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the **Omega**

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Uncertainty remains for BFA

Almost two years in, students and faculty still have more questions than answers

ELLEN KAZEMBE AND LUIS ZABLAH

As part of the lead-up to the phase-out of the Visual Arts program in 2023, the dean of the Faculty of Arts, Rick McCutcheon, argued in a memo that the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) program, Visual Arts Minor, and Studio Certificate should be removed due to the drop in enrollment, inequitable workload burdens, unsustainable physical footprint and facilities costs. Simultaneously, McCutcheon suggested retaining the Visual Arts diploma.

On Jan. 29, 2024, TRU's Board of Governors voted to phase out the visual arts program over three years. The announcement left some students and faculty members with feelings of uncertainty and frustration.

According to InsideTRU, TRU's decision was based on low enrollment, high costs, and overuse and reallocation of campus space. Specifically, the decision affected the BFA (Visual Arts major), the Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts minor), the Diploma in Visual Arts, and the Visual Arts Studio certificate. Former Provost and Vice President Academic, Gillian Balfour, echoed that view, noting that the decision was driven by "strategic planning and resource allocation."

Although select visual arts classes will still be offered, the plan to close the degree and diploma programs has raised concerns about the future of the arts department. Enrolled students were told they would have the opportunity to complete their studies before the closure is finalized.

The decision drew mixed reactions from both students and faculty. According to Castanet, dozens of students, faculty, and community members gathered outside TRU to protest the decision, arguing that the program was vital for arts students and enriches both campus life and the Kamloops community.

This process has been ongoing for nearly two years. For some students, the closure has been more than a policy change; it has affected their academic plans.

"We weren't getting straight, clear answers from the university," Bryanna Lynn said. "The BFA is the best option for me because it is the only program at TRU specifically for visual arts, and there aren't many alternatives I can access without moving. It is very disappointing."

Lynn, who has neurodevelopmental disability, said the closure makes it even harder for students who can only take a few courses at a time to graduate.

Another student, Brianna Nutt, who has been working part-time while pursuing her Fine Arts diploma, says inconsistent advising has derailed her path. At one point, a counsellor even suggested she transfer into a communications program, only for her to later discover that the program "was never implemented."

With no clear alternatives, Nutt remains unsure about what comes next. "I don't want all this effort to be for nothing. There is no plan B for me," Nutt said. She cannot afford

to relocate to Vancouver or Victoria to finish an art degree, nor can she quit her job to take a full five-course load.

For alumni like Charlie "Napcolors" Napoleon, the closure of the Visual Arts program is not just about numbers, but about what it means for the breadth of education at TRU.

"I think because TRU is a university, they are supposed to cover all sorts of programs and take in a variety of disciplines," Napoleon said. "To take out art — especially visual arts — lessens the diversity of courses. Studying visual arts gives you a whole perspective of study."

Some faculty also voiced concerns about the closure. Associate professor Donald Lawrence, who has taught at TRU since 1989, said he regards the decision as a "significant loss to TRU and the local community."

Lawrence told The Omega about how students benefited from community-engaged research. In 2000, TRU received a national research grant to study culture in small cities, and visual arts played a central role.

"We attracted significant research funding and students worked with community groups to tell their stories," Lawrence said, noting that projects included partnerships with Kamloops' Japanese community and others.

Some faculty concerns were also put forward formally on Jan. 16, 2024, in a submission to the Board of Governors. Signed by professors Lawrence, Darlene

Kalynka, Alan Brandoli, Twyla Exner and studio technician Lea Bucknell, the letter called for the "continuation and renewal" of the BFA.

The faculty letter also raised governance concerns. It noted that an external program review mandated by TRU policy was cancelled, and that the Arts Faculty council had not approved the academic plan presented to the Board as evidence of support.

"We believe that this sets a dangerous precedent for collegial governance at TRU," the letter states.

According to a petition filed with the B.C. Supreme Court on June 4, 2024, the Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association (TRUFA) alleges that TRU breached section 10(b) of the TRU Act when it suspended enrolment in the Visual Arts program. TRUFA argued to overturn both the March 2023 suspension of enrolments and the Board's Jan. 29, 2024 decision to discontinue four Visual Arts programs.

After a two-day hearing in April 2025, Justice Maria Morellato reserved her decision, which has yet to be released.

In response to a request for comment from The Omega, TRU said it is not in a position to comment until the outcome of the judicial review is known.

Uncertainty remains as TRU, faculty and students await the court's ruling, a decision that could shape the future of both the university's programs and the wider Kamloops arts community.

Scare off frat flu with these tips and tricks

BRET BOSTOCK

SELENA SALLAY—THE UBYSSEY (UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)

There is nothing more humbling than becoming ill and realizing everything you're doing to get better is what you should've been doing all along. It turns out drinking gallons of caffeine on the regular and getting less than four hours of sleep every night does not fix the broken pieces of your exhaustion or do wonders for your immune system. Who would have thought?

Let's face it. If you've been exposed to a virus this midterm season, it's frat flu, and it's too late for you. Good luck. Hopefully you make it to the other side! Take a day off so you're able to recover quickly and get well soon!

If you're one of the lucky ones, yet to encounter this ailment in the throngs of people bumping into each other in the poorly-circulated air of the tight and enclosed spaces that make up our campus, here are some ways to prevent getting sick this season.

Bus

If the frats are where this particular flu begins, then the bus is where it spreads. You are trapped. It seems like you have no choice but to hope that the unmasked six-foot-seven dude in the middle of the bus doesn't cough all over everyone and let his spit particles fall all over you during your never-ending commute.

Now, I cannot take credit for this revolutionary

sickness-prevention measure since I saw it happen the other day, like, irl. (I would have applauded this individual, if I was not already holding on for dear life to the little grey loopy thing as the bus swerved around various electric scooter riders.) If someone behind you coughs on the bus, you can be brave and simply get up quickly and move — you can even move to a whole other section of the bus, not just one seat over.

Heed my warning: if you're not careful, one day your usual trip on the R4 could turn into the canon university event that is catching frat flu, missing one class and then fearing for your life even more when you come back to a lab, an in-class essay, and an exam that is "not a big deal" just "everything we've looked over during lectures and the first 400 pages of the textbook" which leads to you reading the first question and then the course code, wondering if you are even in the right class.

Lectures

Even though it's spooky season, there is nothing more scary than the person next to you coughing up a lung in a lecture during midterms. Your whole life flashes before your eyes and your whole academic career boils down to this moment. Your next action could determine whether you pass or fail

your courses, or even graduate... so choose wisely.

First, the sitting-somewhere-else strategy can also apply here. Be courageous and finally leave your unassigned-assigned seat you chose that first week of September. Will everyone scoot their chair an inch away from the person having a coughing fit in the corner? Probably. Will people look at them like they are a zombie and start shouting 'brains' until they finally leave? I say this is deserved.

In fact, if you're unable to move, ridicule works great. Personally, I like to point at the cougher and say really loudly, "That was an interesting point, you should tell the professor," which, if all goes well, will result in the professor asking them to share their comment with the whole class, which will then lead to them running from the classroom in fear because they were playing Clash of Clans instead of paying attention.

By using either of these strategies, you should be able to pass that "total GPA-booster" elective you took that's actually really hard — it turns out university classes are all hard — because that would be so embarrassing if you didn't.

Library

I have to fight for my life to find a seat in IKB that isn't across from someone, because I like to look around and I don't

want some random person thinking I'm checking them out. I am not leaving my spot early, easily or ever (what can I say, I'm locked in) so if you even dare sniffle around me, I am not afraid to start kicking some shins.

If the cougher in your proximity doesn't take the hint, I suggest starting a TikTok Live to your 25 followers. Call out this person for staying on campus while sick to your four loyal viewers. Coming to classes? Fine. I guess I get it. Just cough into your arm and not onto mine and we'll probably be fine. But you, as a spreader of frat flu symptoms, have no reason to be in the library!

However, if confrontation isn't your style, then be like everyone on the internet and hide behind a screen! Whether you want to send proof of their ChatGPT usage on their participation assignments to their professor (AI users are cringe and deserve it anyway) or you feel like commenting thumbs down emojis on their recent LinkedIn career update, it is that serious. Quit coughing on me. This method is by far the most effective suggestion on this list.

Finally, try bolstering your immune system on the regular. Get to sleep early. Replace that coffee with some vitamin C for a change — face it, there isn't enough caffeine left in the world to help you anyway.



In this game there are only winners

TRU joins 106 other post-secondary schools in blood donor competition

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

From now until the end of the year, TRU, along with over a hundred other Canadian post-secondary institutions, will be competing in a unique competition for the Canadian Blood Services' Fall Get Together campaign. The effort encourages college students to contribute to the non-profit via blood or plasma donations.

Canadian Blood Services is an organization dedicated to providing safe and reliable access to products and services necessary for the care and treatment of patients across Canada. That is, it is responsible for providing blood, stem cell, tissue and organ components for transfusion and transplantation, as well as the management of plasma protein and related products used for a plethora of medical conditions.

Over the 27 years since its inception, the charity has made significant strides in its role as the national blood authority, improving blood and blood product supply nationwide and ensuring the best possible outcomes for all patients.

Canada's Biological

Lifeline (as they dubbed themselves in their latest strategic plan) performed several outreach and awareness-building campaigns to encourage participation and donations from everyday Canadians. It has collaborated with patient groups, care providers, health system leaders, community donors, and other blood service organizations and governments to achieve their goals.

This year, Canada Blood Services hopes to bring a new generation of donors into the fold. With the onset of the latest campaign, the charity seems to recognize the potential of college students in their mission for a more involved and patient-friendly nation. Fall Get Together is a friendly competition open to all legal residents across Canada, with the exception of Quebec, who have reached the age of majority in their province, are enrolled in a post-secondary institution in Canada and will remain enrolled until the contest ends on Dec. 31.

Individuals who join their post-secondary school's Partners for Life (PFL) team,

book an appointment and show up within the contest period as part of their PFL team will be eligible for a chance to win prizes. Importantly, the website states that a successful donation is not required to participate in the prize draw; all one needs to do, at the very least, is attend the appointment. Each student's attendance will count just once towards the institution's position.

The friendly competition aims to foster a sense of camaraderie and community among students within each post-secondary institution, thereby encouraging a higher rate of blood donation. Their campaign video, posted on their Instagram, features a group of college-aged friends at a picnic, playing pool and having a fun night out at a karaoke bar, their blood donation armbands visible throughout. The message suggests that donating blood is not only a good deed, but also a fun way to bond with friends.

If that isn't convincing enough, Fall Get Together is awarding institutions with the highest donor point average

(DPA) with limited-edition donor hoodies each worth \$95 and an invite to a special Friendsgiving banquet, valued at \$25. The DPA, calculated as the percentage of team members attending an appointment during the contest period, will be updated daily on a top-ten leaderboard for those interested in tracking progress. Only participants in the competition (that is, those who attended their appointments) will be eligible for prizes.

Whether the Canadian Blood Services' goals to attract a younger generation of donors will work is still up in the air, but the incentives and outreach efforts may just be the push it needs. Several post-secondary institutions have already jumped into action, including our own. The hope is that this joins the growing list of annual traditions at TRU and other universities across the country.

To join TRU's Partners for Life team and stand a chance to win some great prizes, you can visit their website at blood.ca/gettogether.

CFBX Top 30 Charts

— October 23, 2025 —

Artist – Album (Label)

- 1) No Joy* – Bugland (Hand Drawn Dracula)
- 2) Ada Lee* – When I Paint My Masterpiece (Next Door)
- 3) Caveman and the Banshee* – Born to Kill (NoiseAgonyMayhem)
- 4) Planet Smashers* – On the Dancefloor (Stomp)
- 5) Bibi Club* – Feu de Garde (Les Braises) (Secret City)
- 6) Maki** – Ruiner (Independent)
- 7) Mud Morganfield – Deep Mud (Nola Blue)
- 8) Foxtrot* – Sugar Toast (Independent)
- 9) Non Ultras* – Bulwark EP (Independent)
- 10) Amber Azalea* – Small Talk (Independent)
- 11) Malled* – Eye Heards EP (Independent)
- 12) TOPS* – Bury the Key (Ghostly)
- 13) Lights* – A6 (Universal)
- 14) Pennan Brae* – 50 Million Years Ago (Independent)
- 15) Maddisun* – Home is Where the Music Is (Independent)
- 16) Made-Up* – World Making (Independent)
- 17) stef.in* – Icterus II (Barnyard)
- 18) Paul Black* – Beautiful Sin (Independent)
- 19) Various Artists* – On the Road: Wetomaci (Musique Nomade)
- 20) Thelonius Garcia* – Marche Nocturne (Independent)
- 21) Mark Pharrow* – RNDR 032 (Render)
- 22) David Occhipinti* – Camera Lucida (Elastic)
- 23) Mike Field* – Nashland (Independent)
- 24) Raquel Marina* – Kind Words (Independent)
- 25) JayWood* – Leo Negro EP (Royal Mountain)
- 26) Paul Pigat* – Cousin Harley Plays the Blues (La Reserve)
- 27) Various Artists* – Nikamutau: Florent Vollant (Independent)
- 28) Roomful of Blues – Steppin' Out! (Alligator)
- 29) Ayla Tesler-Mabe* – Let Me Out!! (Independent)
- 30) Everett LaRoi* – Morning Stars Mornings Hush (Independent)

* indicates Canadian Content ** indicates a local artist

Remembrance Day events in Kamloops

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

Once a year, on Nov. 11, Canadians observe Remembrance Day, a memorial dedicated to commemorating those who were lost in war and honoring all who served and continue to serve in Canada's military.

Observed by several nations of the Commonwealth, the significance of the day—Nov. 11—lies in its century-old history. At 11 am on Nov. 11, 1918, the Armistice of Compiègne came into law, effectively ending all hostilities in World War I. Today, Remembrance Day is often marked with two minutes of silence around the same time, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

Though not every province in Canada observes Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday, B.C. does. This means that, come this Nov. 11, several businesses and schools will shutter in honour of the memorial day.

If you want to observe the memorial holiday in community with others, or hope to volunteer in honour of the troops, don't fret. Several events and opportunities in Kamloops are always looking for people to drop by.

TRU Remembrance Day Ceremony

On Nov. 6, TRU will hold a Remembrance Day Ceremony at Student Street between 10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. The event will be hosted by the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy and Student Services, inviting TRU students, faculty, and staff to honour fallen, retired, and still-serving members of the Canadian military.

Kamloops Legion Poppy Campaign

The Poppy Campaign is a longstanding tradition

held by the Royal Canadian Legion, where tens of millions of Canadians wear the poppy from the last Friday of October until Nov. 11. The poppy will serve as a visual pledge to honor veterans. This year, on Oct. 31, Kamloops' local branch, the Kamloops Legion, resumes that tradition. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Monday to Friday, they will be at Seymour Square on Seymour Street. They are looking for volunteers to help deliver poppies or sit at the Poppy Tables. To volunteer, you can contact Val Davidson at 250-299-1276 or iam-valdavidson@gmail.com.

Colombo Lodge's Remembrance Day Dinner and Dance

The Italian cultural centre, Colombo Lodge, will be hosting a feast on Nov. 10 in honour of Remembrance Day. According to their website, the event is promised to be one of "honour, reflection, and community." The program hopes to bring the Kamloops community together as they honour those who risked their lives and continue to do so.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church's 'In Remembrance' Concert

The annual 'In Remembrance' concert will take place at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Nov. 11 at 2 p.m., featuring Kamloops-based chamber choir the Cantabile Singers. This will be their 15th year performing at the event and bringing the community together in remembrance of fallen soldiers. The event will feature performances of notable works from Mozart, Howard Goodall, and the world premiere of several works from local composer Ryan Noakes.

Logan Lake Miners drilling for success

One of the BCIHL's newest teams is a welcome addition for the community and players

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

Not many hockey fans may have heard of the Logan Lake Miners, but that's starting to change. The Miners, based in the small town of Logan Lake, are one of the newest and least-known additions to the British Columbia Intercollegiate Hockey League (BCIHL).

The BCIHL is a men's university hockey league based in our province, with occasional cross-border competition. It allows players to continue playing hockey in a competitive league while still pursuing their post-secondary studies. Unlike the U Sports league, the teams are not always directly affiliated with their school's athletic department, often acting as independent or semi-independent club programs. As a result, the BCIHL tends to focus on small universities, with many rosters comprising players from multiple institutions. The Miners, for example, draw players from both TRU and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

Founded in 2022, the Miners joined the league during the 2022-23 season. The goal was to fill the gap of having no university-level hockey team in the Kamloops-Merritt region, allowing players to compete competitively close to home. Originally, the program's founders tried to start a youth hockey academy; however, it never took off, and they shifted to a college-level team. The Miners ended up in Logan Lake because of ice availability.

"The reason it ended up in Logan Lake was just

ice availability," General manager and head coach Grant Friesen said. "Kamloops ice time is hard to come by with all their minor and junior teams. Here, we have more ice and a community that's really gotten behind us."

During their first season, the Miners struggled, going winless in over 20 games. From there, they brought in Friesen to rebuild their program. "When I first took over, the team came off a winless season. I think they went 0-22," Friesen said. "Where we've come from that to now is drastically different. The community is getting behind us, people are showing up to games, and players actually want to come play here."

Under Friesen's leadership, the team has rebuilt its identity both on and off the ice. With community support growing and stronger player recruitment, the Miners have really settled into Logan Lake as their home.

"Being part of a program that's really starting to build something here and build a culture in Logan Lake is something special," Nathan Bohmer, a forward and second-year player in the carpentry program at TRU, said. "It's a whole different world once you're here."

What makes the Miners different isn't just their improving record; it's the identity they've built around the character and commitment of their players. With over half the roster in TRU's trades programs, the Miners' culture mirrors that same blue-collar mindset. Show up, work hard, and

take pride in what you build. Friesen says that mindset defines everything about the program.

"For us, everything's based on hard work. We're trying to prove we belong at this level and that we're a sustainable program," he said.

The dedication and hard work of the team are felt by each teammate every day.

"A lot of guys here work all day, go to school full time, and still play hockey," Bohmer said. "That's the toughest adjustment, being able to be a student-athlete while also paying bills, because everything's expensive nowadays."

Still, the team comes together and competes each night.

"We're a bunch of misfits," Bohmer proudly exclaimed. "Guys that people probably would've said no to on other teams. But we show up, work hard every night, and this place feels like home."

The connection with the Logan Lake community has become a defining part of the team's story. What began as a convenient location for ice time has grown into a town that's passionate about its hockey team. Veteran defenseman Jordan Laird, who's been with the team since 2022, says the local support has grown alongside the team itself.

"The first year we struggled to get people here," he said. "But now, with the mine, the community and the work we do volunteering around town, it's packed. Our playoffs had about a hundred people a night. It's an unreal feeling."

As Bohmer put it, communities like Logan Lake are often known for supporting hockey teams. "Small towns are known for their rowdy hockey crowds," he said.

The team has also made an effort to give back and be involved in the community in return for the support they provide the Miners.

"We were able to raise enough money to give away season tickets to all the school-aged kids in Logan Lake," Friesen said. "It's a way to make hockey part of the community here."

Looking forward to their season, the Miners are chasing more than just victories; they're looking to earn respect from within the BCIHL.

"Our goal this year is to go to the finals," Laird shared. "We want to prove we're not just an expansion team that people laughed at. We're here to make an impact in the league."

Friesen shared a similar long-term vision. "Success for us isn't just about the standings," he said. "It's about providing a great experience for our players and showing the community that this is a place worth being part of."

As the Miners continue to climb the BCIHL standings, they're proving it isn't just about wins and losses. A team that is made on pride, dedication, and teamwork, is worth more than what shows on the scoreboard.

For the Logan Lake Miners, that "something bigger" is more than a hockey program; it's a legacy taking root in the heart of a small town that believes in them.



Runnin' with the 'Pack

A conversation with Floor Ursem, goalkeeper for the women's soccer team

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

From Uitgeest, Netherlands, to Kamloops, British Columbia, the first-year goalkeeper Floor Ursem has quickly made her mark with the TRU WolfPack women's soccer team. Balancing a taxing science course load with life as a student-athlete in a new country, Ursem has helped the WolfPack stay in playoff contention throughout her debut season. With two games left against UBCO and a postseason berth on the line, she's determined to help set a new standard for the program. The Omega sat down with Ursem to discuss it all.

O: You grew up in the Netherlands. Can you tell us a little bit about how your childhood shaped you into the soccer player you are?

FU: Well, when I was younger, I always liked sports. When I was in my mom's belly, I always kicked, so she always says she knew I was going to be a soccer player. When I was four, I started playing soccer, and I dreamed of being a professional player. So, here I am playing soccer.

O: How did you decide to come to TRU and Canada in general for your career?

FU: In the Netherlands, you're not able to play soccer at the highest level and go to university, and I think it's really important to get an education. So I started looking at schools in the United States, and then my coach, Mark [Pennington], reached out to me. It just seemed like a really good fit.

O: Since you are just in the first few months of your first year, what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced so far, coming from the Netherlands to Canada?

FU: The school part is not too hard, but more so, how everything is in English is weird [for me]. Cooking on my own and living in the dorm is [also] just weird. My mom always did everything for me, like washing my laundry, cooking, and stuff like that, so doing it on my own is weird.

O: Because it can be a bit of an odd position, what specifically got you into goalkeeping? And what would you say you enjoy most about that position?

FU: I have no idea how I got into it. At one point, I was like, I want to be a goalkeeper. So I just never looked back. But sometimes I do miss playing [other roles] because there is more freedom, and it gives you more position to be out and play on. I like that I can do things with my hands, like not just my feet, but I have the freedom to use my hands. I'm also the last player back, so I get a view of the entire field, which is nice to be able to see everything.

O: How would you describe your kind of style as a goalkeeper? What do you think your strengths are?

FU: Well, one of my strengths is like my goal kick, and I really love doing 1-on-1s with players. I feel like I'm very good at them.

O: How have you been balancing your academics and the athletic schedule?

FU: We practice every day from noon to 2 p.m. and then on Tuesdays from seven to eight we have [our] lift. Then on Mondays, I have the PACE program, where I do two hours of homework with all the other first-year athletes. My schedule is packed on Mondays and Tuesdays. I start school at 9:30 a.m., and I won't come home

until 10 p.m. I'm tired, so it can be hard to do homework outside of class. But so far, I've been getting it all done because school isn't too hard yet.

O: So far, how has your first year been on the WolfPack?

FU: I love it. We're doing really well as a team, we have some really good players, and everyone is like one big group, everyone really likes each other. I think we can make the playoffs within the last two games.

O: You guys are in the last playoff spot, and you're going to play your last two games against UBCO, who are fighting to take that slot. What are you guys focusing on going into these two games?

FU: UBCO is a really good team who plays everywhere, and they like to make long passes, so we have to stop those and really put pressure on them. We just need to stick together on the field and stay calm. I think we can do it.

O: Now looking back at the season so far, is there a particular save or game or something that stands out to you as a highlight of your first year with the Wolf Pack?

FU: There are two, and then they're both against UVIC. I saved a big penalty shot against them last time we played. Then I had a 1-on-1 with one of their top players, and I shut her down, so that felt really good.

O: What is some advice you'd give to a young soccer player who may be looking to go overseas and play soccer for a school?

FU: I think you should always follow your dreams and do what you want to do, not what everyone else wants you to do. Whatever you do, do it with passion.

Fans react to new CFL rules

Why some people are flagging the proposed rule changes as out-of-bounds

ALEXA LIPTAK AND LUIS ZABLAH

One of the oldest professional sporting leagues in Canada is set to adopt some major changes, and sports fans have thoughts. To many people's surprise, the organization that would eventually be called the Canadian Football League (CFL) has a history that predates its American counterpart, the National Football League, by over 35 years. The Canadian style of football was first established in 1884 and adopted its current name, the CFL, when it became a formal league in 1956. Over the years, the league has developed its own unique set of rules that distinguish the CFL from the typical American football most people are familiar with.

Recently, the CFL announced several changes to the game that will roll out over the next few seasons. These changes are set to happen in two phases, the first of which will take effect for the 2026 season and the second during the following season. According to league officials, the goal is to increase touchdowns and big plays, improve game flow consistency and freshen the visual look of the stadium and broadcast, while preserving distinctive elements of Canadian football.

However, the announcement came with pushback from fans, players and coaches alike. Many have voiced concerns that these new rules will detract from the game's Canadian essence. For example, longtime fans have argued that reducing field and endzone sizes, relocating goalposts, and altering the rouge point—specific features that set the CFL apart from other football leagues—will strip the game of its Canadian identity. Kamloops Broncos head coach Braden Vankoughnett is among those with concerns, saying the CFL is fixing something that isn't broken.

"I don't think they needed the changes at all", he said. "We're at the highest scoring season we've had in a long time. The game's fantastic, it's unique. We get guys coming from all over the world to come play for our team, and they love this game because it's different."

Online football chatter has been filled with debate. Some argue that the changes are beneficial for the game's development, offering an opportunity to modernize the league and attract new fans. Others argue that the league is leaning too heavily toward an American-style game, risking alienating loyal fans who value the CFL's distinctive style and heritage. Vankoughnett believes in the latter, suggesting that the CFL is focusing on the wrong kind of updates.

"The Canadian Football League definitely needed to make some changes to grow the game," he said. "But that needed to happen in marketing, in the way they keep statistics and brand the game, not in the way the game is played on the field."

So, what are the new changes and why do they matter?

Rouge Point

A unique rule of the Canadian league is the rouge point. A team can earn a single point if a kicked ball, such as a punt, missed field goal, or kickoff, went into the end zone and wasn't returned, even if it went wide of the goalposts or out of bounds through the end zone. Under the new rules, a point will only be given if on a punt or field goal if the returner fails to bring the ball out of the endzone, such as if the returner takes a knee or is tackled. The CFL says this will prevent games from being decided by "[...] a missed field goal, punt or kickoff through the end zone," but some players argue that those moments are part of what makes the Canadian game exciting.

Play Clock Change

Under the current rules and regulations in the CFL, the time players must start their play, known as the play clock, sits at 20-seconds. However, that period only begins when the officials spot the ball and signal it ready for play. This sometimes leads to inconsistent pacing and longer gaps between plays. In contrast, the new rules state that the play clock will be 35 seconds and will start as soon as the play ends. According

to the CFL, this revision will "[...] eliminate inconsistencies caused by teams setting their own pace." Some opponents of the new rules, however, worry that it could change the game's rhythm.

Goalpost Relocation

The goal posts in the CFL are located at the front of the endzones, on the goal line. This can sometimes obstruct passing lanes or cause deflected balls that may interfere with a touchdown. Beginning in 2027, the goalposts will be moved to the back of the endzone, similar to American football layouts. The reason for this is to open up more passing angles, create safer endzone plays and boost touchdown opportunities. "Moving the uprights back eliminates one of my favourite special team plays about the Canadian game, which is the field goal return," Vankoughnett said.

Field Length Reduction

One key feature that sets the CFL apart from other football leagues is its 110-yard field, which is 10 yards longer than a standard American football field. With the new changes, fields will be shortened to 100 yards. This comes with the goal of standardizing stadium dimensions across the league and bringing offenses closer to scoring range.

Endzone Size Change

The endzones in the CFL are 20 yards long, offering more space for receivers and long, developing passing plays. However, similar to the decision to shrink the field length, the proposed changes will reduce the endzones by five yards.

While some of these changes are seen as necessary for modernization and growth of the league, others believe they could erase part of what makes the CFL special, distancing the league from its most dedicated supporters.

"It's a beautiful game, and the changes were made in the wrong part of the Canadian Football League," Vankoughnett said. "I hope they revoke some of them, because the product on the field is already doing great."

Gamify your fitness

If working out becomes too much of a chore, making a game of it could help

LINDSEE MUGFORD CONTRIBUTOR

You've picked the perfect workout plan, but when it comes time to hit the gym, you flake, then berate yourself, insisting you'll do better tomorrow. Meanwhile, it's now November and you've made it to the gym once since school started, and that plan isn't really "perfect" anymore. If this sounds familiar, know you are not alone. The truth is, plans are only perfect if you can actually do them when you're supposed to. Which means that for many of us, the best plan is whatever movement we can sneak into our day, and I assure you, 10 minutes a day of exercise is always going to get you better results than none. So, if you find yourself needing to be sneaky about fitting movement into your day, this article may help you.

Start with the simplest changes. Try sneaking movement into the routine you already have. When you park your car in a lot, park at the far edges and walk the extra steps. If you take the bus, get off a stop or two early and walk the rest of the way. When you have the option to take the stairs, an elevator, or an escalator, choose the stairs. Get up and walk a loop of campus between classes, or the next time you get groceries, see if you can get them all in the house in one trip.

On days when you are at home studying (or binging Netflix), set a timer. After an hour (or an episode), get up and do squats for a minute, then hold a plank for another minute. After another hour (or episode), repeat the sequence. If the squats and plank combo get too easy, switch it up and try to sit in the bottom of a squat for a minute, then see how many push-ups you can do. If cardio is more your thing, put on your favourite song and dance to it. It all adds up.

If you find you are better motivated to move if you are with friends, or need a little more competition to get the blood flowing, then this is where gamifying your workout comes in. One of my favourite ways to spend some free time with friends is to find a quiet playground and start a vicious game of The Floor is Lava or Playground Tag. If you can't find a quiet playground, you can always try and start a game with the people already there. I will warn you, though, playground kids are tough, and I have rarely seen adults beat them. If that's not your thing or you don't have access to a playground, games of tag in a field or public park are also great.

Don't let the fact that winter is coming deter you from stupid challenges; snow only adds to the fun.

Channel your childhood and start a snowball fight. Go sledding, and extra props if you take turns pulling each other back up the hill. Find a field and start a race to see who can pull a friend on a sled the fastest. Play that same game of tag, but with snow as resistance. And perhaps my favourite way to lose a bet annually is to see who can roll the biggest ball of snow.

Anything can be made into a contest or a game if you want it to. So next time the idea of going to the gym is too much, try being sneaky about it. Our lives may feel so serious and stressful right now, so don't turn your exercise into a chore. Movement should make your life better, not worse.

Finally, I am throwing in a more structured routine for those who want a bit more commitment and challenge. I suggest adding this get-up routine to your day. You don't need any equipment, and this routine also makes an excellent gym warm-up.

- Lie on the ground on your back, now stand back up-
- Lie back down, but on your left side, then stand back up
- Lie back down on your right side, then stand back up
- Lie flat on your stomach, then stand back up
- Finally, lie down in the top of a push-up position (arms

extended in a straight line from directly under your shoulders to the floor, arms rigid), then get back up

That's one round. To add the second round, repeat the steps, but pretend your right hand is glued to your right knee. Round three is performed with your left hand glued to your left knee. Then, right hand on your left knee, followed by your left hand on your right knee. Finally, try with both hands glued to your butt (do not attempt the final push-up position).

If you want to make these more difficult, you can add rounds, experiment with hand placement, or try to get up and down using as few movements as possible. It may not seem like much, but these really get the blood flowing when you do them right. They also make for a hilarious competition if you have another person and enough room.

Lindsee Mugford spent years helping clients get strong as a nutrition coach and trainer. She experimented with swimming, strongman, powerlifting, and even a little competitive arm wrestling over the years. While her focus may have changed to literature and writing she still enjoys a competitive game of the floor is lava.

Artist Chat with TRU alum Ral Ojah

Ojah talks with the Omega about rewriting history through his works of art

JAKOB SCHMIETENKNOP STAFF WRITER

Ral Ojah is a Nigerian artist who has recently graduated from the TRU Fine Arts program. Ojah is beginning to make waves in a city where two rivers meet by finding his audience and educating Kamloopsians through the works of his art. His creations explore the theme of liberation, using his cultural identity and materials like Dutch wax fabrics, while being bridged to historical traditions through a contemporary style, such as mixed media and realism.

Speaking with The Omega, Ojah described the connection to the artistic process.

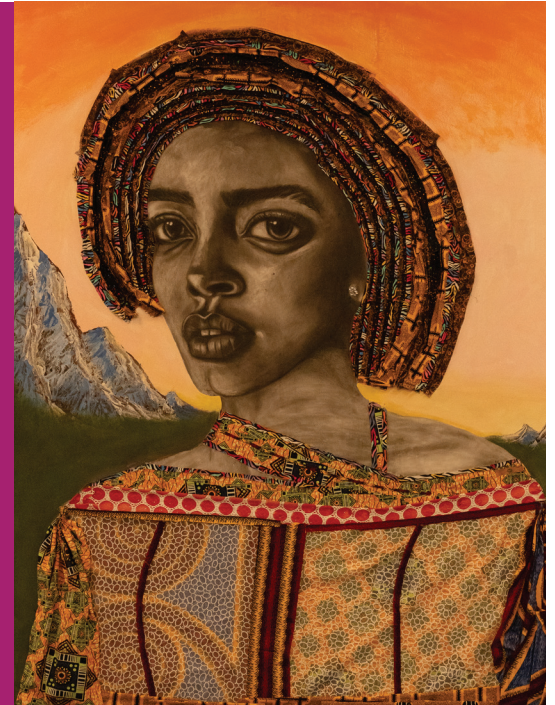
"It's the process that keeps me going," Ojah said. "When I start a piece, I don't know what it will look like. I work through the mistakes and uncertainties, and finally, I see what comes out. That drives me to push further."

Ojah has been creating art since he was three years old, though Ojah's devotion intensified around 2019-2020. He credits a range of artists as inspirations, from Kelvin Okafor's realistic graphite portraits to Yinka Shonibare's fabric work and Nick Cave's multimedia approach. "It's a way to honour their work while making it my own."

Charcoal eventually became Ojah's preferred medium. He's experimented with ink, poster colours, acrylics, and graphite, but patience led to charcoal, which allowed him to fully capture depth and skin tones. Over time, he began combining the materials as a way of his storytelling.

His series, *Ifunanya*, illustrates this story. Beginning

"I put it out there and let the art attract its audience, even if someone calls it hideous, that reaction is still meaningful, the beauty of art is in the eye of the beholder,"



with simple charcoal and graphite, Ojah progressed to large-scale mixed-media works incorporating Dutch wax fabrics. "Ifunanya is my push," he said. "It represents growth, experimentation, and taking risks. By the third piece, I was pushing large-scale and pushing myself to the limit."

Another work, "Baby, Please Don't Go!" is a sculpture of Ojah's future studio. The piece reflects the tension many artists may face: the possibility of art leaving the soul of an artist due to having no time due to work. "Why it's termed, Baby, Please Don't Go! Is because during the final year of art school, we tend to either leave the art, or the art leaves you. Because you may still be painting, but you won't have that amount of time due to work," Ojah said.

The inclusion of Dutch wax fabrics is central

to Ojah's work, linking past and present.

"The fabric is called Dutch wax fabric, and it's tied to Indonesia, the batik. Back then, the Dutch masters tried to capitalize on it and make a market out of it. The indigenous rejected it due to its low quality; they used their hands to make fabric while the Dutch masters used machines," Ojah explained. "We are not the people who bought those fabrics and appropriated it. Now we do it in different ways; it's taking an identity that has been used to ridicule you and changing it into a contemporary use. I can style it with my shirts or trousers, using that and making it my identity in a sense. The fabric is not just a piece of artwork; it's a statement for those who now see the statement. It's reconciliation."

His work is indubitably making a statement, letting

the art speak for itself. "I put it out there and let the art attract its audience, even if someone calls it hideous, that reaction is still meaningful, the beauty of art is in the eye of the beholder," Ojah said.

When asked for a message to inspire any artists, here's what he had to say: "First thing is, if you pray or have a source of power they use, may their God hold them tight. Even if you're confused, it looks dumb every single time you do it, it feels weird, but just do it. You will then see your answer, maybe while you're showering, or taking the bus, I tell you, it will pop up. Secondly, make mistakes, steer yourself towards making the mistakes consciously. Because that's how I've been able to discover the perfect way to do things. After I've made the mistake, gotten angry at myself, and then calmed down, I can see it clearly."

A Swift album review

From Shakespeare's tragedies to feather Boas, Swifts new release is a wild ride

OLIVIA WILCOX ARTS EDITOR

In music, there are often times when an artist's direction changes so slowly that differences are not noticeable until someone actively brings them to our attention. Other times, however, the changes are fast-moving, quick, and dare we say...Swift.

On Oct. 3, Taylor Swift released her twelfth studio album, *The Life of a Showgirl*. The new album, with its shiny and glittery vibes, may cause whiplash when compared to the manic monotone that pervades the themes of her 2024 album, *The Tortured Poets Department*. So, now that the album has been listened to countless times, let's have a debrief.

Showgirl represents a true shift from Swift's last two studio records, *Midnights* (2022) and *The Tortured Poets Department* (2024). Unlike the former albums, which were written during Swift's six-year-long relationship with British actor and model Joe Alwyn, *Showgirl* is full of energy and potential, signifying a shift that suggests the superstar has found her light again.

The energy of the album is in part related to significant changes in Swift's life: her relationship with Travis Kelce, tight end on the Kansas City Chiefs, as well as the return of the master albums and the legacy of The Eras Tour.

Certain tracks on the album, such as *The Fate of Ophelia*, *Opalite*, *Wi\$hli\$t* and *Wood* have the rumoured common

denominator of fiancé Kelce being the muse. Which, honestly, is refreshing compared to songs on *Poet's Department* such as: *Fresh Out The Slammer*, *Down Bad*, or *loml* (abbreviated slang for 'love of my life' or 'loss of my life'). All three songs share the common themes of grief and sport melancholic lyrics like,

"My friends tried, but I wouldn't hear it
Watch me daily disappearing
For just one glimpse of his smile"

(*Fresh Out The Slammer*, *The Tortured Poets Department*, 2024)

These lyrics describe Swift as she attempted to save her fragile six-year relationship with Alwyn.

In contrast, *Showgirl* begins with *The Fate of Ophelia*, a song influenced by the untimely demise of the young Shakespearean heroine, Ophelia, who is fated to drown after being rejected by her lover, Hamlet, and the death of her father, Polonius.

In her version, Swift takes the place of Ophelia, who, unlike in the stage production, is ultimately saved from drowning by an unnamed hero, presumably inspired by Kelce.

"And if you'd never come for me
I might've drowned in the melancholy
I swore my loyalty to me, myself and I
Right before you

lit my sky up
All that time
I sat alone in my tower
You were just hon-
ing your powers
Now I can see it all (see it all)
Late one night
You dug me out of my grave and
Saved my heart from the fate of Ophelia"

(*The Fate of Ophelia*, *The Life of a Showgirl*, 2025)

Although Swift's love life is generally an exciting topic for fans, what is even more exciting is the growth of her career, including the return of her master albums.

The controversy began in 2019 when her original record label, Big Machine Records, was sold to Ithaca Holdings. As a result, Swift was contractually stripped of the sole ownership of her albums, her art, and the very chapters of her own story.

Rather than accept her fate, Swift took action and started the process of re-recording her original works, now known as Taylor's versions.

What followed was a tireless legal battle between Swift and Ithaca Holdings owner Scooter Braun, which ultimately led to Swift repurchasing her master albums from Shamrock Capital in 2025.

The return of her beloved original albums is also a recurring theme in *Showgirl* songs like *Father Figure*, *Actually Romantic*, and *Eldest Daughter*. In these three tracks, Swift describes

the power associated with her success.

"I saw a change in you
(saw a change, saw a change in you)
My dear boy
They don't make loyalty like they used to
(not like they used to)
Your thoughtless ambition sparked the ignition
On foolish decisions which led to misguided visions
That to fulfill your dreams
You had to get rid of me
I protect the family"

(*Father Figure*, *The Life of a Showgirl*, 2025)

This is where some interpretation may be required. In *Father Figure*, Swift mentions protecting her family. Some fans believe that this song is one of her social criticisms, similar to the themes of other tracks like *The Man or Lover*, which describe the tireless criticism female celebrities endure that male celebrities simply do not experience. Others, however, contend that the song would best be examined in the context of Swift's life, suggesting that the "family" referenced in the song exists as a representation of her master's albums, creations that the artist may view as her children.

With the release of *The Life of a Showgirl*, Swift took to social media to reveal her docuseries that takes Swifties through the behind-the-scenes of the Eras Tour. This docuseries will premiere on Disney+ on Dec. 12.

Professor Spotlight

Introducing biological sciences professor Naowarat 'Ann' Cheeptham

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

In academia, it's easy to get lost in awards, titles, and research papers, but the professors who leave a lasting impact are the ones who let their personality shine through. Whether Naowarat "Ann" Cheeptham is in a muddy cave, a kitchen cooking miso soup, or a classroom telling jokes, Cheeptham's passion for life is as strong as her passion for science.

Cheeptham is internationally recognized for her pioneering research on cave microbiomes, drug discovery, and the fight against multi-drug-resistant infections. Her work has been featured in outlets such as The New York Times, WIRED, and CBC's Nature of Things, and she has earned honours including the 2022 3M National Teaching Fellowship, the TRU Faculty Excellence Award, and the D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning. Away from the lab, Cheeptham finds balance through a wide range of activities.

"I love to be active," Cheeptham said. "Hiking, biking, snowshoeing, paddle boarding, dancing, skiing—both downhill and cross-country. I'm even certified as a cross-country coach for the bunny rabbit program. I go to barre class, love cooking [and] eating, taking pictures, reading, travelling, and learning new things. This fall, I even joined a rock choir."

For Cheeptham, dance is a bridge between culture and individuality. The classical style connects her to her heritage. Free

dance, meanwhile, gives her the space to move like a spirit unbound.

The variety of her hobbies speaks to the same curiosity that fuels her work. She doesn't just teach science—she lives it, in motion and in colour. That joy follows her into the muddiest parts of her research.

"My research is in caves—I don't look like this every day. I look muddy when I go with my students," Cheeptham said.

Cheeptham is the first to admit she doesn't want her lectures to feel dull. If students look bored, she doesn't see it as failure, but rather a chance to switch gears. And usually, she told the Omega, that gear is comedy. The same quick wit that wakes up a classroom is what fuels her half-serious dream of one day taking the comedy stage.

Behind her personality is a story shaped by resilience and chance.

"I didn't come from wealth," Cheeptham said. "In Thailand 50 years ago, the gap between the rich and poor was huge. The only way to improve your socio-economic status was through education. Education was a privilege; not everyone could go to school."

Cheeptham's parents were elementary school teachers, and her grandparents worked the rice and sugar cane fields.

"On weekends, we were dropped off to help them. My grandma would cook, and I had to carry food for the workers in the field. We also had to take the



CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

Professor Naowarat "Ann" Cheeptham

water buffalo to the river. I basically grew up with the trees," Cheeptham said.

Her father, who earned his biology degree in his forties, exposed her to science.

"He would take me to collect samples of butterflies and insects. I just kind of fell into biology," she said.

At 15, Cheeptham won a Thai government scholarship awarded to only 25 students nationwide.

"The government would send me anywhere in the world for my PhD, but I had to return to Thailand to be a professor. I already had a position waiting for me," Cheeptham said.

But life had other plans.

"When I was about to finish my bachelor's degree, I received another scholarship from the Japanese government. This time there were no strings attached, and I could study my master's and PhD for free. That gave me a chance to study in Japan... and it's where I met my husband, who is Canadian. I hadn't planned to live and work in Canada. Sometimes you just cannot plan your life," Cheeptham said.

Her philosophy on life is summed up in a Japanese saying, "Shiawase wa

itsumo jibun no kokoro ga kimeru," which means that your happiness is always determined by your own heart.

"Happiness is a choice, and you are the one who makes it happen," Cheeptham said.

That lesson resonated deeper after a ski accident left her with a brain injury. "For too long, I tried to fit in and be 'nice.' But I realized being kind is not the same as being nice. Kindness is about respecting yourself and others, not seeking validation. That's what I want the younger generation to understand."

Her advice to students is simple but powerful: "Believe in yourself, be yourself, and don't let societal constraints diminish you. If someone doesn't like you, that's okay. They are not your people anyway."

The Omega's Professor Spotlight is a series where we reintroduce you to some of the university's most popular faculty members. If you would like to nominate a professor, lecturer, or sessional instructor for their own spotlight, you're encouraged to email the Omega's editor-in-chief, Robert McAlaster, by email at editor@theomega.news.

One slice of satire, extra cheese

Pizzagate 2.0 is bringing us closer together, but how? And can we get pineapple on that?

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

The Pizza Conspiracy Instagram account, @pizza.machine.conspiracy, opened late September and with only five posts, has gained over 2,300 followers in what feels like the blink of an eye. It's brought up constantly in conversations around campus, often with the mirth and excitement of a shared inside joke. The account's claims—that a man is living inside the pizza machine, forced to cook, package and hand out hot slices of pizza to a ravenous university community—is not just absurd, but strangely compelling.

What is it about conspiracies, even the most obviously fake and ironic ones, that draw us in?

Disappointing as it might be, the truth is that this type of satirical conspiracy isn't an original concept. This past July, a small crowd of protesters appeared at Chicago's Cloud Gate sculpture, known colloquially as *The Bean*, to make a similar claim. They insisted there was a man trapped inside the stainless steel monument, that he had been put there as an infant during construction, and that all denials from the municipal office were manipulations from "Big Bean Media". The protests were accompanied by an Instagram account, @maninbean, dedicated to spreading awareness for the cause.

The pizza machine conspiracy and *The Bean* hoax have certain similarities. Firstly, both accounts appeared seemingly out of nowhere and received significant

attention once their Instagram posts went viral on the platform. Secondly, both put made absurd claims that people rarely appear to take seriously, although their comment sections are filled with people willing to play along. Thirdly, both accounts get their message across with earnest and resolute tones.

Finally, they're both run anonymously. The Man in Bean Coalition, as they called themselves, refused to reveal any details beyond simple black and white headshots posted on their page, their eyes obscured by dark sunglasses.

Similarly, the person/people behind the pizza machine conspiracy remain unknown.

Yet, while both the Cloud Gate and the Pizza machine are recognizable landmarks, the latter is not a work of art that holds any real significance. Nor is the pizza conspiracy (pizzagate?) accompanied by physical protests. Our TRU conspiracy is much smaller, at least for now, and relegated, primarily, to our campus.

It is no surprise that the Man in Bean protests began in the U.S. this summer, as the nation grapples with rising authoritarianism and a crackdown on democratic freedoms. For the past two years, the States have seen almost nonstop protests over issues ranging from geopolitics to immigration, to abortion and trans rights and beyond. It is almost a given that the members of this Man in Bean Coalition had public demonstrations at the forefront of their minds. But there seemed to be a second motivation,

an arguably greater need for levity at a time of intense politicization.

In 2017, a similar satirical conspiracy theory, Birds Aren't Real, was started by another college student at the University of Arkansas. It was a small bit of satire directed towards the early MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement, meant to ridicule the absurdity of many of their political positions. The conspiracy took off. It spread like wildfire across the country, both to people who genuinely believed in it and others who saw it for the joke that it was.

For many young people who came to adulthood over the past decade, it's easy to see politics as inherently divisive. Considering the global turmoils of democracy, the growth of fascism across the West, and the increasing wealth gap that elected officials everywhere seem uninterested in resolving, it feels to many like the only function politics has had is to keep us apart.

So in an increasingly divided world, there is an appeal in "depoliticizing the political," in turning political action into a joke. Freeing a man trapped inside a behemoth or demanding the truth about an indentured servant inside a pizza machine both sound like political issues, but are certainly not. This means that instead of politics functioning to divide us, it becomes a unifier. Everyone can agree on saving the trapped people, and if you don't, it doesn't really matter anyway. The point is absurdity, that we can all have something

to talk to each other about.

This is the function of conspiracies at their roots. They give us purpose and enable us to fulfill it together. Research suggests that a sense of marginalization and the need to address it through community is a key factor driving individuals to adopt conspiracy theories. They make us feel like we're part of an in-group.

This doesn't mean conspiracy theories are harmless, or that their benefits outweigh their dangers. Conspiracies may appeal to those who seek certainty, autonomy and community, but there is little evidence to suggest that they actually fulfill those needs. In fact, they might actually act counter-intuitively to them, undermining your needs while lulling you into a false sense of security.

Satirizing a conspiracy theory, then, removes most of the risks from the equation while sustaining the parts that bring people together, making us all feel a little less powerless.

In the time since *Pizza Machine* went viral, I've locked eyes with several people who had been, like me, staring a little too intently at the pizza machine. I've shared with them knowing, mischievous smiles as we walked by each other in the halls. We weren't looking for any man in the machine, because we knew there wasn't one. We're looking for each other, for connection. And for those few seconds—when we knew, without having to speak, exactly what was on the other person's mind—we had it.

RIP: Mourning the death of letter writing

The recent Canada Post strikes remind us how fragile letter writing has become, and how easily it could disappear without public postal service



BRIANNA ALLAN—THE MARTLET (THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA)

In the digital age, writing letters — once an essential way to keep in touch with loved ones living far away — has instead become an art. The act of planning, writing, decorating and mailing a letter is a deliberate choice, filled with intentionality and intimacy. We rely on our postal system as a crucial step in this process. But what happens when Canada Post stops delivering?

For most of us, we aren't fazed when we see headlines reading "expect delayed deliveries." When we need to mail something, we can rely on courier services like UPS and FedEx. Over the past decade, private couriers have increased their deliveries, whereas Canada Post's has decreased.

However, I believe these companies cannot replace Canada Post's accessibility, affordability, and community service. I was met with that reality earlier in October, when I wanted to mail a letter internationally to Denmark. What cost me \$3.83 with Canada Post ended up costing \$100.57 with UPS. That's when I realized that to couriers, a letter isn't a letter — it's a document.

Private shipping couriers don't recognize letters in

the traditional postal sense, but rather treat them as document shipments — no different than a business invoice or a legal document. With a private courier, my piece of paper with heartfelt, handwritten words became a trackable premium package with a high price tag. Private couriers are designed with business transactions and urgent shipments in mind — not the slow, sentimental act of sending a letter.

I wasn't the only one mourning what felt like a quiet loss. For some Canada Post workers on strike, they have noticed the fragility of written letters long before the impact was felt by us. For the workers I interviewed, striking wasn't just about pay or policy, but also protecting a community service that connects people across distance and time.

Scott, a striking Canada Post letter carrier, told me there's a "larger [feeling] that people are ready to move on from Canada Post, which is a terrible thing to say, because it's been such a backbone of the community for so long."

The art of sending a letter begins with thinking of what to say, writing it down, and trusting someone else to carry it the rest of the way. "It comes down to a

mailman putting a piece of paper in your box that is so integral" to the art of information transfer, Scott said, reminding us that the delivery finishes the circle of intention that begins with the writer's hand.

For some, letters are not just about telling your inner feelings to someone you love, but they are also a quiet way of checking in, of making sure someone is alright, and they fill an important social function beyond interpersonal communication. Scott said that letter carriers see this firsthand. "We notice things about houses," he explained. "We notice mail building up in the box, [which] may make us concerned for an elderly [person]." In that small act, letter writing and delivery becomes more than just communication, but also care.

With private couriers operating as a business not a community service, we lose the humanity behind mail: the hand, the thought, and the intention that once carried every message.

Another striking worker, Troy, described letters as creating "something that moves the energy of the world." The intentionality of handwriting cannot be replicated digitally. In his

view, writing online loses the "societal behaviour of having deep thought," a result of our quick and impermanent digital habits.

There is art in patience. "The patience of waiting to hear from someone," Troy continued, "the patience of collecting your own thoughts." With digital messages sent in an instant, and private couriers prioritizing speed, we lose yet another chance to create stillness between people.

That is, at least, until we lose Canada Post — which one striking employee, Denise, predicts could be another "ten years away."

"We might see," she said, "a complete disappearance of letter mail." As more people move down a digital path, Denise said that many "people don't think they need the post office anymore." In a way, she said, this costs us our "humanity, not just in letter mail, but in our society."

The possible loss of letter writing demands our attention. Pick up a pen with someone in mind, and write to them. Go to the post office and hand that small piece of humanity to a person who will pass it to the next, until it reaches your person. The art lives in that chain, in the connection, the patience, and the shared act of care.

A close-up photograph of several vibrant red poppies in full bloom, set against a dark, blurred background. The petals are bright red with some darker veining. In the center of the image, there is a white rectangular box containing text. The text is in a purple, serif font and is arranged in three paragraphs. The overall mood is somber yet beautiful, reflecting the poem's theme of remembrance.

*"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though
poppies grow
In Flanders Fields."*

- John McCrae