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the **Omega**

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ROBERT MCALASTER/THE OMEGA

Activist group releases divestment proposal

ANNA MONTANER NEWS EDITOR

Thompson Rivers University is facing a call to divest from companies involved or aligned with Israel following the release of a detailed report by the activist group People's University of Gaza at Thompson Rivers University.

The proposal, presented in November, requests the university withdraw its investments from companies accused of complicity in human rights violations, particularly in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In June, TRU disclosed its investment portfolio in response to a freedom of information request filed by the group in May, as reported by the Omega. According to the release, a team of TRU faculty and individuals from the group carefully reviewed the disclosed documents over the summer and fall.

Their findings highlighted several companies the group alleges have violated international human rights standards, especially concerning the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The proposal identifies multiple companies with significant investments tied to the Israeli military and surveillance operations.

For example, Scotiabank, which TRU invests through, holds a substantial stake in Elbit Systems, a company the People's University states is "Israel's largest manufacturer of weapons" used in violations of Palestinian human rights.

Similarly, Microsoft is implicated through its provision of technology

to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

The divestment team, advised by TRU professors Peter Tsigaris (faculty of economics) and Alex Ng (faculty of accounting, finance & law), emphasized TRU's ethical responsibility to align its investment practices with its core values of inclusion, sustainability and community-mindedness.

The proposal calls for a thorough review of TRU's investment strategy, urging the administration to divest from companies associated with the Israeli occupation and its military operations until these companies demonstrate adherence to international law.

"TRU cannot uphold values of diversity and inclusion if it continues to financially support companies complicit in apartheid and crimes against humanity," states the divestment proposal.

The report claims TRU's investments in such companies are not only morally questionable but also pose financial and reputational risks for the university.

In January, the TRU Students' Union passed a motion calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and reaffirmed its commitment to Palestinian human rights.

In addition to divestment, the group is calling on the university to revise its investment policy to ensure it will no longer invest in any companies listed by international human rights organizations, including the United Nations Human Rights Council and the American Friends Service Committee, which are alleged to be "complicit in the surveillance, occupation,

human rights violations and murder of Palestinians by the State of Israel."

The proposal asks TRU's advisory team to conduct a more thorough review of the university's investments and provide a formal report on the actions taken by Jan. 31, 2025.

The proposal is part of a broader movement that seeks to hold institutions accountable for their financial support of companies linked to human rights abuses.

On Dec. 3, TRU responded to the press release with a brief statement.

"Last week, following the public posting of TRU's investment statements in June, TRU received a proposal for divestment from a student group.

"We will forward the proposal to our investment fund managers for review. TRU instructs our fund managers to follow the UN's Principles for Responsible Investment when making investment decisions. We are confident that our fund managers make financial decisions responsibly and in alignment with TRU's Investment Objectives Policy (BRD 22-0).

"We encourage everyone interested in TRU's responsible investment practices to visit our Investments web page, where we will post investment statements at least annually."

For TRU, the decision could have lasting effects, not only for its investment strategy but also for its relationship with students, faculty and the broader community, who are pushing for stronger ethical commitments in the wake of ongoing global conflicts.

Four events to keep you warm

There's snow-way you won't enjoy yourself at these holiday events

ANNA MONTANER NEWS EDITOR

December can be a difficult month for students not going home for the holidays. For those who don't want to try outdoor activities or are just looking for extra special events, here are four events you won't want to miss.

Stars on Ice with Elvis Stojko

On Dec. 13 at 7:00 p.m., the Stars on Ice Holiday Tour skates into the Sandman Centre.

The event will feature Olympic silver medalist Elvis Stojko, Olympic gold medalist Kaetlyn

Osmund, and many of the most accomplished figure skaters in the world.

Decemberfest with The Stir

On Dec. 14, hop down to the Stir and mix your sustainability and holiday spirit with Decemberfest. The Stir Maker Grazing Goat Charcuterie will be vending snacks. Guests can get a professional holiday photo taken, participate in the Evergreen bow-making station, enjoy a warm drink, pick up their Holiday Foodie Box, and more. The event is free to attend and will take place from noon to 4:00 p.m.



A holiday ornament sits on the tree at the TRU Bookstore.

The Stir is located at 185 Royal Ave. on the North Shore.

Holiday Grouch Acrylic with Sip & Paint

On Dec. 17, bring out the artist in you and join the Sip & Paint for a fun and festive evening at Westsyder Pub. Channel those 'grinchy' vibes and create your own mischievous holiday grouch acrylic masterpiece. The event runs from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$55 per person and can be found here.

The Westsyder Pub is located at

3369 Westsyde Rd.

New Year's Eve Dinner and Dance

Last but not least, on Dec. 31 ring in the New Year with a night full of delicious food and unforgettable memories with Colombo Lounge, featuring an appetizing meal and great music. Kick off the night with cocktails, followed by dinner, and then get ready to move and groove as you dance your way into 2025. Tickets for this event are \$100 per person and may be found on their website.

The Colombo Lounge is located at 814 Lorne St.



Embracing the spirit of giving this season

AUGUSTUS HOLMAN ARTS EDITOR

The first snow has arrived, and all Kamloops community members are feeling the cold. On Nov. 15 and 21, the Hygiene for Homeless club hosted a winter clothing drive on student street in Old Main for unhoused people experiencing Kamloops' harsh winters. In an interview with the Omega, club leader and nursing student Jessye Large shared how students can continue to help after their event.

Large told the Omega

that clothing donated during the drive will be donated to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) for distribution. CMHA will continue to accept donations of these winter items for students interested in helping the homeless community of Kamloops this winter. Other associations recommended by Large include The Mustard Seed and Out of the Cold shelter.

"The places we're [delivering items to] can be directly contacted [for donations]. I know with CMHA, they don't

even need to be contacted. You can donate right to their clubhouse if they're in small amounts, and the same [goes for] Mustard Seed. They accept things year-round. Right now, they're [in dire need] for winter clothing," Large said.

At this time of the year, warm and waterproof items are preferred for donation; however, the CMHA website states they take various physical donations, including blankets, towels, hygiene products, shoes and warm clothes year-round.

"Winter coats and winter pants are very sought after as they protect from wetness as opposed to sweaters that will get wet and eventually cold, even if [the sweater] is warm," Large said.

The Hygiene for Homeless club is still accepting donations of hygiene products. Donation boxes may be found scattered around campus, including in Old Main. Soap, shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, toothpaste, menstrual products and more can be donated to the shelters.

Discover the Media Information Centre

Equipment rentals, advising and a study space wrapped into one location

EAGLE ANDERSEN STAFF WRITER

Nestled in OM2651 on the second floor of Old Main is a space many students may not know exists: the Media Information Centre (MIC). This resource is accessible to all journalism, communications and visual arts students and serves multiple purposes.

For the uninitiated, the MIC currently acts as an equipment distribution space, providing technology like cameras, audio recorders, and other media-making accessories for class projects or personal use. And soon, new services will be added as well.

After adding new technology in recent months, an in-office program advisor is next on the checklist for the MIC.

"Students are really happy that there is somewhere they can go that has the resources that they need for these classes," said MIC work-study student Carly Kay. "A lot of this stuff is really expensive, and on a student budget, that's just not feasible."

According to Luke Redgrove, the journalism lab



Luke Redgrove., journalism lab technician

technician, equipment rentals are free and are also available to non-program students who are taking electives.

"We do get a lot of students that come in here ... asking what courses they need to take [for their degrees]. We don't have anyone trained to do that, but soon, we should have an advisor in here," Redgrove said.

The MIC also provides technical assignment help and offers info on career opportunities and

program-specific events.

Although not yet confirmed, Redgrove hopes to expand the MIC's technical support and provide academic advising for the winter semester.

This year, the MIC expanded its catalogue to include virtual reality equipment. The Meta Quest 2 is available for rental for course-specific students on their site, but curious students can test the equipment out under supervision in the MIC.

"Not a lot of students know that we have this stuff, which

is a shame because a lot of it is really cool," Redgrove said. "It's about educating the students as far as what the workforce is gonna be like for their generation. These big companies are really pushing immersive media as the new smartphone."

Redgrove also explained that the MIC has 3D printers that most students need to be aware of.

"Those [3D printers] are severely underutilized, and I want more students to use them," Redgrove said. "We have it all set up in the back for any student working on an assignment that involves 3D printing."

Table space is available inside and outside the office, which some students use to study or work on group projects.

The MIC website and social media pages also feature course updates, job opportunities, scholarship announcements and other relevant information. Visit the Media Information Centre in room OM2691 to learn more.



Food service survey says local vendors a priority

ANNA MONTANER NEWS EDITOR

A recent survey revealed student's feelings regarding TRU's food service. In October, external consultants created a survey for students and faculty regarding their opinions on the food services around campus. TRUSU helped share the survey on their social media and respond to the needs shown.

The TRUSU service committee oversees many of the student-run food

services on campus.

Jannat Bhullar, TRUSU's university affairs committee executive shared her thoughts on the programs TRUSU and TRU have worked on regarding food services.

"One of the issues [recieved] during the feedback session is that students feel there's not enough vegan, Halal, and vegetarian options on campus," Bhullar said.

Only two of the food services on campus have Halal

options available: The Den and The U & M Deli. While all the services provide a vegetarian option, students also have concerns about the origin of the food.

"Something that students voiced is they want to see TRU explore more local and non-branded options on Campus," Bhullar said.

Of the dining options on campus, the Den, the U & M Deli, and the Workbench — located in the Trade and

Technology building — are the only places marked as using locally grown ingredients.

The Scratch Café and Esters Market received praise for both their products and the prices.

The external consultants will soon have a report ready that could potentially influence the master plan for 2025. Meanwhile, TRUSU will continue to provide their monthly Chef's Packages and Community meals every other Thursday.

Solarization project generating change

When complete the panels will help to power a cleaner, greener campus

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) has announced that it will be launching a solar energy project that aims to install nearly a thousand solar panels on campus within the next five years.

As a part of this project, TRU is working towards achieving zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The first phase of the solarization project will bring 540 photovoltaic (PV) solar panels to three buildings on campus: the Arts and Education Building, the Campus Activity Centre and the Industrial Training and Technology Centre.

Touching on the solarization project's scale and phased rollout, James Gordon, manager of sustainability programs, said that it would take approximately five years to install around 1,000 solar panels on campus.

"Within that five years, a little less than 1,000 solar panels — I think it's around 980, will be done in several

phases. We know the first phase is moving ahead. There will be 540 solar panels installed on three campus buildings. These buildings were chosen for their structural suitability to handle the added weight of the panels," Gordon said.

The project's alignment with the Low Carbon District Energy Systems [LCDES] will enable TRU to transition its heating systems from natural gas to electrically produced hot water, distributed through a network of underground pipes from a soon-to-be-constructed energy center.

"The big reason is that this ties in with the LCDES," Gordon said. "At the essence of that, we are going to get away from using fossil fuels, specifically natural gas, to heat the inside of buildings on the campus, almost all the major buildings on the campus."

This shift is part of a wider mandate in British Columbia to decrease reliance on fossil fuels for energy.



An example of what the solar panels to be installed at TRU may look like.

In addition to benefiting the environment, TRU's solarization project will serve as a hands-on educational opportunity for students.

According to Natalie Yao, energy manager, the project will give students within the trades program the opportunity to gain practical experience by observing and participating in various stages of the solar installation process.

"Their instructor will direct them through the whole process," Yao said.

As TRU students learn

from this sustainable energy project, they will contribute to TRU's goal of achieving zero carbon emissions by 2030. This combination of student learning with TRU's renewable energy goals reinforces TRU's commitment to sustainability and education, building a greener future for the campus community.

With installations scheduled to start in early 2025, TRU's solarization project is a step forward in its goal of creating a greener future.



Climate action grant applications now open

ANNA MONTANER NEWS EDITOR

The City of Kamloops is now accepting applications for the 2025 Climate Action Grant program, which provides funding to support community-driven climate action initiatives.

This program aims to assist residents, non-profit organizations, and charities in advancing projects that contribute to the city's climate action goals. It offers grants of up to

\$2,000 with \$20,000 in total funding available from the city's Climate Action Reserve.

To be eligible for funding, projects must demonstrate a direct benefit to the community, aligning with the priorities outlined in the Climate Action Plan. This includes initiatives that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance community resilience, or support the development of a healthier urban ecosystem.

Projects should foster neighbourhood pride, improve community wellness, and adhere to principles of equity and climate justice.

Project examples could include textile recycling and clothing swap events, community gardening and planting initiatives, and repair events to reduce waste.

These types of community-based actions can play a critical role in both

mitigating climate change and promoting sustainable practices at the local level.

Applications for the 2025 grant program will be accepted until Jan. 13. Interested individuals and groups are encouraged to submit their proposals early and ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

Visit the City of Kamloops website for more information about the 2025 Climate Action Grant program.



Kamloops servers struggle in unstable industry

JENNA SPENCER CONTRIBUTOR

Kamloops servers are experiencing job instability and increased financial strain as the local restaurant industry struggles with rising inflation and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The restaurant industry in Kamloops has been at the mercy of an economic downturn, which has created difficulties not only for business owners but also their employees. As inflation and the changes in customer behaviours related to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to create challenges for local restaurant owners, servers are confronted with inconsistent work hours and job instability, leading many servers to be forced to take on multiple jobs.

Maeghan Summers is a partner in two local Kamloops restaurants that form the Noble Pig Group.

"I think it's very challenging to go into this industry," she said. "I think there's a lot of disillusionment to what it actually takes. We need to understand that there are going to be changes that occur in our industry, and it's because of the inflated cost that it is to operate."

This economic strain affects servers and restaurant owners

and has broader implications for Kamloops' economy.

Financial pressure has been a common issue among business owners, servers, and consumers alike. The rising costs have affected how customers tip and how often they dine at restaurants, directly impacting servers in Kamloops. Grace Balon, a first-year nursing student at TRU and a server for three years, has noticed a change in the behaviour of her customers' spending.

"You'll see the nicest people and they'll tell you how amazing [you were as a server] and they wish that they could tip you more. So, you can tell people are struggling," she said.

Summers has noticed the same trend in her downtown restaurants. "Guests don't have the same dollars to spend," she said.

Keanen Bromley, a fifth-year business student at TRU who has worked in the restaurant industry for ten years, agrees that changes in customer spending have impacted his work. "We have to raise our prices, but I'm the one who has to go out and deal with the people so it can be challenging sometimes. I've had people come in, sit down and look at prices, and decide that they don't eat there."

Balon and Bromley,

juggling roles as students and servers, understand the struggle to keep up with the rising costs. "People are trying to save money, which is totally fair. I get that," Bromley said. The restaurant industry has seen a shift in customer behaviour post-pandemic.

"People just aren't going out to eat," Bromley said. "We just don't get as busy as we used to."

When he first started serving, the summer season would have restaurants packed. "It'd be go, go, go the entire shift," Bromley said, "and now, during the summer, we probably have two less staff."

Both students have had to change jobs multiple times and hold more than one position simultaneously due to fluctuating hours and income. "It's such a draining job," Balon said. Bromley has noticed a very high turnover rate for employees working in restaurants. He said that it is difficult for servers, especially those who are students, to find and maintain steady employment. "Lots of restaurants are seasonal. You have your seasonal high in the summertime and they hire like crazy. Then winter rolls around and there's not enough shifts to go around," he said.

Summers, who has worked

in the hospitality industry for thirty-one years said, "The inflation factor is real. Let's be honest. We've had multiple minimum wage increases. We have the employer health tax go through, and it came through at a time when we were transitioning into the global pandemic." She thinks that restaurant owners need more assistance so they can better support their staff and the surrounding community.

"We need incentives or breaks that allow us to just have a little bit more of that breathing room to allow us to be successful. Because if a business doesn't succeed, that's a landlord that doesn't have someone that's paying rent and that's a vacancy space that turns someone else off or maybe wanting to be in that space because they see it as not as popular. So, there's a huge ripple effect when those things start to take effect," she said.

For now, servers and restaurant owners are feeling the pressure and are hoping to soon find relief. "I know that the good times will come, but you need to get through the hard times to appreciate the good times. And, although it's not all bad news right now, it's definitely challenging," Summers said.

Student-athletes: balancing study and sport



TRU WOLFPACK—ANDREW SNUCINS/SUBMITTED

WolfPack member Madison Maichin jumps to serve the ball during a game earlier this year.

How some WolfPack athletes juggle study, sport and responsibility

ALEXA LIPTAK CONTRIBUTOR

While the idea of being an elite student-athlete may seem glamorous to some, those living the reality of having one foot on the field and another in the classroom know the struggle it can be to manage both simultaneously and the stress it can cause. Just ask Madison Maichin.

"I'm just keeping my head above water," said Maichin, a fourth-year nursing student and libero on the women's volleyball team. Maichin is describing the delicate balance between her rigorous nursing program and the demands of being a competitive athlete. All 'Pack athletes face such challenges; but for those with more demanding degrees, this requires more strategic planning and help.

For Maichin, a typical day starts at 5 a.m. with a gym workout, followed by three back-to-back classes. She also has clinical days where she spends seven hours at the hospital, all before heading straight to practice. On Mondays, she fits in a co-ed volleyball game at night on top of her class and previous practice that day. This is all to make up for missed Thursday practices.

"It's not the funnest of days," Maichin said.

Unlike some degrees with more flexible course schedules, nursing is a structured program with labs and long clinical hours, adding more pressure to an already demanding athletic schedule.

Fortunately, Maichin notes that her professors offer her support and understand her busy athletic schedule, even allowing her to participate in lessons via Zoom when the need arises. Yet even with these accommodations, the pressure to keep in good academic standing remains high for all athletes, as one key to eligibility depends on maintaining a minimum GPA.

To help athletes academically, TRU offers a program called PACE—a study hall for athletes managed by academic advisors and supported by PACE leaders who are senior athletes. TRU requires that all first-years or students with a GPA below 2.5 attend two hours of PACE each week.

Matix Harrison is a first-year student on the men's basketball team. He said he uses PACE as an opportunity to get all his assignments and projects done for the week.

"PACE is pretty good at keeping me on track," Harrison said. This time allows busy athletes, especially first-years, to adjust to the new lifestyle of university and ensure they have time to study.

Beyond formal support, both Maichin and Harrison emphasize the importance of their peers as being the ones to help them out as well. Maichin credits her nursing classmates, who will help her catch up if she has to miss classes due to volleyball. She says having a really good study group like theirs

is beneficial, as they can give her the rundown of lessons when absent.

Besides the mental exhaustion from classes and practice, 'Pack members also have to deal with significant physical demands.

Recovery is essential. Harrison credits his ice baths and spending time in the hot tub and sauna are just a few of the things he and his teammates do to ease the physical toll of high-level sports. For Maichin and her busy schedule, she insists on getting at least seven hours of sleep each night for her body and mind to recover. She describes her gym sessions as "a mental cleanse and release" and chooses to view the mandatory lift time as a rare opportunity to not focus on school or volleyball.

For those like Maichin and Harrison, juggling demanding academics and high-level athletic commitments is a labour of love. While Maichin admits she has times when she questions why she does it all, moments like gratitude from her patients or hard-fought wins with the team are why she perseveres. Harrison, too, shared that it's a hard balance, but his passion for basketball drives him. Their dedication shows a powerful lesson: determination, time management and passion will serve many student-athletes long after their university careers.

As Maichin said, "It's easy to get discouraged, but other people have done it, so it's not impossible."



ROBERT MCALASTER/THE OMEGA

Runnin' with the 'Pack

Meet Jessye Large from the WolfPack women's soccer team

AIBIIKE ALYMOVA SPORTS EDITOR

Jessye Large smiled as she stood on the soccer pitch moments before the 'Packs last home game of the season. It was a chilly October night, but Large didn't appear to mind. For some on the team, including Large, it wasn't just the last home game of the season but also the last home game as WolfPack players.

At the game, it was announced that Large, defender Raiya Rumo, goalkeeper Cassandra De Amara and team captain Ainsley Grether would embark on new adventures outside TRU as they graduate this year.

In anticipation of her departure, the Omega spoke with Large about her experiences as a student, an athlete and leader of the Hygiene for Homeless club.

Omega: How has your journey been as a student-athlete for the TRU WolfPack soccer team?

JL: It has been the best experience it could be. I'm happy I did it and went

through both aspects of my schooling, like athletics and academics. It was a lot of fun ... I think it was very useful for other skills in my life as well.

Omega: What are the most significant lessons soccer has taught you, both on and off the field?

JL: Probably flexibility and time management. I had to do a lot of that, especially because I'm in nursing and was doing soccer, [so] I was extremely busy. I loved both things, so I developed very good time management skills and was able to make both of them work and balance them perfectly.

Omega: Can you share a memorable moment or game that stands out during your time with the WolfPack?

JL: We played UVIC in 2022, and then we went to a shootout. We won, and everyone came crashing onto the field. It was the first time that TRU women's soccer had beaten the University of Victoria and also gone to the final four.

Omega: Why did you

choose nursing as your field of study, and what inspires you in this career path?

JL: I knew I wanted to do something like that to help people. I was very interested in a medical kind of job and nursing just seemed to fit.

Omega: What are your plans after graduation, and how do you envision integrating your passion for health and sports into your career?

JL: I might do some soccer for fun, like a women's league, or there are Rivers FC here in town, like a semi-professional league, if I have that kind of time. I'm planning on working as an emergency nurse in a hospital, but the actual location is to be determined.

Omega: Could you tell us about the Hygiene for Homeless Club and its mission?

JL: Hygiene for Homeless is a TRUSU club. It was founded last year by a couple of friends of mine, Denzel and Olivia. They kind of made the mission to collect products for the unhoused population

and Kamloops specifically for hygienic purposes. We've expanded it slightly. It's still definitely a smaller club and less active, as in participation from club members, but we kind of expanded it and tried to do some more things, like the warm clothes drive. We basically just want to make some lives easier and help that population with some really needed products that they're very short on.

Omega: How has being involved in these various roles shaped your identity and personal growth?

JL: It definitely has shaped me. I feel like it prepared me very well for life in general. Just being able to enjoy all the little things and being a part of a team. Even the clubs, [which is] kind of a team, my nursing cohorts, and then obviously my soccer team. Being a part of that is just ... it's been amazing. I feel like it's not only given me lots of life lessons, but it also has just been a lot of fun and will be very memorable as I move on.

An advocate for the vulnerable

Professor spotlight: Amy Tucker from TRU's Open Learning department

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

Students can often be intimidated by their professors and may need help approaching them. Through this ongoing series, the Omega will introduce students to several professors at TRU, uncovering the humanity and personalities of our educators.

Often, in academia, there may be various professors who stand out not only for their scholarly achievements but also for the profound impact that they have on students. Professor Amy Tucker is known by TRU students for her passion for teaching and dedication to nurturing student growth.

As an instructor and Open Learning faculty member, Tucker instructs on topics such as human resource management for tourism and business ethics. Additionally, she is a member of several committees at the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of B.C., including women and gender equity and decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenization.

"When I first started my journey into education, I quickly understood that I wanted to teach but decided to go into academia," she said. This decision enabled her to partake in both teaching and academic research. Tucker pursued a bachelor's degree, followed by a master's and a doctorate, focusing on methods to Indigenize the curriculum.

With a strong background in organizational behaviour and leadership, Tucker found an opportunity to apply to teach at TRU. "When a course in organizational behaviour was posted at TRU, I was encouraged to apply for it," Tucker said. "I worked with youth at risk, people recently

released from prison, and those with drug addictions or homelessness issues."

This community work opened her eyes to some of the systemic issues that affect different communities.

"I realized I needed to advocate for those who are vulnerable," Tucker said. Her passion and commitment led her to focus on equity, inclusivity, and bringing diverse perspectives into her curriculum. "My doctorate is very much focused on inclusivity and making the curriculum more inclusive—not just from a Western perspective."

Pamela Maguwu, an international student at TRU, spoke fondly of Tucker. "[Amy] is an easy-going person, very accommodating and understanding. She uses the hybrid teaching style, which makes life easier, especially for international students."

To this day, Tucker uses different educational strategies to address inclusivity. An example is in her leadership class, in which Tucker assigns an intersectionality assignment based on a theoretical framework by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which

helps students understand the importance of intersectionality in social justice.

The storytelling component of the leadership course, rooted in Indigenous cultures, is another method Tucker uses in teaching.

"They can do storytelling in any way they desire—whether it's a traditional research paper, video, podcast, or even a comic book," Tucker said.

Incorporating Indigenous literature into her curriculum, Tucker emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and respect in her teaching. "Quite often, students ask, 'Why do we do land acknowledgments?' and I think that's a good starting conversation for every class," Tucker said.

Reflecting on a busy schedule, Tucker shared some thoughts on her weekly routine. "I train six times a week and then do time boxing...I guess the last thing is knowing how long it will take to spend time with family [and] friends, and to travel—and to make those experiences meaningful," Tucker said.

At the core of Tucker's teaching principles is the value of forming and maintaining connections. "Since my younger years, I have been lucky to have mentors who believed in me, so I try to pay it forward by connecting with people and empowering them to be successful," Tucker said.

Having worked with diverse demographics, including individuals with challenges related to gender identity, Tucker has deepened her commitment to diversity and inclusivity in her teaching and interactions.

For Tucker, a key to personal and professional achievements is setting ambitious goals. "You have to create ridiculous and audacious goals that seem so beyond anything that you can conceive," she advises. Her passion for triathlons and commitment to physical fitness reflects her belief in setting goals and embracing challenges. "I have been on Team Canada for the past three years, competing at the international world championship for my age group," Tucker said.

“No matter where you are today, it’s going to get better.”



The knowledge-sharer and the sucker-fish

Kenthen Thomas reminds us of the importance of remembering the helpers in your life

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH STAFF WRITER

Earlier this past November, TRU's Alumni Theatre was filled with students, faculty, and community members from the greater Kamloops area who gathered to experience tales from Indigenous storyteller Kenthen Thomas. The event, split into two storytelling sessions, lasted just under three hours and offered guests the chance to witness the Secwépemc nation's rich storytelling traditions.

Thomas, a storyteller and educator, has been telling stories since his youth. A member of the Secwépemc nation, Thomas was born in Kamloops and raised in Salmon Arm. It was during his time in Salmon Arm that he connected deeply with his roots, helping him "reconcile and go beyond who [he was] meant to be." His grandmother, elder Mary Thomas, trained him in the traditional Secwépemc art of storytelling. Today, Thomas shares his gift in cities across British Columbia and beyond; his 'Stsepetkwl'—or "Legends That Teach"—is an important tool for both education and entertainment.

With a frame drum and drumstick in hand, Thomas spent the next few hours transforming the theatre into a vivid world of anthropomorphic

animals and mythical adventures. As customary in Secwépemc storytelling traditions, Thomas began each story with the phrase, "A long, long, long time ago." His voice, reverberating loudly across the room, was supported by the intense beating of his drum. Everything about his performance—from the body movements to the practised changes in his voice—drove the tale forward. In no time, the crowd was hanging on to his every word, alive with laughter and surprise, cheering loudly at each story's conclusion.

Though undeniably engaging, these 'Stsepetkwl' are also important learning lessons, full of moral and cultural wisdom.

"These stories aren't just entertainment," Thomas said in a piece for Indigenous Education. "If they want entertainment, they can hire themselves a magician, or a clown, or a DJ."

More than simply a performance, Thomas' stories serve as lenses through which people may reflect on themselves, their relationships, and the world around them.

In the second session, Thomas shared the story of The sucker fish, a tale about a beautiful suckerfish who tried to outshine the moon by leaping over it. After jumping



ROBERT MCALASTER/THE OMEGA

Indigenous knowledge-sharer Kenthen Thomas shares the tale of the sucker fish during a presentation at TRU in November.

too high and at too sharp an angle, the fish fell to the earth and scattered into several tiny pieces. All animals of the community came together, giving something—whether it was parts of their bodies, their time, or their wisdom—to put the suckerfish back together as best as they could. But the suckerfish was ashamed of its new, less beautiful appearance and now hides at the bottom of the lake.

"He forgot all of the helpers," Thomas said. "He forgot all who gave him something small, little, or advice or kindness. He forgot to honour himself for being able to reconcile and go beyond. And he carries with him the shame and agony of being a Suckerfish at the bottom of the lake."

The moral of the story, Thomas told the audience, was to never forget those who offered you assistance, no matter how little.

"I truly believe that the true miracles in our [lives] are the ones that are put in front of you," Thomas said. "[Those people] who look at you as a human and go, 'You need my help, I have the capacity to help you, and I'm going to help you.' Keep in mind the helpers in your life."

With over 30 stories in

his arsenal, Thomas sees his position as a knowledge sharer as one of deep cultural value and responsibility.

"If you know a story, it is your obligation to share it," he said. "And if you know our culture and traditions, it is your responsibility to pass them on." He encourages those present to continue in his work, sharing the stories they've heard and carrying them forward for future generations.

Thomas expressed hope that these stories will not only endure but will thrive in the hands of future generations.

"I am just the knowledge-sharer," he said. "And I do this because the true owners of the knowledge are the people that are yet to come. And that's the unborn, the future generations, the children and high-schoolers. They're going to be the ones, in ten or twenty years, sharing this knowledge with the next generation."

The event demonstrated the power of stories; how they resonate, connecting people across space and time, preserving and carrying on culture, and interrogating truths about us. Kenthen Thomas' performance demonstrated why we all tell stories, and why storytelling will never be a thing of the past.

The girl in the picture

Artist chat with Javiera Diaz Acevedo

JAVIERA DIAZ ACEVEDO/SUBMITTED

AUGUSTUS HOLMAN ARTS EDITOR

The reasons that artists make art differ for each individual, and through this new and 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.

International student Javiera Diaz Acevedo has created a whole world on canvas. Recently, after having her work featured at TRU's art gallery located on the first floor of Old Main, Diaz Acevedo walked the Omega through her process of creating many of her pieces and exploring what art means to her.

"I don't care about anything else," Diaz Acevedo said regarding art, a craft that builds up a massive portion of her self-identity. She often spends much of her free time creating both on the canvas and through the digital space.

"I feel like that's my true self... I am the person in the sketchbook, I am not the person that people talk to," Diaz Acevedo said.

Diaz Acevedo said that for much of her life, drawing and painting was her way of surviving.

"I think because I was undiagnosed [with autism] as a kid, I had depression for so many years," Diaz Acevedo said. "I remember going to therapy when I was like nine or ten... I was just a kid, and no one could tell what I had so I was just depressed all the time and drawing all the time so I think this is my way of surviving."

Born and raised in Santiago, Chile, Diaz Acevedo often struggled to find new ways of pursuing her love of art.

She explained to Omega that Chile does not show much support for artists who create original works and instead caters to people who can create art based on famous characters or aspects of trending pop culture.

"In Chile, it's very tough [for artists]. I know many other artists who are also skilled, but they have no opportunities at all. If you're born rich, you can become an artist, but if you're born poor like I was, there's nothing you can do. We're kind of these slaves of the system in Chile. It's a hard word, I know, but it's true," Diaz Acevedo said. "Chile was destroyed after the dictatorship we had... so it messed up the whole country, and we've never recovered after that. People just kept going, 'Maybe one day we'll become a first-world country,' but that never happened. It was lie after lie. People kept working and believing that; it never happened. I was growing older, and I was like, 'This is not going to change ever.' I was born in a poor place in a not-good city. Everything was so hard and I don't understand how I survived. I think it's all thanks to my drawings."

Diaz Acevedo enjoys creating art that most reflects her lived experiences and opinions. As she toured the art gallery and TRU's painting studio with the Omega, Diaz Acevedo individually described the meaning of some of her work.

The piece "The Wait," which was displayed in TRU's Art Gallery in the "People, Places, and Things" exhibition, is about Diaz Acevedo's personal experiences battling depression and a hard breakup.

"I remember I did [The Wait] for

drawing class. It's called 'The Wait' because I was so depressed after I broke up with my ex-boyfriend, and I was so depressed for so long," Diaz Acevedo said. "I had short hair when I broke up with him, but then I realized that time started to pass, and my hair was growing longer and longer. I wasn't taking care of myself... [this piece is about] waiting for yourself to feel better. The hair is also all tangled everywhere because she's trapped in this sadness."

Diaz Acevedo's piece, "Ruins of the Future Empire," is a reflection of the world we're destroying through capitalism and environmental destruction. It features tall power lines looming over everything, a broken-down church in the background, tall statues of historical figures who have incited colonialism, and cracks forming in the earth.

"I'm more of a thinker than a painter actually," Diaz Acevedo said. "In [the future], when I'm dead... people will see my paintings and say, 'Oh, so this is how they felt at that time. They were living in capitalism, and they were destroying the environment.' I feel that's important. Art is not just beautiful things; it's not just pretty faces; it's also about letting people know about the story that is happening in this era we are living in, like the culture we were living in and how we are surviving through it."

If you are a local artist or would like to nominate an artist who would like to talk about the arts, please contact the Omega's Arts Editor, Augustus Holman, by email at auggietaylor6284@gmail.com or by phone at 250-351-9676.

Healing from trauma and finding a community

How a new program at TRU is helping students find peace amidst grief and loss

ADEYA OMOTOLANI CONTRIBUTOR

While global conflicts continue to displace millions, TRU, along with local organizations like Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS), is stepping up to provide a comprehensive support system for students from war-torn regions. Offering a blend of academic, emotional, and practical resources, these initiatives are meant to help students from places like Palestine and Ukraine rebuild their lives and adjust to life in Canada while coping with the trauma of displacement.

Pedro Mori is a fourth-year journalism student at TRU who's been closely watching news coverage of the war in the Middle East and has friends from many war-torn countries impacted, like Lebanon.

"It's amazing how they try to remain very positive. Normally, you would feel a sense of despair, but these students are looking for how they can make a difference," Mori said.

Although Mori acknowledged TRU's efforts to provide resources like the Wellness Centre, he highlighted a gap in outreach, saying some students may hesitate to seek help due to fear. "A lot of these students are a little bit reluctant to try and seek the help because they're scared of what could happen afterwards," he said.

Leah Dagg, a communications consultant at TRU, explained how the university has developed a holistic support system for international students, particularly those from regions affected by war.

"Our international student advisors (ISA) team is committed to providing personalized, one-on-one support for students from conflict zones," Dagg said. "Whether in-person or virtually,



Rev. Jane Gingrich addresses attendees at a grief and healing workshop.

we offer a broad range of services, including emergency financial aid, housing assistance, food security, travel support, and guidance through the complexities of settling into a new country."

Dagg states many of these students struggle to adjust to a fresh start, and it's an overwhelming challenge as they navigate the stress of adjusting to a new academic system while coping with the emotional and psychological weight of their experiences in war-torn regions. "We go beyond the typical academic support and recognize that these students are often grappling with trauma and displacement, so we work closely with them to make sure they have everything they need to succeed here, academically and emotionally," Dagg said. "We make sure students are aware of our counselling services and we encourage them to reach out whenever they need help. These services are a critical part of ensuring students feel supported and able to focus on their studies and well-being."

Local organizations like KIS also provide critical support for newcomers, including students from conflict zones, as they adjust to life in Canada. Kate Cheng, a settlement counselor at KIS, outlined the range of programs designed to assist individuals and families who have fled war and violence.

"Our primary goal is to help newcomers settle into their new community and provide the tools they need to succeed here in Kamloops," Cheng said. "This includes everything from helping families navigate the Canadian education system to offering assistance with housing, employment, and accessing healthcare."

For families facing complex challenges, particularly those fleeing conflict, KIS offers the Achieve Program, a specialized initiative for individuals who may have no housing, no jobs, and limited access to healthcare. "Our role is to connect [families] with ... necessary services, from mental health support to legal assistance, and to help them navigate the system."

Rev. Jane Gingrich, a

campus chaplain at TRU, has witnessed firsthand the emotional toll the ongoing conflicts in Palestine, Ukraine, and other regions have had on students. "Over the past decade, I've seen a lot of students come and go, but this year, there is an overwhelming sense of grief," Gingrich said. "Students are not only mourning personal losses but are also carrying the emotional weight of the suffering they see unfolding in their home countries."

In response to these emotional needs, Gingrich has launched a grief support program in collaboration with TRU's Wellness Centre. The five-week program provides a space for students to process their emotions, share their experiences, and receive emotional support in a safe and compassionate environment.

"It's essential students have an outlet to express their grief," Gingrich said. "This program gives them a chance to name their feelings, explore their grief, and begin to heal."

Although the series is rooted in Christian teachings, Gingrich emphasizes the program is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their religious background. "The texts and themes we use overlap with Jewish and Muslim sacred writings, so the program is not exclusive to any one faith," Gingrich said.

For many of these students, the road to recovery and adjustment is long. Still, the combined efforts of TRU and KIS are helping them navigate this journey with greater resilience. Dagg emphasized TRU is committed to supporting students from conflict zones, in all areas of their lives. "We recognize these students are facing incredible challenges, but our holistic approach ensures they don't just survive—they thrive."

Finding acceptance through Queer Connections



The bi-weekly social event, Queer Connections, brings together 2SLGBTQI+ individuals across the university for community building and inclusivity.

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH STAFF WRITER

For years, the TRUSU Pride Club has been pushing for the inclusion and representation of 2SLGBTQI+ students at TRU. The club, headed by President Payton Hiebert and VP Jessie Dhillon, is dedicated to organizing events, fostering community, and promoting the interests of its members.

The club's ongoing project, Queer Connections, began in January 2020. It is an 18+ social gathering that brings together members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community—both students and non-students—for a few hours bi-weekly. The event's main focus is to create an environment where participants can socialize, form friendships, and experience a sense of belonging.

"My partner actually told me about the event," said Ruby Tremblay, a student from the electrician trades program. "They had some faculty come into one of their classes and give a talk about different student resources. They mentioned that there was a queer community event, so I looked it up online; I figured it'd be fun to go to."

Queer Connections has grown over the years, and a large part of that can be attributed to word-of-mouth cases like Tremblay's.

"I think that's pretty important," said Marcus Allard, accounting major and frequent Queer Connections attendee. "Because [word of mouth] is how I find out about most events. I don't have an Instagram, and that's where a lot of TRU-specific things are posted. So whenever people around me mention these things off-hand,

I'd be like, 'Hey, what was that? Could you tell me more?' And that's basically how I get my information."

"If you're invited by someone you know," Allard added. "It's easier. Because you're with someone familiar, and there's a lot less pressure."

The importance of this community space is clear to its members, who have attested to general feelings of isolation among the larger TRU community and difficulties finding friends.

"If it weren't for Queer Connections, I wouldn't talk to anybody," said Kyle Rougheau, who majors in software engineering. "I don't really talk to my classmates; I'm kind of in and out of TRU. So it's nice to have something to actually stop me."

"It was really fun to talk with people," added Tremblay, who is new to Kamloops. "I was happy to go out and talk to strangers for the first time in a while."

The events occur between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. every other week at the Wellness and Inclusion Space (OM 1522), which was recently moved from the UPREP room (OM 2551). They sometimes begin with short, educational presentations about 2SLGBTQI+ topics before attendees participate in whatever activity is planned.

The event's activities differ every time, ranging from board games to watch parties, gaming tournaments to crafting, and more. "There have been movie nights, origami, paintings, pumpkin painting," Allard said. "There was a sound bath—like meditation—a couple of weeks ago. It was pretty relaxing."

The event's dynamic offerings mean there is always something to look forward to and something new to explore.

Attendees of Queer Connections see it as a place of possibility where new relationships can be built which will carry on beyond the walls of the classroom.

"I think Queer Connections has gotten me to come to TRU for more than just the classes," Allard said. "It's gotten me to hang around more, which is nice. It gets me to talk to more people."

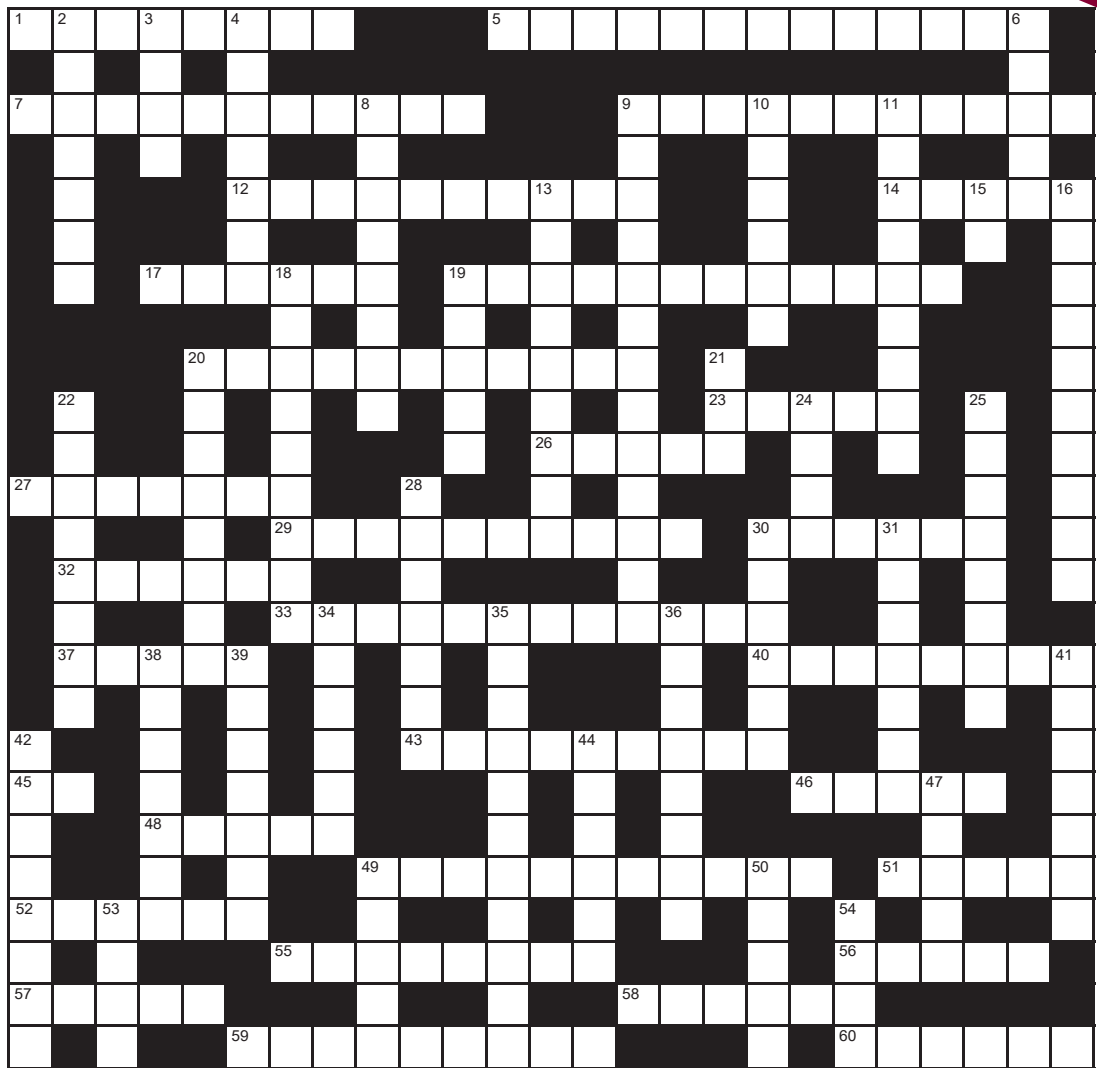
"I still have a couple of months before I start my program, so I've been hoping to just make some friends," Tremblay said. "It's very helpful to make a few queer friends when I know my program is likely to be sparse with them."

For Queer Connections attendees, the future of the community looks bright, and its impact cannot be understated. They encourage students on the edge to take the leap and make an appearance. "You're never gonna be in an awkward spot," Rougheau said. "They specifically design it so that, even if you're on your own, you've got something to do."

For the past seven years, the TRUSU Pride Club has been petitioning for the creation of a dedicated queer space. In a previous conversation with The Omega, Hiebert said such a space could create a sense of togetherness and community. The envisioned 'Pride Centre' is to be an accessible space dedicated to the queer-identifying community of TRU, where 2SLGBTQI+ people can safely express themselves, explore, and contribute without fear of discrimination or rejection.

Across

- 1 Italian explorer; U.S. state capital (8)
 5 Worcester, Springfield and Cambridge are lesser known cities in this U.S. state (13)
 7 Half of Mongolia lives in this city (11)
 9 U.S. state with silent 'c' like in 'indict' (11)
 12 Kentucky city known for its wooden baseball bats (10)
 14 Nearly 18 per cent of the world's population lives here (5)
 17 Capital city of the Central African Republic (6)
 19 The name for a person from this country, which is as far south as Australia, but nearly 8,000 kilometres away (5,7)
 20 State capital of Florida (11)
 23 Military blades (5)
 26 Curacao's neighbour (5)
 27 Lisa Simpson's halloween costume (7)
 29 Montanan city known for its water features (5,5)
 30 Our home and native land (6)
 32 Indigenous peoples include Oaxacan and Yucatan (6)
 33 This city hosts the National Hockey League's newest team (4,4,4)
 37 If not Persian, a person from this country is known as (5)
 40 Adjective related to this country, located between Turkmenistan and Iraq (8)
 43 Demonym for someone from the country known as the 'cradle of humanity' (9)
 45 Flies the Union Jack (2)
 46 African country, now known as the Democratic Republic of the _____ (5)
 48 The only city you can think of in Nebraska (5)
 49 Bart Simpson's hometown (11)
 51 The sun rises for this country's 14,125 islands, of which 260 are inhabited (5)
 52 George W. Bush doesn't want you to forget about this country (6)
 55 Born in a Georgian city, Martin Luther King Jr. was one of these (8)
 56 This city known for its nightlife also brings the Heat (5)



- 57 Goyang, Incheon and Suwon surround this capital city (5)
 58 Capital city of Colombia (6)
 59 Iowan city; its literal translation reads 'of the monks' (9)
 60 U.S. state hosts Burning Man's annual temporary city (6)

Down

- 2 Magical city in Florida (7)
 3 U.S. state packed with mesas (4)
 4 Ancient Mesopotamian city (7)
 6 A person from Riyadh might carry this demonym of his country (5)
 8 ...and Tobago (8)
 9 Peacefully split with Slovakia in 1993 (5,8)
 10 Most populous New Jersey city (6)
 11 Adjective for this densely packed east Asian island country (9)
 13 U.S. state and hot sauce moniker (9)

- 15 An American city established by the country's constitution (2)
 16 A person from Alice Springs, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga or Darwin is one of these (10)
 18 Darwin visited (9)
 19 This colonizing country briefly controlled parts of southern British Colombia, and a lot more further south (5)
 20 A person from this country, located between Algeria and Libya (8)
 21 Shortest way to refer to the only country Canada borders (3)
 22 A B.C. river, key Kamloops thoroughfare and half of this province (8)
 24 Midwest state known for corn (4)
 25 Ancient city known for its medieval steel (8)
 28 New Mexico city; literal translates to 'holy faith' (5,2)
 30 British territory islands known for lax tax laws (6)

- 31 A person from Juneau, Anchorage or Ketchikan (7)
 34 The capital isn't Istanbul, it's _____ (6)
 35 Canada's military left this country in 2014; the U.S. didn't leave until 2021 (11)
 36 Known as the Prairie State (8)
 38 The sunniest U.S. state (7)
 39 Arrivals to this country land at Keflavik (7)
 41 About two million people can speak Gaelic in this country (7)
 42 Capital city bisected by the Danube River (8)
 44 The Beaver State (6)
 47 Between the Ivory Coast and Togo (5)
 49 Alleged witches were tried and hanged here (5)
 50 Nearly 21 million people live in this lagoon-adjacent African country capital (5)
 53 Landlocked country that borders China (4)
 54 Muscat is its capital city (4)

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