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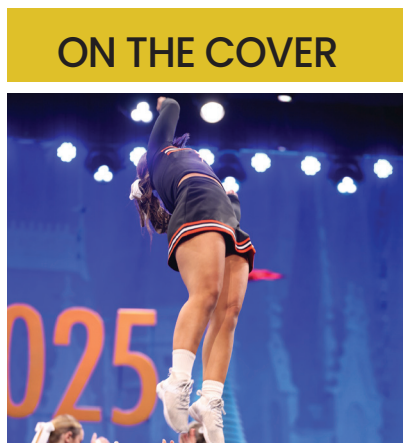
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Photo Meaghan Blakely*



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the **Omega** theomega.news

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The WolfPack cheerleaders perform a routine during the University World Cup Cheerleading Championship in January 2025.

WolfPack cheerleaders hunt down bronze

ALEXA LIPTAK STAFF WRITER

At the end of January the TRU WolfPack cheerleaders returned from the United States with a renewed sense of pep and a third-place championship victory.

From Jan. 17 to 19, the cheerleading squad competed at the University World Cup Cheerleading Championships in Orlando, Florida, where they earned bronze in the premier small co-ed division and seventh place for the small co-ed game day division.

The 34 athletes and two teams from TRU set a program record for their premier small co-ed division by earning bronze on the podium at the competition. Not only did they make program history, but this was the first time the teams competed in both co-ed divisions. TRU was just one of two Canadian schools in their division and the only from Western Canada.

Preparing for competitions of this calibre takes months of training. To help ensure the team is ready for the

competitive pressure, the WolfPack coaching staff try to simulate a competition environment to prepare their athletes, creating “high pressurized environments, like showcases,” said Meaghan Blakely, co-head coach and program director.

At Worlds, teams only get 12 minutes to warm up before performing their routine.

“Our coaches do a really good job of recreating that environment for us in practice,” said Ian Brown, a first-year on the premier and game-day teams. “We do a dynamic warmup and stretch... then we do a modified full-out of the routine.”

Canadian teams face a special challenge when competing against many top teams in the U.S., as the American cheer competition season starts

earlier in the school year and ends in January after the World competition. For Canadian universities, it’s the opposite, with the season beginning in January at the world competition.

“You’re kind of going in blind. The routine hadn’t been scored yet. For some of the athletes, it was their first time competing ever in the sport,” Blakely said.

“This can help athletes learn what they may be like within a competitive environment.”

Meaghan Blakely, co-head coach and program director

With routines lasting just over two minutes, the work can be pretty intense. Each athlete on the mat pushes their body to the limit during the short but demanding performance, as routines are made up of tumbling, stunts, jumps and synchronized choreography.

“I’m throwing an athlete... 15–20 feet in the air and then I’m trying to do that multiple times for three minutes,” Brown said. “It’s difficult and takes a lot of endurance and muscle.”

It’s hard to ensure everything is perfect within those few short minutes. Still, both WolfPack teams hit zero, meaning no deductions were made during their sets. “Immediately after my group hit all of our stunts, I felt really excited,” Brown said.

With a hard-fought competition, TRU wasn’t sure where they would place. “Our competitors performed and looked good, really good,” Blakely said. “We didn’t know what to expect score-wise from the judges.”

When the first Canadian team was called, Brown said he held his breath until they announced the other school. “Then they announced a U.S. team in fourth place and I knew we had at least medaled. I think our whole collective group was more excited to get bronze than some of the teams were to get silver.”

The TRU WolfPack cheerleaders will compete in two more competitions in Vancouver this season, where they will face teams like UBC, SFU and UVIC.

New men's WolfPack curling team debuts

The newest team to join the 'Pack made a surprising impact at the Canada West Curling Championship

ALEXA LIPTAK STAFF WRITER



Team member Calder Fadden delivers a rock down the sheet.

For the first time in a decade, TRU sent a men's curling team to the Canada West (CW) Curling Championship.

Despite being newly formed in September, the men's team immediately made an impact at the tournament. The TRU team knocked off the five-time reigning champions, the Alberta Golden Bears, handing them their first loss at the CW championship since 2019.

The team is comprised of Duncan Silversides (skip), Coburn Fadden (lead), Kyron Suah (second), and Calder Fadden (third). The four athletes initially started as part of the TRU curling club, but in September, the decision was made to form a team and bring back the university's men's curling program for the first time in a decade.

"I think it's great for the school to be able to put something like that together again and try to build

a program," said Calder Fadden, a fourth-year business student. Despite the team's success, they faced some challenges leading up to the CW Championship, having had limited opportunities to compete in games or practices, which led them to rely on communication and individual training to stay successful.

"Even though we couldn't necessarily practice together or [play] games together, we still played a lot. Coburn and I played two or three times a week. I know [Kyron] and Duncan also played two or three times a week on a mixture of different teams," Calder Fadden said.

As a newly established team, the men were forced to put their best face forward while competing with well-established programs like the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia. TRU swept the first four games

against many nationally ranked teams. They were met with a tough but hard-fought loss in the semi-finals against the Regina Cougars, which sent them to compete for third and fourth.

Although the team won their last game, securing them third place, their efforts were not enough to advance to the USport championship.

"We're all, as a team, very proud to have been able to represent TRU, proud with the success we had... we put a good face forward for TRU and the future of curling at TRU," Fadden said.

The team continues to look towards the future with hopes of creating a strong curling program.

"We're hoping to keep the program going and let this year of success show and be the base for future years of success in Curling at TRU," Calder Fadden said.



Kamloops Blazers shine in NHL midterm rankings

Blazer forwards Nathan Bhém and Tommy Lafrenière could head to the NHL

ALEXA LIPTAK STAFF WRITER

Two Kamloops Blazers players have been named in the National Hockey League's (NHL) Midterm scouting rankings.

Two Kamloops Blazers players, Nathan Bhém and Tommy Lafrenière, have cracked the top 100 of the NHL midterm scouting rankings. Both players, born in 2007, are eligible for the 2025 NHL entry draft.

Nathan Bhém, a Calgary native, was ranked 31st among the American skaters from the NHL, which projects him as a potential first-round pick—standing as a 6-foot-2 forward,

Bhém has been a stand-out star in his third season with the Blazers. He has raked up 23 goals and 48 points in 40 games. Bhém has been recognized as the WHL's "Star of the Week" twice this season. During one of the weeks, Bhém netted four goals and six assists in just three games. The Central Scouting report initially ranked him with a "B" grade in October, which would project him as a second or third-round draft pick.

Originally labelled as a "W" player to watch back in October (indicating the 5-foot-11 forward as a potential

sixth or seventh-round pick), Lafrenière has climbed the rankings to 86th. The latest ranking sets him as a now potential third round draft pick. In his first full WHL season, Lafrenière has scored 17 goals and a total of 39 points so far this season in 42 games with the Blazers. The forward was even named the "WHL Rookie of the Week" in January for his performance of six points in two games.

The two rising stars continue to make significant contributions to the Blazers, showcasing both of their potential as future NHL players.



TRU WOLFPACK

Runnin' with the 'Pack

Meet Sam Flowerday, the 'Pack volleyball forward with over 1,000 career kills

AIBI KE ALYMOVA SPORTS EDITOR

Australian outside hitter Sam Flowerday is in his last year at TRU. From debuting as a rookie in the 2021-22 season to accumulating more than 1,000 kills throughout his career, it's been a long journey. Recently, the Omega spoke with Flowerday about culture shock, his career goals and a unique trip to Istanbul.

Omega: Take us through your journey from Australia to Kamloops.

SF: When I was in Australia, I was in a national excellence program. It's called the Center of Excellence and then got renamed to the Australian Volleyball Academy. So, when I was coming to the end of my time there, my coach asked me if I wanted to play pro or university. I [chose university because] I knew a lot of Australian guys went through Canada West. My coach reached out to Pat [Hennelly]. Pat came back to me and

then just went from there.

Omega: What was the biggest cultural shock?

SF: Just the weather, it's super cold. Then, hearing the [Canadian] accent for the first time was a bit weird. Overall, it's pretty similar to Australia. Honestly, everyone's super nice [in Canada] and [it's similar back home]. But the weather accent is a bit different.

Omega: Congratulations on surpassing the 1,000 career kills milestone. What does that mean to you personally and professionally?

SF: I think it's just something there that I can look back and think, "Yeah, I achieved that. It's pretty cool. Not many people get to do that." I think it's just a milestone for me to look back on to show how it worked out.

Omega: What was the most memorable moment from the last four years?

SF: Just meeting the guys

and then the first win in the 2021-22 season. It was the first time we went down to play UBCO. We didn't have a good start but then brought it back to a win in five. That was pretty good.

Omega: What was the most valuable lesson that the program has taught you?

SF: I think it teaches you how to be a good player. How you carry yourself [on the court follows] you into real life. It [the athletic program] doesn't just build good volleyball players but also builds good people. So I think just carrying the attributes you get from playing competitive sports over to real life.

Omega: You went to Istanbul during the winter break. How did you like that?

SF: It was really good. We did a lot of sightseeing; we went to the Blue Mosque, cistern and underground system. Just walking all over Istanbul was super nice. It

was awesome to see the different cultures. We also watched a couple sports games, like a soccer game and a basketball game. The crowd was crazy, and the fans were insane. Yeah, just walking around the market and seeing everything.

Omega: What do you think you've improved about yourself since joining the 'Pack?

SF: I think just the ability to do things on my own, like living at home and then across on the other side of the world, has been isolating sometimes. So learning to be on my own a bit and [about being] self-sustaining.

Omega: What are your plans after graduation?

SF: To play pro somewhere in Europe. I'm talking to a couple of teams and agents right now. So, hopefully, I'll lock something in over there. I just continue to play volleyball for a while to get as good as I can.



Team member Jorja Kopytko performs with her team in February.

WolfPack women claim silver medal

JAKOB SCHMIETENKNOP STAFF WRITER

After nine years, the WolfPack women's curling club returned to the Canada West Curling Championships (CWC) and emerged victorious, claiming the silver medal.

On the road to the finals, the women, led by Holly Hafeli, vanquished the Regina Cougars a day earlier to earn their spot in the gold medal game. But the top prize was not meant to be. On Feb. 2, the WolfPack met the Cougars again in their final match-up. The Regina squad played hard, cluttering the top of the house with guards, resulting in the WolfPack being blanked out 6-0.

"We wanted to keep our run going and it just didn't continue. It was a rough final, especially for me. That team [the Cougars]...didn't miss anything," Hafeli said.

"We just tried to have fun. We weren't expecting much as this was the first [CWC] we've been to [together]. When we made it through our

first game, we decided to keep having fun and to keep the ball rolling," Hafeli said.

The women's team—consisting of Hafeli (skip), Natalie Hafeli (lead), Hannah O'Neil (second), and Jorja Kopytko (third) have been together for six years as part of the competitive curling team.

"Everyone was there to have a good time. Lots of teams were thrown together [at the last minute] except for UofA, Calgary, and Regina. The UofA women's team and the Regina men's team recently came back from representing Canada, so everyone was adjusting to it," Holly said.

Hafeli hopes to one day win gold for Canada in the Olympics, but for now, she remains focused on the next tournament. Thanks to their strong finish at the CWC, the Hafeli rink qualified for the U-Sports National Curling Championships in Lethbridge, Alta. from Feb. 24 to 28.

CFBX Top 30 Charts

— February 13, 2025 —

Artist – Album (Label)

- 1) Holy Void* – All Will Be Revealed in Time (Independent)
- 2) The Imagine If* – Great Expectations (Gypsy Soul)
- 3) Menno Versteeg* – Why We Run (Royal Mountain)
- 4) SHEBAD* – Music is the Answer (Lovetown)
- 5) Locarno* – Colibri Caliope (Independent)
- 6) Devarrow* – Heart Shaped Rock (Paper Bag)
- 7) Sam Lynch* – Outline (Birthday Cake)
- 8) Rapallo* – Merger (Unbelievably Spectacular)
- 9) Various Artists – King Size Dub 24 (Echo Beach)
- 10) Ada Lea* – Notes EP (Next Door)
- 11) Skinny Dyck* – Easygoing (Victory Pool)
- 12) The Meringues* – Pavlova's Dog (Independent)
- 13) Various Artists* – D.O.A.: No Escape from What You Are (Sudden Death)
- 14) Ruby Singh* – Vox Infold II (Independent)
- 15) Sugar Brown* – Toronto Bound (Independent)
- 16) Montuno West* – Raices (Bent River)
- 17) Richard Laviolette* – All Wild Things Are Shy (You've Changed)
- 18) Swamp Music Players* – Swamp Sandwich EP (Independent)
- 19) Matthew Chaffey* – Texas Hotel (Gypsy Soul)
- 20) Righteous Rooster – Fowl Play (Shifting Paradigm)
- 21) Caribou* – Honey (Merge)
- 22) Chloe Doucet* – Sincerely, (Independent)
- 23) Jennifer Castle* – Camelot (Paradise of Bachelors)
- 24) Mother Sun** – Meadow 6 (Earth Libraries)
- 25) Slug Rust** – The Pressure to Be Cool (Ulusulu)
- 26) Bad Buddy* – Bad Buddy II (Meatflower)
- 27) S P O K** – S P O K and Gdubz Unreleased Vault (Independent)
- 28) Ghost Cartridge* – Ghost Cartridge (30/30)
- 29) Mother Country* – The Sign of Jonas (Milltown)
- 30) Cool Band* – Cool Band (Independent)

* indicates Canadian Content ** indicates a local artist

Meghan Gardiner visits TRU for Consent Tea anniversary

Gardiner was a panelist and keynote speaker at the event's 10th anniversary

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

Two events hosted on Jan. 29 commemorated the 10th consecutive year of *Consent Tea*, the Wellness Center's annual consent education program.

The grand finale to this year's Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the program consisted of a sexual violence panel discussion and a keynote speech. Special guest Meghan Gardiner, a Vancouver-based actor, writer and activist, headlined the event, sitting on the panel and giving a 30-minute talk to the audience.

Consent Tea began as the brainchild of TRU Senior Wellness Coordinator Chelsea Corsi, as she observed and attempted to navigate the recurring issues of sexual health, violence and consent that come up on university campuses.

The concept arose from the viral *Tea and Consent* video, which used tea as an analogy for sex while discussing consent. "If you're struggling with consent, just imagine instead of initiating sex you're making them a cup of tea," the clip goes. "If you can understand how completely ludicrous it is to force people to have tea when they don't want tea, how hard is it to understand when it comes to sex?"

Corsi found this a compelling analogy and developed the *Consent Tea* Toolkit with former colleague Meaghan Hagerty. Since then, it has become an annual event that promotes sexual health, educates on consent, and offers support to attendees. The first of



Vancouver-based actor Meghan Gardiner.

two anniversary events, the *Consent Tea* Panel and Dialogue, was held from 11:45 a.m. to 1:20 p.m. at the British Columbia Center (HOL 190).

The panellists included Indigenous rights activist Viola Thomas, anti-violence advocate Alix Dolson, Gardiner and others. They addressed the audience with their experiences, opinions and advice around issues of sexual violence, consent, and both gendered and racialized oppression.

Gardiner's personal experience with sexual violence has shaped both her art and activism. Her one-woman show, *Dissolve*, has been performed hundreds of times across the continent since 2003 and remains on tour to this day, though Gardiner herself retired from the play. She has received several accolades for her work as an artist and activist. She has pushed this activism even further over the years with more plays, appearances and

talks across Canada.

At 7 p.m. in the Clock Tower's Alumni Theatre, Gardiner drew a crowd of students, faculty, and community members to listen to her keynote speech, *The Power of Sharing Your Story*.

"In all iterations [of the word resistance], we resist in order to avoid or prevent long-term pain to ourselves and others," Gardiner said. "But there's short-term pain and huge risk in the process of doing so."

Gardiner recalls her experience of assault and the struggle with turning it into a play that she then performed for thousands of people across the globe. "The other side of resistance is strength," she said. "If there's no force on the other side, there's nothing to resist. So, resistance makes us stronger. Fighting for something makes us stronger."

Though Gardiner had achieved notable success with the play, it took her

two years to admit that the experiences in it were hers. This drew a new wave of interest in the play and her life, and opportunities abounded for her career, activism and personal healing journey.

She discussed the difficult expectations often levied on women who try to speak out about their experiences with sexual assault. "I think that women face this pressure [to be okay] constantly," Gardiner said. "Expressing anger is not an emotion that is seen as powerful in women. So while I was publicly okay, I was privately angry."

"An act of resistance feels strong," she continued. "It feels angry. And I love that."

Gardiner fears that people—particularly survivors—may feel pressured to hide or minimize their feelings to project strength. "There's a huge desire to be a part of the resistance, but there is a huge resistance to feeling something," she said. "To going deep, to getting uncomfortable. I firmly believe I am okay today because I excavated. It became part of my resistance training regime. I stopped resisting my feelings and I started resisting the system that told me it was my fault."

To close off her speech, Gardiner performed the expanded version of the final monologue from *Dissolve* for the audience.

"The show has been running for 23 years, and I've never uttered the final monologue until tonight," she told the room. "I feel strong enough to do so because of all my resistance training."

Radon testing in progress on campus

Small detectors around the university will test for the heavier-than-air gas

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

Thompson Rivers University has partnered with Interior Health (IH) to conduct a radon awareness project for post-secondary institutions. As part of TRU's commitment to a safe and healthy campus, the risk and safety services department deployed radon detectors at TRU on Jan. 7. The puck-style detectors were placed in specific areas of campus for several months to investigate and monitor radon levels.

Sarah Martin, manager of health, safety, and environment at TRU, explained that radon is a radioactive gas produced by the natural decay of uranium in the soil. "Radon is a heavier-than-air gas that settles in low-level areas and tends to enter buildings through cracks in the foundation, water pipes, or windows," Martin said. "It can pose a health risk if inhaled over long periods of time."

As TRU has not previously conducted radon testing, this initiative marks a significant step in detecting the quantity of radon in and around the soil on campus. "We were excited to partner with Interior Health because we haven't seen historical testing at TRU," Martin said.

The initiative follows a broader effort by IH, which has conducted studies with other school districts, daycares, and public sector organizations in the region.

"Interior Health wants to understand what radon exposure looks like in their region, and this partnership allows us to help build that map," Martin said.

The radon detectors will primarily be placed on the ground floor and in the basement of campus buildings, including student residences. According to Martin, these passive devices "will not disrupt your daily routine," while the detectors will remain in place for a minimum of 90 days to gather accurate data. The collected data will be sent to a lab for analysis, where the radon concentration will be measured.

"This is not mandatory testing; it's an investigation to determine what or if there are any radon levels on campus," Martin said. "By deploying these detectors, we can assess the risks and plan accordingly based on what the results show."

Steve Pottle, director of risk and safety services at TRU, emphasized the importance of testing during the winter months. "Radon tends to

accumulate more in winter because buildings are sealed, which means we get a better idea of exposure when doors and windows are closed."

The radon detectors are part of a larger effort by the IH to map radon exposure in the region, and while there are areas of B.C. with known high radon levels, Martin and Pottle stress that this testing is about gathering data to understand the exposure risks at TRU and beyond.

"It's not that we know we have a problem, but we're looking to find out what the levels are," Martin said. "Once the data is analyzed, we'll determine what actions, if any, need to be taken based on those results."

According to the Government of Canada, uranium—the element that eventually produces radon gas, is common throughout the crust of the Earth. As a result, radon gas can be found "in almost all homes in Canada," though in varying amounts.

For questions or additional information, students, faculty, and staff can contact TRU's Risk and Safety Services at safety@tru.ca.



Vancouver bids adieu to Invictus Games

ALEXA LIPTAK STAFF WRITER

More than 500 Athletes from 20 different communities visited Vancouver and Whistler for the 2025 Invictus Games. The event kicked off with an opening ceremony on Feb 8 at BC Place with performances from artists such as Chris Martin, Katy Perry, Noah Kahn, and Nelly Furtado, along with inspirational speeches from event organizers, senior members and the founder Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex.

The games originated in 2013 when Prince Harry visited the Warrior Games in the United States, a multi-sport competition for wounded, sick, and injured veterans from various branches of the American Department of Defence. Prince Harry, who had previously been deployed in Afghanistan with

the British Military, saw how much the games inspired and helped heal all the veterans on their recovery journeys and desired to create an international version of the games to help connect more communities.

A year later, the Invictus Games debuted in London, England. The games are supported by the Invictus Games Foundation, a charity founded by Prince Harry that supports wounded, injured and sick service members and veterans.

As the 2025 games were held in Vancouver and Whistler, this marks the first time the games have included winter adaptive sports such as alpine skiing, nordic skiing, and skeleton alongside other traditional events. This is the sixth iteration of the games.

This year's games were hosted

on four First Nations lands: Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Lil'wat. Prince Harry acknowledged the honour of holding the games hosted on their lands during his opening ceremonies speech and emphasized the shared healing journey of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This is all reflected in the medals in the games, which have been designed by an Indigenous designer, Levi Nelson from the Lil'wat nation, along with designers from each of the Nations the games are hosted on.

The closing ceremonies took place on Feb. 16 at BC Place with energetic performances from Canadian favourite artists like the Barenaked Ladies and American rapper Jelly Roll.

Looking ahead, the next games will be held in Birmingham, England, in 2027.

TRUSU updates election bylaws

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR



Each year, TRUSU holds elections to select a new board of directors. According to their website, there are about 20 board positions up for elections each year. Elections occur any time before March 31, and elected officials take office from May 1 until the end of the next academic year.

This year's TRUSU annual general meeting (AGM), which kicked off at 6 p.m. on Jan. 28 at the TRU Mountain Room, oversaw a few noteworthy amendments to the students' union electoral procedures. Most significantly, the meeting presented a motion to end the slate system, which allowed campaigning students to group themselves into political parties.

The AGM serves as an opportunity for the union, students, and faculty members to monitor TRUSU's activities over the past year and gain perspective on the direction in which it will be heading in the future. The event boasts an open-door policy, meaning all interested members of the TRU community are welcome to sit in, listen, voice their concerns and make contributions. Complete with committee reports, audits and a budget presentation, the meeting offers transparency and clarity on major union operations.

New business was the last item on the AGM agenda once all reports had been presented. This year, all new business involved amendments to campaign and electoral procedures.

"At the end of last year's annual election, we received feedback from several places that there were perhaps some required changes that could be made to improve our electoral policy," said TRUSU's Executive Director Nathan Lane. "I was tasked with making [recommendations] to the board of directors, which I did."

The recommendations involved, amongst other things, three notable

changes to the TRUSU election process: modernization of the by-laws, restructuring of the electoral timeline, and the elimination of the slate system.

The policies in the by-laws restricted campaigning to only on-campus, in-person campaigns, which Lane said became challenging to regulate given the amount of campaigning that now happens online. "When this policy was first created, there was little to no social media," Lane said. "So [this amendment] removes the requirement that all campaigning must happen on campus."

Further, adjustments made to the timeline of the elections reduce the process by one week. To achieve this, the proposal cuts down the two-week nomination period to seven days.

"Around 99% of all nominations come in the last day, and in the last four hours," Lane said. "I had to look back over ten years to find someone who even submitted a nomination on the first day of that two-week period. So that takes one week out of the election process for folks, with [virtually] no impact."

Of all the amendments proposed, the most substantial was the change to the rules surrounding the formation of political slates or parties. Section II(f) of the election policy now reads: "No candidate shall collude with another candidate, including the formation of a party or slate prior to, during or following the campaign period."

For Lane, this recommendation was made in response to behavioural criticisms levied at candidates over the past few years. Complaints of harassment, bullying and inappropriate conduct abounded, along with objections to the high barrier of entry these slate systems created for individual campaigners.

"I believe a lot of the negative behaviour happening is a sort of group mentality, and that leads to some pretty bad behaviour both online and in

person," Lane said. "But one of the things we've noticed is that people, individually, are actually pretty good to each other."

"What [this amendment] will do is essentially require every individual student to participate on their own," Lane explained. "I think the outcome will be twofold. One, it will hopefully make it a much more accessible process, where you won't need to find 20 other students in a slate to be a viable candidate. But also, each individual must run on their own. And in my experience, students are significantly better at engaging with each other respectfully one-on-one."

After the motion to amend the electoral procedures had been put forward, the floor was open to questions and comments from the audience. Many students attested to harassment and bullying from past election years. While some were satisfied with the changes, others protested that they were inadequate and that more needed to be done to curb the issue. A few students spoke in favour of the slate system, regarding it as a training ground for those who hope to partake in electoral politics on much larger scales.

Despite the few dissenting voices, most present supported the recent changes, and the votes in favour of the motion were almost unanimous.

Before adjourning, Lane gave a final word to the audience.

"This is not going to make the election perfect," Lane said. "But I hope it's going to make it better. I am more than happy to sit back here again next year and talk about ways we can make it even better. I wrote down all your suggestions and if you have more, come talk to me. We're always trying to make experiences better for students. Don't think that if it didn't get into policy change this year, then that's it. Let's not let this one last for 13 years."

Visit TRUSU's website to learn more about its offerings, upcoming programs, and contact information.

Honours College to launch in Fall semester

The new four-year program will be the first of its kind in Canada

EAGLE ANDERSEN STAFF WRITER

TRU is launching a brand-new Honours College in the fall. The university says this will be a first-of-its-kind program in the country to help students make the most of their time on campus.

The goal of the new certificate is to provide additional learning opportunities for undergraduate students.

According to its developers, seminars and practical hands-on learning experiences will be the core of this project.

"The [initiative] provides a 19-credit pathway for students to enrich their majors through a carefully crafted program of interdisciplinary learning, undergraduate research, and experiential learning opportunities," Interim Dean of the Faculty of Student Development Will Garrett-Petts said.

Students from different fields of study will be exposed to new ideas in seminars about topics

like Secwépemc Understandings and other hands-on opportunities like the study abroad program.

"By combining academic rigour with experiential learning, the program prepares students for leadership roles and equips them to make a difference locally and globally," Provost Gillian Balfour said in a release.

Garrett-Petts, who helped spearhead the Honours College along with TRU professor Kellee Caton, explained that this will improve students' credentials after graduating from their field of study.

"Students taking this program will graduate with both their major and an honours certificate designation on their transcripts," Garrett-Petts said.

This Honours College was one of several goals highlighted in TRU's Integrated Strategic Planning initiative, which is focused on giving students "a unique TRU experience."

Although there are more than 600 Honours Colleges worldwide, TRU

will be the first Canadian member of the National Collegiate Honors Council, according to Garrett-Petts.

"Honours education is a key element of post-secondary education around the world," Garrett-Petts said. "But each country and university approaches honours education slightly differently, with honours programming in Canada traditionally focused on providing an intense introduction to a particular discipline."

TRU aims to differentiate its approach through integrative learning by exploring a range of disciplines and worldviews.

Garrett-Petts' advice for any future students interested in earning that honours certificate is straightforward:

"I'd like to encourage students to apply early," Garrett-Petts said. "The initial intake for the University Honours Certificate will be limited to 80 students. Twenty-five of those students will have access to reserved spaces in residence."



Driver in fatal McGill Road crash to plead guilty

The parents of the victims are calling for a review of the case

ROBERT MCALASTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Over 14 months after the tragic vehicle crash that took the life of one Thompson Rivers University (TRU) WolfPack volleyball player while severely injuring two others, the driver charged in the incident will plead guilty on April 15.

On Nov. 29, 2023, Owyn McInnis, and his teammates Riley Brinnen and Owen Waterhouse were driving down McGill Road near TRU when the driver of a black Dodge Ram collided with the Jetta carrying the three youths.

Colval Shaquille Abbinett, 29, the individual accused of driving the Dodge Ram, was charged in the fall with two offences: driving a motor vehicle without due care and attention and driving without reasonable consideration.

Abbinett's alleged actions

behind the wheel caused a major collision involving six vehicles. Eleven people were injured with seven requiring hospital care.

Late in November 2024, it was reported that the Crown had chosen not to file criminal charges against the accused, saying the evidence was not enough to meet criminal standards.

If Abbinett indeed pleads guilty to the charges, the typical penalties for the charges he is facing are \$368, but could be higher.

A letter-writing campaign has been started by the parents of the three TRU students members of the B.C. government, such as Minister of Justice, Niki Sharma, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Gary Berg, Superintendent of Motor Vehicles Sam Macleod, to review

the case and take action, citing that the charges are insufficient.

When it was revealed that criminal charges would not be laid, Pat Hennelly, head coach of the men's volleyball team, expressed his frustration with the Crown.

"I can't even begin to guess what this news would do to a guy. For me, I am bitterly disappointed in the justice system. I feel like Crown counsel did not represent Kamloops and I expect the entire community to be disappointed in that decision," Hennelly said.

In the days following the accident, the WolfPack announced the creation of the Owyn McInnis Memorial Men's Volleyball Athletic Award to honour the late players memory and his contributions to his team and the sport.



FAIZAL BUKHARI/THE OMEGA

TRUSU Accounting Club co-presidents Shaveena Raj and Roshnee Jayakumar pose for a picture.

Accounting for the future

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

Launched in February 2024, the TRUSU Accounting Club at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) has become a resource for students to bridge the gap between their academic studies and the professional world. From speaker events to firm visits, the club's initiatives equip students with the tools to succeed in the accounting world and beyond.

"The purpose of the club is to provide students with opportunities, to develop essential skills and build their professional networks while also exploring opportunities mainly in the accounting field. We try to bridge the gap between the academic world and the professional one, offering hands-on experiences and career opportunities," said Shaveena Raj, the club's co-president.

Although the club is focused on accounting, its events are designed for students from all disciplines. "Our events benefit all students from different backgrounds," Raj said. "We aim to raise awareness about the Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) [certification]."

Since its establishment, the club has forged valuable partnerships with top accounting firms, including MNP, Hosenbocus & Co, BMO, Doane Grant Thornton and BDO. These firms have contributed to the club's events, offering students valuable insights and networking opportunities. "We've had speakers from these firms who were happy to collaborate with us and share their knowledge with students," Raj said.

Co-president Roshnee Jayakumar spoke about the club's origin.

"In January 2024, [Shaveena and me] attended a CPA info session on campus, and the speaker mentioned joining an accounting club is a great way to get involved in the accounting community," Jayakumar said. "We realized there was no accounting club at TRU, so we took the initiative to start one."

The club's offerings include speaker events, firm visits, networking workshops and peer mentoring sessions. These initiatives help students gain important technical knowledge and soft skills—such as resume-building

and interview techniques. Jayakumar highlighted the success of one of the club's most significant events, Ace Your Career, which took place in September 2024. "We had three speakers from accounting firms who were TRU alumni, which made the event even more special. It was a full house, and the feedback we received was incredibly positive," Jayakumar said.

The accounting club's leadership structure also provides students with an opportunity to build professional experience. The club is managed by a student executive team, with roles such as operations director, development director, and media director.

"Our leadership team plays a key role in the club's success. The skills they gain are something they can put on their resumes, and it's been great to see students get job offers because of the experience they've had with us," Jayakumar said.

Sagar Rochwani, who joined the club during its first semester, shared his enthusiasm about its impact. "I was excited to see the club at the welcome event, and I signed up

immediately," Rochwani said. "Since then, I've worked as the administration director. The networking opportunities and connections I've made through the club have been amazing."

With over 150 members and more than 500 attendees at 15 events, the accounting club has grown into a strong presence on campus. The club continues to look for new ways to engage students, with more workshops, firm info sessions, and peer mentoring sessions on the horizon.

"The success of the club is measured by student engagement and feedback," Raj said. "When students tell us that they've gained valuable insights and that they'll use what they've learned in their future careers, that makes it all worth it."

The club is open to all TRU students, whether you're an accounting major or studying a different program. For those interested in getting involved with the accounting club, there are several ways to connect, including via email at acctclub.trusu@gmail.com and on Instagram at [@trusuaccounting](https://www.instagram.com/trusuaccounting).

A discussion with Kasari Govender

The B.C. human rights commissioner was on campus for a roundtable event

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender participated in a roundtable discussion on Jan. 22 at the Brown Family House of Learning. The event, hosted by the Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association, was organized in collaboration with the commissioner's office and the All My Relations Indigenous Research Centre.

Beginning at 11:30 a.m., the event kicked off with a buffet and opening talks from TRU professors and community leaders. The floor was soon handed over to Govender, who introduced herself and the BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC).

Since being elevated to the position in 2019, Govender has dedicated herself to promoting human rights—particularly those of the most marginalized in Canada. As a lawyer, she has worked to promote gender equality, Indigenous rights, children's rights, and the rights of people with disabilities. Her work has investigated critical social issues ranging from gender-based violence to systemic racism and access to justice. She has even contributed to the establishment of the Rise Women's Legal Centre, a non-profit legal clinic in British Columbia.

The BCOHRC, per Govender, is mandated to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in British Columbia. With several tools, including (but not limited to) education and awareness

campaigns, research and policy work, and inquiries and interventions, the office directly or indirectly shapes laws, policies and practices for the betterment of human rights across the province.

"We are very independent," Govender said about the office. "My role as an officer of the legislature means that I report to the legislature as a whole and not the government. I wasn't appointed by a political party, and we are not funded at the whim of one. We're funded by the legislature."

According to Govender, this independence allows them to take a more critical view of government activities and frees them from any of the pressures that an office built into the government would face.

Their mandate is entirely systemic, focusing on broader systems of inequalities.

"That means we don't deal with individual complaints," Govender said. "We work to change the various systems that create those human rights violations."

Their most recent effort is a report called *Rights in Focus*, which provides a snapshot of the state of human rights in B.C. It details 10 systems that are essential to the fulfilment of human rights. "The systems that we selected are the primary systems impacting our social, economic and political lives," Govender said. "They reflect what we've heard from community members about where human rights show up

most often in their lives."

Though she calls the issues addressed in the report unsurprising, Govender suggests that it may not be obvious to many what constitutes a human rights issue and how they may particularly impact marginalized people.

"Many of the systems in the review are relevant to the protection of our economic and social rights, our rights to the necessities of life," Govender said. "This includes things like our high standard of living, housing, and rights to the highest achievable standard of health."

International human rights law obligates governments to take appropriate steps towards the realization of these rights."

Govender's talk touched on the many areas of improvement for human rights, including employment, education, health and childcare, housing, the criminal justice system and much more. With a breadth of statistics in her arsenal, Govender painted a worrying picture of the inequities within major sectors of daily life. Though significant strides have been made, there is still a long way to go in achieving meaningful equality, she said.

"It's a common misunderstanding that when we talk about equality, we mean sameness," Govender said. "It very much does not. [Equality] means understanding that there is a disproportionate impact of certain policies and practices, and it sometimes requires treating people

differently according to their needs and circumstances to ensure everybody has meaningful access."

After her talk, questions were brought forward by the two other panel members, Manu Sharma and Rod McCormick, who discussed issues related to Indigenous and racialized people in Canada, as well as the status and policies affecting international students. Many of these questions were gathered by Sharma and McCormick, both professors of TRU, from students across the university who wanted their concerns addressed.

Further, the panel opened up to questions from the audience. One by one, audience members took the stand to express worry about and request elaboration on issues related to accessibility, international students' rights, employment, housing, immigration, and so on. Govender answered every question, making assurances where possible, promises where applicable, and clarifications in cases beyond her jurisdiction.

The event came to a close at 1:30 p.m., and guests shuffled out of the hall. The work is not over for Govender and the BCOHRC, however. Govender made it clear that her office would continue promoting human rights in B.C., now with a fuller perspective after taking in the thoughts, opinions, and concerns from the TRU community.

To learn more about the BC Human Rights office, visit their website at bchumanrights.ca.



ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH/THE OMEGA

B.C. Attorney General Niki Sharma (front, far left) poses for a picture after a recent event at TRU.

Law school hosts B.C. Attorney General

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

Niki Sharma, B.C.'s attorney general and deputy premier, hosted a meet and greet on Feb. 6, organized by the Faculty of Law.

Sharma has been working as a lawyer in B.C. since 2005, beginning her career with a focus on indigenous rights. Throughout her career, she has represented residential school survivors and advocated for reconciliation, climate justice and anti-racism. In 2020, she was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Vancouver-Hastings electoral district. Two years later, she ascended to the position of Attorney General of British Columbia after being appointed by Premier David Eby, becoming the first woman of South Asian descent to hold the position.

The meet and greet presented students interested in law an opportunity to speak with an established career lawyer and politician.

The event kicked off at 3 p.m. Despite the podium set-up, Sharma elected to sit with the students and answer their questions on a more personable level.

When asked for her advice on how students should shape their career paths as prospective lawyers, Sharma encouraged them to remain prepared for new opportunities while never losing sight of their core values.

"It's a really exciting time to get into law," Sharma said. "Everybody goes to law school for a different reason. My advice would be to hold on to that reason."

Her journey into legal politics was unprecedented, she said. Initially focused on aboriginal law, Sharma had never imagined she would one day become the Attorney General of B.C.

"I wouldn't say I have a magic path I walked down," Sharma said. "I always wanted to be around people that inspired me and I could learn from. That was the anchor that got me to where I am today."

As opportunities came, Sharma took them on with confidence. However, her goal to safeguard Indigenous rights and promote equality for all across B.C. never wavered.

In fact, Sharma has recently facilitated the opening of a new Indigenous Justice Centre (IJC) in Kamloops—one of several built across B.C. in the past two years.

"That was really exciting," Sharma said. "We started this project a few years ago. The goal was to set up IJC's across the province. Because we know Indigenous people are overincarcerated. We've got all 15 of them open now, so I'm looking forward to how that transforms that part of the justice system."

As Attorney General, Sharma has also taken strides in investigating the ways sexualized violence and racism pervade the legal system and how these issues can be resolved.

"I think it's appalling that so few people come forward with those complaints and that the system doesn't handle them very well," Sharma said. "It's disturbing, this whole attack on DEI

that's happening. In my role, I feel like [equity] is important. A lot of what I see my work as is creating a fairer society."

Beyond social issues, Sharma also touched on the technological developments of the past few years and the resulting legal grey areas.

"There's so much work to do in the technology space," Sharma said. "I think about this area a lot; about how inadequate a lot of our legal tools are. These issues actually cause harm to society, whether it's our elections, societal discourse, or individual harms like sexploitation. It's kind of the wild west right now, a time before laws stepped in."

"I think there's something really interesting about figuring out what democracy looks like in [the technology space]," Sharma added. "And how we take back the space for the people. How we can structure things in a way that's in the public interest, instead of leaving it to for-profit entities that are just, in a lot of ways, doing harm."

Recalling her last campaign experience, Sharma describes knocking on the doors of B.C. citizens and being faced with a worrying rise of paranoia and conspiracy theorists. Most of which, she said, were fueled by social media and the internet.

"We focus too much on our differences instead of what we have in common," she continued. "And those social media platforms do that on purpose. So we're being driven away from each other for profit."



They brought *Original Stories* to life

Artist chat with Napcolors

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.

The TRU “Lorax” monument placed on one of the stumps outside of Old Main was created by none other than one of TRU’s fine art students. Charlie Napoleon, more commonly known as “Napcolors,” is a painter, illustrator and figure artist frequently featured in art exhibitions around Kamloops. Napcolors has also created their own exhibitions, including one recently in TRU’s Art Gallery, featuring art inspired by comic illustrations.

Napcolors’ gallery exhibition, titled *Original Stories*, was proposed to the art gallery organizers as an opportunity for illustrators and comic artists to showcase their work, which they often don’t get the opportunity to do.

“The original idea came to me because... the program is a fine arts program, so it’s more so focused on what is considered ‘fine arts,’ and I find that illustration in comics wasn’t usually included in the descriptions,” Napcolors said. “It kind of made me sad that [artists and teachers] weren’t showing art

that [these artists] like to create, so I proposed this exhibition to the gallery organizers. I wanted to showcase the comic artists’ original stories... I wanted to give them the opportunity to showcase [their works]. I wanted to prove a point: that comics and illustrations should also be considered art ... I wanted to give it that spotlight as well.”

Original Stories was only displayed in the art gallery from Jan. 15 to 24. However, Napcolors’ art will still be displayed at several other exhibitions in the Kamloops area, including Celebration at Gallery 635 until March 14.

Napcolors not only creates figure drawings and paintings, but they have also been known to use the 3D printer in the TRU Maker’s Space. After the chopping down of several trees in front of Old Main, Napcolors came up with a harmless joke that turned into a famous altar for the Lorax.

“I was so mad when they cut down the trees, and it was on the first day of [my] classes. It was so loud and caused such a ruckus... People were being startled and disturbed and stuff, so I wanted to do something about it. I went to the Maker’s Space and created a little Lorax,” Napcolors said. “I had it printed the next day and originally put it on a different stump. It was further back where it was a bit more hidden. I think someone eventually grabbed it

and moved it to the stump where it is now. My expectations for that were for it to just be a kind of funny thing... [I expected that] someone would just take it to their dorm.”

Over the course of several months, many of TRU’s students and community members have been offering various objects to the Lorax.

As a graduating TRU student, Napcolors is working towards maintaining and growing the art community in Kamloops. Napcolors has worked on the art gallery silent auction in the past and has also taken over hosting live figure drawing events in OM1562 on Monday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

“I [have] always loved life drawing; it was one of the first things I started going to at TRU to become a part of the [artist] community,” Napcolors said. “When I heard that the person who was running it before me was going to graduate... I offered to run it and it’s been fun since then. It gives me something to talk about with other art students. It gives me an opportunity to talk with community members who also do life drawing or [other] art in Kamloops.”

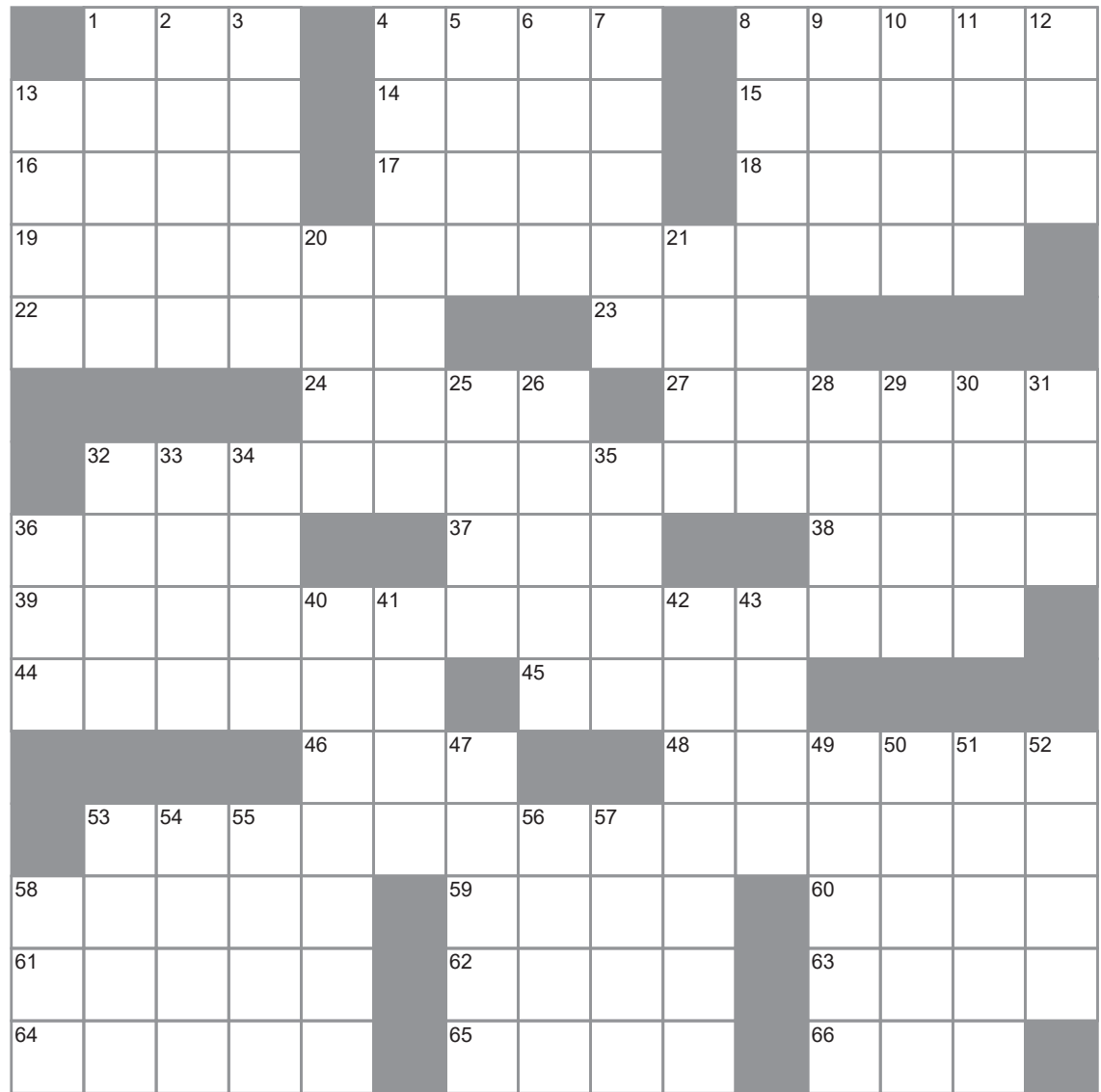
If you are a local artist or would like to nominate an artist who would like to talk about the arts, please contact the Omega’s Arts Editor, Augustus Holman, by email at auggietaylor6284@gmail.com or by phone at 250-351-9676.

ACROSS

- 1 Bro's sib, maybe
 4 Unkempt hairdos
 8 Ceremonies
 13 Clean with soap and water
 14 "Well said!"
 15 Miyazaki's cartoon genre
 16 The Emerald ___ (Ireland nickname)
 17 Farm tower
 18 Palindromic Honda
 19 Parts specialist?
 22 Joe's veep
 23 Green prefix
 24 "Dang"
 27 "Let's hear more ..."
 32 Child care worker?
 36 Preppy shirt
 37 Winery wood
 38 Favoritism
 39 Policy adviser?
 44 Puffiness remedy
 45 Follow stealthily
 46 Special guest, briefly
 48 Scorching
 53 Forty-hour gigs ... or 19-, 32- and 39-Across, based on the lengths of their words?
 58 Ninja Turtles' home
 59 Impolite
 60 Exchange
 61 Cropped up
 62 One between 12 and 20
 63 Sometimes-slipp ery trees
 64 Taboos
 65 Blind piece
 66 Airport safetyagcy.

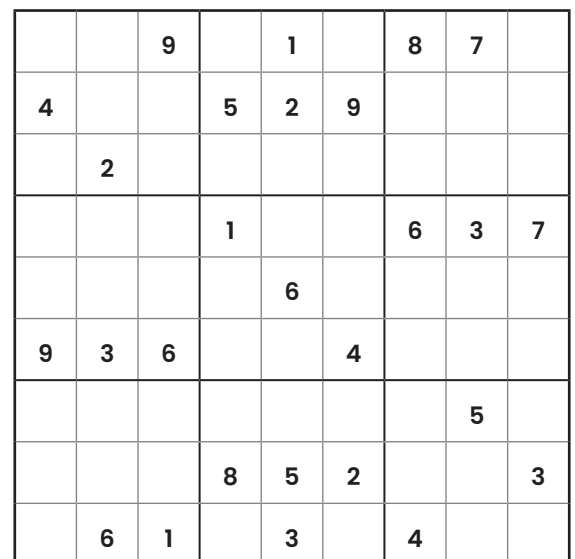
DOWN

- 1 Beyonce's "I Am... ___ Fierce"
 2 Religion whose pillars include shahada and zakat
 3 "___ and the Princesses of Power" (Netflix show)
 4 Lash enhancer
 5 Neglect to mention
 6 Soccer great who was Brazil's first minister of sports
 7 Saw logs, say
 8 Garbage can bandit
 9 Still competing
 10 DVR since 1999
 11 Middle Eastern title
 12 Short amount of time?
 13 It's lit!
 20 German grocer
 21 Electrifying rock group?
 25 Loads and loads
 26 Plot for development
 28 London subway, with "the"
 29 "The Office" receptionist
 30 Future J.D.'s exam
 31 "___ Miserables"
 32 It's a little horse!
 33 Alternatively
 34 Nickelodeon kid who kept a journal
 35 Swedish furniture retailer
 36 Thanksgiving dessert
 40 Holds in the highest esteem
 41 Landed
 42 HVAC system entry point
 43 Delight
 47 Container ship destinations
 49 EDM festival performance
 50 Laughs heartily
 51 Biden was his veep
 52 Recipe amts.
 53 Unpopular Roman emperor
 54 Victory boast
 55 Aerie, e.g.
 56 Kerosene or propane
 57 Brainstorm product
 58 Feeling blue



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— SUDOKU —



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