff, administrators, board members, Indigenous representatives, and one student.

"We've tried to capture a lot of stakeholders and get feedback from them," Chung said.

A consulting firm, Boyden Canada, also assists with and oversees the search process.

"[Boyden Canada specializes] in helping educational institutions search for executives," Chung explained.



President Brett Fairbairn, September 2024

The expected appointment of a new president in the summer of 2025 will mark the fifth person to hold the position since TRU received full university status in 2005.

Although TRU's Board of Governors ultimately holds the power to appoint the next president under section 27 of the University Act, Chung said that input from the community is valuable.

Updates on the presidential search can be found on TRU's search website.



Bolivian students face financial troubles

PEDRO MORI CONTRIBUTOR

"I have 15 debit and credit cards from different banks in Bolivia. They all have insane restrictions," said Lara Romero, a fourth-year Journalism student from La Paz, Bolivia.

This lack of access to money is a common experience shared by Bolivian students studying abroad. Since the collapse of one of Bolivia's largest banks in 2023, the country has seen its dollar reserve decrease, leading to the government introducing monthly restrictions on international spending. In

April the limit for international spending was around US\$1000 a month; currently, it is as low as \$35 US per month.

The country has also seen the value of its currency slowly decrease. The exchange rate was 6.7 bolivianos per dollar for over a decade. Last month, it hit 6.91BOB per dollar. Street rates are much more transparent, with a current exchange rate of 10.78 per dollar.

This means that Bolivian students face an uncertain future. Unsure if they can pay

for tuition and housing while keeping food on their plates.

With capped working hour limit for international students, making ends meet is only getting harder, leading to further concern for an already ballooning problem.

TRU offers grants, scholarships and loans to help them with financial issues, along with the Wellness Centre and free therapy. However, direct information from the university on how to access these resources is missing.

To further complicate matters, some Bolivian students have communicated that a lack of understanding from people unfamiliar with the situation in Bolivia, leading to comments that come across as ignorant or even hurtful.

"Often, stereotypes [...] don't capture the full complexity of the situations," said Esther Chaparro, a first-year Business Administration student. "A deeper understanding can foster better empathy and connections."

Workshop helps create sense of belonging

TRU counsellor aims to connect newcomers to new homes

ANNA MONTANER STAFF WRITER

Finding friends and forging lasting relationships can be difficult for adults, even more so if you're an international student new to Canada. Thankfully, a new series of weekly workshops at TRU will help students overcome these challenges and find their place in the university community.

TRU Counsellor Mark Zhang started the Sense of Belonging workshop series, which provides students with the opportunity to gather and explore questions related to the challenges of cultivating friendships and social connections. The workshops began in the first week of the semester and will run until November 28.

After noticing a pattern in his previous institution, Zhang—who has lived in many different countries throughout his life—set out to create a workshop where students could share their experiences and build connections during their studies.

"I thought it would be nice to have a meeting where they can hear from each other and

learn from each other about these experiences," Zhang said.

For the past three years, Zhang has been running these workshops once a semester or, as last year, once a month. This year, however, is different, with Zhang now hosting workshops every Thursday through the Fall semester.

For Zhang, the weekly gatherings promise a deeper connection between attendees...so long as they show up.

"I'm confident now in my ability to run the workshop. Now it's just having to show up," Zhang said. "At some point, I got my hopes up and imagined 20 students showing up, and there were only two."

Speaking with the Omega, Zhang highlighted the efforts of the marketing and communications team, acknowledging that their efforts have allowed the workshop to flourish, even as attendance has been an ongoing issue.

Despite the low turnout during this first workshop, Zhang believes the workshop successfully created a welcoming space for

those who attended.

"I felt like we were able to share things that were helpful to each other, and it seemed like that conversation led to them completely making a connection by exchanging contact information," Zhang said.

"This series is meant to work as a drop-in, where students don't need to attend each one," Zhang said. "Each week, we explore a different aspect of belonging. Whether that's belonging in nature or belonging within yourself."

Zhang hopes that these workshops will help him gather data and information from the students, which will lead TRU to change how it welcomes newcomers to the institution.

While the university has been working towards events that gather students together, like the Welcome Back Barbecue and Clubs Day, Zhang notes a lack of individual groups creating connections.

"I wish there were more faculty groups within specific settings," Zhang said. "[Where you could] meet peers within arts



TRU Counsellor Mark Zhang, founder of the Sense of Belonging workshops

faculty, science faculty, trades, nursing ... [allowing] you to feel like you're not going to a place that's so new and strange."

The workshop is open to all TRU students, not just newcomers. Zhang hopes to bring in special faculty guests throughout the semester, but this will depend on turnout.

"A sense of belonging is a basic human need. However, we all have times when we feel like we don't belong and struggle to find that community," Zhang said. "So it is important for all of us to look for different ways [to] recognize that we are not alone in this battle."

No registration is required for the workshops, and students can drop in at the Inclusion and Wellness Activity Room (OM 1522) every Thursday at 1 p.m.



Student film to screen at Slamdance festival

AUGUSTUS HOLMAN ARTS EDITOR

TRU student and director Reno Anastasio will release his newest horror-comedy film, *Attack! Of the Viper and Cobra* at the Slamdance film festival in Los Angeles, Calif. from Feb. 20–26, 2025.

According to the IMDb synopsis, the plotline follows the story of a woman named Alex who receives a surprise birthday gram from two low-budget strippers, Viper and Cobra. As a closeted lesbian, Alex is repulsed by the performances of Viper and Cobra and has a nightmare of her girlfriends being murdered by Viper's supernatural and disembodied leopard print thong.

"The plot dynamic pays homage to the slasher films of the 80s, like *Friday the 13th* or *Nightmare on Elm Street* where there's a killer who kills a whole bunch of people... then there's what film critics have tokened 'the final girl,'" Anastasio said. "The one major difference is that there's no blood in mine. At one point, I was thinking of marketing it as the first slasher-horror where not a single drop of blood is spilled because the way the thong kills the victims is by suffocation or electrocution."

The film's post-production is being completed this year, but filming started in 2011. Anastasio reported that the film took

longer than expected due to personal issues that occurred between filming and the completion of the project.

Attack! Of the Viper and Cobra took 14 years for Anastasio to complete, from the start of the filming process to the end of post-production. He reported that even though the film took longer than expected, the delay allowed for better editing software and special effects to be applied.

If the film does well after release, Anastasio said he would be willing to film a sequel, noting that his friend, actor Troy Fromin ("Ox" in *Saved by the Bell*), would like to star in it.

NDP club hosts immigration forum

EAGLE ANDERSEN NEWS EDITOR

Immigration was top of mind on Sept. 25 as Member of Parliament for Vancouver East Jenny Kwan video-called into the TRUSU NDP club's immigration forum at the TRUSU lecture hall to speak to supporters.

The event was one of several monthly forums the club expects to host this year. Club leader Levi Escobar, a fourth-year philosophy student, said this forum's inspiration was clear.

"We choose [event topics] democratically. If students come to us and suggest event ideas, we're going to take that into consideration. So many students came up to us about immigration... it was just overwhelming the demand for an immigration event."

Forty individuals registered for the event, and the 55-person capacity lecture was nearly full, including club organizers.

"It was a good way to start off the semester for us. There were some hiccups, like in any event," Escobar said. "[The event] turned out pretty well, all things considered."

During her presentation, Kwan emphasized the challenges that international students hoping to immigrate may be facing.

"Canada's immigration policies allow [and] facilitate exploitation," Kwan said. "Immigration should be recognized as a national building tool for Canada and we should recognize the contributions of the newcomers to Canada — whether you're an international student, a refugee or an immigrant."

These challenges come following an announcement from the federal government earlier in September that limited foreign enrollment at post-secondary institutions and put limitations on work permits from spouses of international students.

"When Canada needs the workers, the newcomers, the students to come to Canada, they will use the policies for what they need; but the minute things turn, they're also the first to be blamed for Canada's problems," Kwan explained.

Kwan also highlighted how housing challenges are impacting international students and Canadians at large.

"Housing is being built and used as a commodity to turn the biggest profit for the investors and the landlords," Kwan said.

Guest speakers are a staple of Escobar's NDP forums. Depending on who speaks, the presenter may present in-person or remotely, like in Kwan's case. He said he hopes to host an environment-themed event in the future.

According to Escobar, the club's membership has steadily risen over the last year. Currently, the club totals nearly 350 general members.

"We gained 200 members since the end of the winter semester last year. It's been massive... the growth," Escobar said.

Students can visit the TRUSU NDP Instagram page to participate in this growth or to find information on the club and future forums.

Students share election thoughts ahead of Oct. 19 provincial contest

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

As the 2024 B.C. election approaches on Oct. 19, the Omega asked students at Thompson Rivers University about the key issues that matter the most to them, whether they plan on engaging with the electoral process and the changes they would like to see within the B.C. provincial government. Here is what students had to say.

Omega: What issues are most important to you in this election?

Helen Pratt (HP): Housing and jobs because there are a lot of homeless people right now, and there is a housing crisis. There is not a lot of space, and people are struggling with finances and jobs right now. There are not enough jobs to go around.

Eric Maslen (EM): The current crisis in our healthcare system and the government's ongoing efforts with the opioid crisis.

Evan Rhode (ER): I agree with that. I would also add that access to housing in B.C. is a big issue.

Danika Schultz (DS): Healthcare and affordability for people around the province for housing and food like basic needs.

Levi Escobar (LE): The cost of living crisis and education. Especially rent and housing costs; grocery prices; and international [students'] tuition.

Omega: Do you plan to vote in the upcoming election? Why or why not?

DS: Probably not because I don't know much about the people running for elections."

LE: I will be voting in this election because I don't believe the BC Conservatives care about students

at TRU due to their consistent absence on campus, and I don't support their plan to defund university programs or to remove rental protections.

Omega: What changes would you like to see in the province's government?

HP: I would like to see more diversity and also more representation of people with disabilities and people that are of a lower social and income status to participate in the government. In the city council, there are a lot of older people; it would be nice if there were more younger people involved as well. I don't feel like there are enough young people involved within the city council.

EM: I would like to see electoral reform like switching to a proportional representation.

ER: Maybe more student tuition and debt relief for students, of course. More affordable housing and more access to healthcare for people with substance issues and mental health issues and more access to housing and for them to get the help they need.

LE: I would like to see the provincial government take real steps to reduce or at least cap international student's tuition province-wide; do more to protect international students from housing fraud and unfair market practices by predatory landlords; do more to defend our food security by defending the local & provincial agricultural sector, especially due to the fall of the B.C. Tree Fruits Cooperative; reduce the provincial voting age to 16, and give permanent residents the right to vote.

Artist Chat with TRU alum Kelly Perry

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH STAFF WRITER

The reasons that artists make art differ for each individual. Through this ongoing series, we want to explore them all. The Omega is interested in talking to diverse local artists at TRU and across Kamloops to discuss the complexities of art, why people make art and how it affects the artist and the viewer.

Gallery 635, a private gallery in downtown Kamloops, is located in the lobby of an office building on Victoria Street. Its interior features white tiled walls, beautiful modern décor, and a line of vibrant acrylic paintings that bring the space to life. Several of these paintings are displayed along the walls, with each canvas covered in a cluster of brightly coloured petals.

The flowery art pieces belong to Kamloops native and visual artist Kelly Perry. Perry has been painting for over two decades and is now presenting her newest exhibit, "If Plants Were Like People," at Gallery 635.

Speaking with *the Omega*, Perry described what brought this collection to life.

"The inspiration was what's going on in the world today in so many countries," Perry said. "Like with Ukraine and Russia, and all the innocent people dying on both sides. I studied all these countries intensely, and it made me realize that a lot of these conflicts have



FAIZAL BUKHARI/THE OMEGA

Local artist and TRU alum Kelly Perry at Gallery 635. Perry's exhibition, If Plants were like People, is on display until December.

been going on for so long. In many places, it's been going on for centuries. And that was hard to learn because I realized there was [little] I could do. So, I thought the only thing to do was try to bring a little bit of joy to people."

Each painting in her collection is based on a nation she explored during her research, many of which are embroiled in turmoil. From Saudi Arabia to Ukraine to Somalia, Perry's pieces tell

a familiar story of human struggle and anxiety.

"The hardest part for me, in all this, was seeing the suffering of people in all the different countries," Perry said. "It brought me down a little bit. Not to mention, I did all of this in eight months, which is a lot of work. But I did it."

A TRU alum, Perry credits her tenacity to her past struggles and unconventional path. "I went back [to school] after a 30-year relationship failed,"

she recalled. "I found myself lying on the ground outside, crying for my mother and my daughter. Then I thought, 'Kelly, get off the ground, or you're gonna die.' So, I applied to TRU, and they accepted me as an adult student. Four years later, I got my Bachelor of Fine Arts."

Perry was not always aware of her proclivity for art. "I never drew," she said. "I never did any of that. I think that just by experiencing loss, art became what I had to do to stay alive. I always say that art is my voice. If I sense things I cannot say, my art says it for me."

She spoke about TRU's recent decision to discontinue the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program.

"I know what [the Fine Arts program] does for people," she said. "Sometimes, you just don't have a voice, right? It doesn't matter how many people spoke up; it's gone. And sometimes, I think it's all about the money, but money doesn't make a better world."

Despite this setback, Perry's message to the young artists of Kamloops is clear: "I want them to know that there are no mistakes in art. Even at school, they try to tell you what to do, but art doesn't come from your head," she said, gesturing to her heart, "It comes from here. It comes from the soul."

Perry's collection, "If Plants Were Like People," will remain on display at Gallery 635 until December.

Revisiting the Groove Saloon

Vancouver-based psych-pop duo brings a twist to heartbreak with humour

ANNA MONTANER STAFF WRITER

Groove Saloon's Daniel McBurnie and Graham Gomez have released their second single, "Let Me Down." The duo retook music with their first release, "If I Don't Make It," only a few months prior.

The track highlights the band's unique style, blending outrageously funky basslines and shimmering synths with deeply emotional lyrics.

"The song is about the sort of cowardice that you can feel in a relationship that is stagnant," Gomez said. "I feel a lot of people have experienced that where one or both people are just waiting for things to happen on their own, and all the while life is happening around you."

"The song 'Let Me Down' is not so much a lament of 'you're supposed to feel sorry for the voice,'" McBurnie said. "It's almost poking fun at itself because the voice is saying, 'Come on, go ahead, break up with me.'"

Similar to "If I Don't Make It," Groove Saloon created the video and song, which were both done entirely at home with virtually no budget.

"We've been doing it like that since we were young," McBurnie said. "It's not even a studio microphone; we have a live performance SM58 microphone set up on a stand, and that's what we track all our vocals with. It's hilariously [do-it-yourself]."



Vancouver-based tattoo artist Devon Sigurdson inadvertently inspired the duo by showing them an old animated short from their film school days called "Nugs Gone Wild."

Captivated by the quirky concept, McBurnie and Gomez transformed what they saw into a full Groove Saloon music video.

"In a way, the silliness of the video, by design, almost doesn't match with the mood of the lyrics, which has kind of been what we've gone for in

our first single," McBurnie said.

"I feel like [the animation] works with the video. It's silly imagery of this little nugget dancing around, and the voice [in the song] hasn't matured; it's just stuck in a loop," Gomez said.

Groove Saloon will release new songs in the upcoming months, hoping to turn them into a full EP.

"Let Me Down" is now available on all streaming services, as well as iTunes and Bandcamp.



WolfPack soccer back on the hunt

Men's soccer team looks to bounce back after last season

AIBI KE ALYMOVA SPORTS EDITOR

After a disappointing end of the 23-24 season, the men's soccer team returns with a roster full of new players.

Led by co-captain Domenico Comita the men's 'Pack is embracing its youthful roster this season.

"The biggest thing is just getting them immersed in the culture and showing them what we're all about ... [being] a hard, gritty team that is resilient and looks to do their best on and off the pitch."

Entering his fourth season with the Pack, Comita is a crucial player whom rookies look up to.

"I think the best this is to lead by example," Comita said. "I've been the type of player to do my best and I believe that the best way to

lead is to show up and bring a solid effort and let the others see it."

To him, the most surprising aspect of the new season has been how easily they've come together as a team and positively influenced each other.

"A lot of them are great people, and I love being with them," he said.

Looking ahead, Comita is focused on resilience and continuous improvement.

"The plan is to keep going no matter what struggles we face," Comita said. "We've got to be resilient and continue to improve as the year goes on."

Head coach John Antulov also reflected on the team's journey this season.

"It's different," Antulov said. "It takes me back to when we first started this

program back in '14. Everyone was new and fresh. Although we had our difficulties, we see a lot of positive things going into the second part of the season."

As a young team, the 'Pack is going through their highs and lows.

"There's been some hiccups," Antulov said. "There's been some ups and downs. Just having so many new players that have come in from different systems and trying to get everybody together. But it's a really good group of kids that are trying to buy into what we're doing here."

Antulov mentioned several players audiences should keep an eye on during this season, including Marcus D'Andrea, Abdel Coulibaly, Minwoo Kang, Lachlan Will, Lucas Kirnon and Ranjeet Brar.

— CROSSWORD —

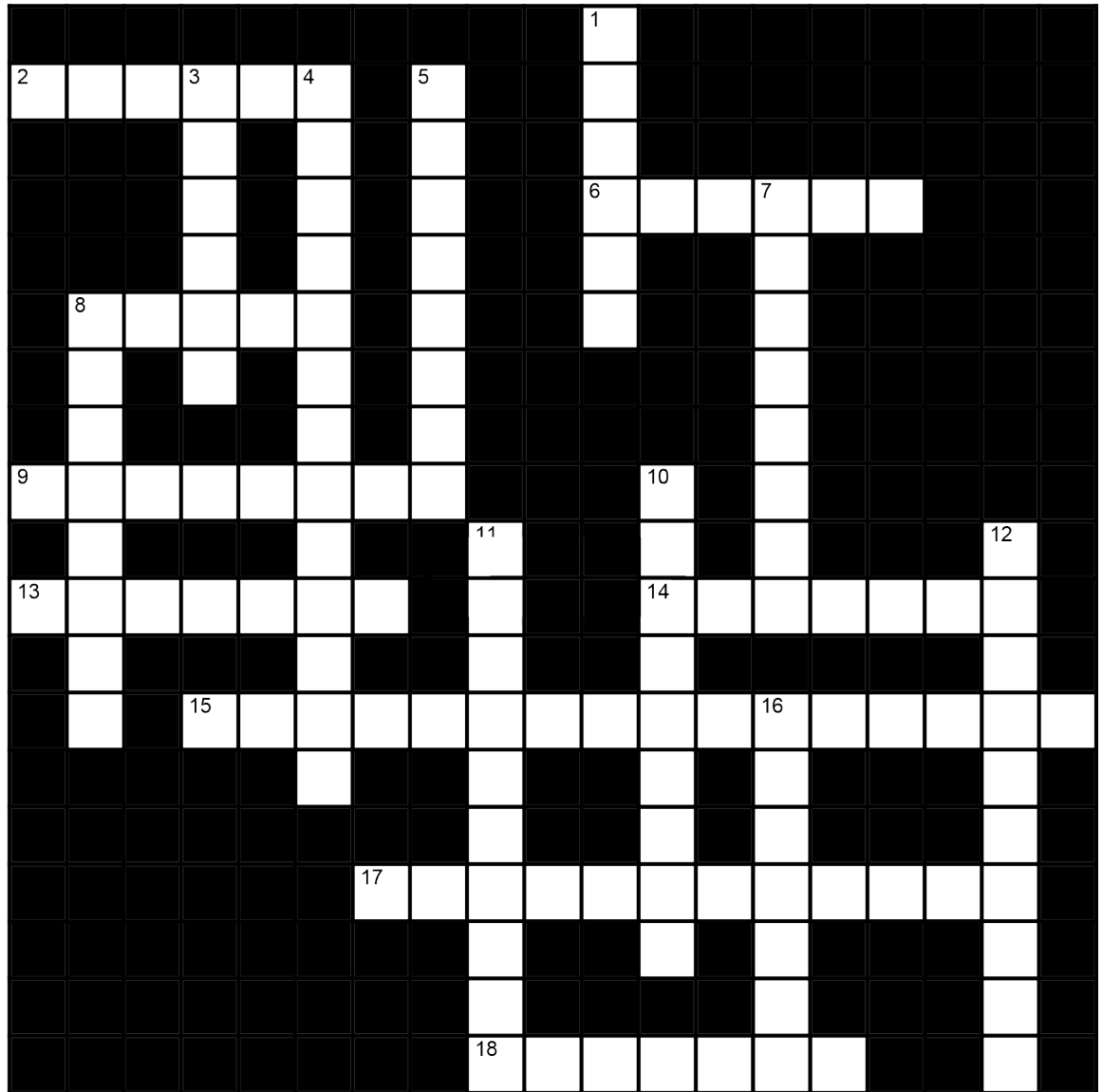
Geography Talk

ACROSS

- 2** Canada's largest province, by land mass (6)
- 6** This rocky geographical feature 'protects' the bulk of Ontario, some of the prairies and northern territories (6)
- 8** This northeastern U.S. state borders three Canadian provinces (5)
- 9** Home of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (8)
- 13** While it belongs to Washington, this point near Vancouver is only accessible by land through B.C. (7)
- 14** Canada's youngest northern territory (7)
- 15** Major cities in this hyphenated region include Kelowna, Kamloops, Merritt and Vernon (8-8)
- 17** A royal city of 76,000 people located near the geographical centre of B.C. (12)
- 18** Lakes abound in this region just east of Kamloops (7)

DOWN

- 1** The Thompson River joins this river in Lytton (6)
- 3** Canada's seldom visited largest island; the fifth largest island in the world (6)
- 4** This bridge connects Prince Edward Island to New Brunswick (13)
- 5** A Kamloops street or a river that flows through B.C. and Washington and Oregon (8)
- 7** Alberta's northernmost city over with more than one million inhabitants (8)
- 8** Winkler, Brandon, Gimli and Norway House are lesser known centres in this province (8)
- 10** Captain's namesake; B.C.'s largest city (9)
- 11** B.C. natural attractions at Harrison, Radium and Fairmont (10)



— SUDOKU —

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