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the **Omega**

theomega.news

The Omega is published by the Cariboo Student Newspaper Society, an independent non-profit society operating on the Thompson Rivers University campus.

805 TRU Way - Kamloops, B.C. V2C 0C8
Office located in Old Main - Room OM2768
Published since November 27, 1991

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A gift box sits in front of the fire, waiting for Christmas to arrive.
Charles Rankin/The Omega

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Honouring Trans Day of Remembrance

Students, faculty and staff gathered as a sign of love and solidarity for our peers, friends and families in the transgender community

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

It feels like, with every new year, the transgender community around the world is increasingly persecuted, scapegoated and victimized. Just this Tuesday, Alberta's government invoked the notwithstanding clause against three laws that affect trans and gender-diverse people within the province.

The three laws, passed over a year ago, prohibit gender reassignment surgery for youths, ban puberty blockers and hormone therapy for those under 16, and mandate schools seek consent from parents when children below 16 ask to be referred to with different names or pronouns. The notwithstanding clause protects these laws against constitutional challenge, which two out of three were already facing at the time.

"This government does not turn to the notwithstanding clause unless the stakes warrant it," Danielle Smith, Alberta's premier, said to reporters on Monday. "In this case, the stakes could not be higher."

Add this to the growing anti-trans sentiment in the United States and UK, as well as the rising violence and reduced tolerance of trans and gender-diverse identities in several countries around the world, and it is clear that violence towards the trans community is both extremely severe and urgent in our present moment.

Every year on Nov. 20, trans and gender-diverse people gather together with supportive allies to mark Transgender Day

of Remembrance, a day commemorating the souls lost through anti-transgender violence. The ceremonies are often marked by candlelight vigils and a reading of all the names of trans and gender-diverse people who died within the past year.

Transgender Day of Remembrance began 26 years ago, after a small group of transgender activists decided to honour the violent murders of two Black trans women—Rita Hester and Chanelle Pickett—some years prior. The event's date, Nov. 20, honours the anniversary of Pickett's murder, a fittingly sombre origin to a heavy day.

Typically organized by Kamloops Pride, Kamloops' Trans Day of Remembrance was held this year at the TRU Clocktower. Its organizer, Noah Fischer, is the Manager of Gender and Sexual Diversity and Student Services here at the university.

"It just felt like a really special opportunity to take this on and be able to kind of showcase TRU's commitment to honouring the trans community," Fischer said. "It feels very special and privileged that I get to be the one to be in this position and do this. And it's important, you know? I think it's scary out there right now; it's bleak. But we can't let these opportunities pass us by to acknowledge our community and be there to support each other."

The event, which began at 6 p.m. and lasted almost three hours, opened with

the Kamloops Pride Choir performing moving renditions of heartfelt ballads, including *The Village* by Wrabel and *What About Us* by P!nk. Their voices, haunting, carried through the silent space, perfectly capturing the gravity of the moment.

This was followed by talks from several members of the trans and gender-diverse community present.

The speakers each stood in front of the large hall with a trans flag taped to the board behind them and another, digital flag projected onto an even larger screen above. They spoke of their experiences, their personal realizations and the obstacles they had to contend with every step of the way. Their candidness and vulnerability moved the audience to tears several times.

One speaker, Emily, reflected on the conundrum of hope. She explained that her life was drastically improved by coming out as trans, but the world also immediately became a harsher place. Her life post-transition, she said, was filled with trauma and pain.

"And yet, I'm still here," she told the crowd. "And I still want to be here. I'd rather be Emily than who I was before."

After each speech, the speaker would read out a list of names. Each one, the audience was told, carried a life and a story. Each name had meaning, was handpicked, and used with love and hope. Each one was taken by bigotry and hatred.

The religious studies scholar, Catherine Bell,

described rituals as strategic, culturally situated practices that, among other things, negotiate power. They are strategic in that they have functions, which are often achieved through the very process of ritualization.

Reading out the names of the dead on Transgender Day of Remembrance is a ritual. It is a pattern that matters to people, that brings the community together, and functions to force into existence a reality where trans lives are not simply statistics to be added up and forgotten. It renders visible those lives that others would have erased, and it pushes back against the powers that try to insist they don't exist.

"[This community] is not going anywhere," Fischer said. "This community exists. It persists. It has support, and it has advocates rallying around it."

"I used to always feel like I didn't want to make a difference in the world," one trans woman divulged, speaking eloquently to the audience. "I didn't want to be seen or remembered. But now, I think if there's one thing I could do, I would want to make things better for the next generation. And I don't know how to do that."

"But I feel fortunate to have lived in the years that I did, knowing that if I lived a few years earlier, I likely would not have the support from friends and family that I've had. Would not have had the access to medical care that I've had. And I don't want the next generation of trans people to lose that."

OBGY-OUT

Is Kamloops' maternity care in danger?

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

Kamloops is facing a growing crisis after several obstetrician-gynecologists (OBGYNs) at Royal Inland Hospital (RIH) resigned earlier this fall, leaving patients and professionals worried about the future of maternity care. The resignations have sent shock waves beyond the hospital walls, affecting families, local businesses, and the broader Kamloops economy.

"So we have been hearing a lot from our members over the last few months around the challenges that they have been trying to recruit," said Acacia Pangilinan, Executive Director of the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce. "And really, at the heart of those challenges are social structures, so things like housing, healthcare and childcare. And I think the recent loss of OBGYNs at Royal Inland Hospital is just another erosion of healthcare services within our community that are really making Kamloops appear not as desirable as other places."

While the Chamber hears concern from employers, community organizers like Alix Dolson, co-founder of Maternity Matters Kamloops, say the situation has reached a "crisis point" for expectant families.

"Yeah, so we're a very new organization, very much a grassroots organization," Dolson said. "It started

because, a few weeks ago, someone that works in the birth sector reached out to me and said, you know, we've reached a crisis point in Kamloops in terms of maternity care, and we need to do something. And we're not able to do that because we, you know, we work within the sector and some of us are employees of Interior Health, and so we're limited in how we can respond, and we're looking for the community to sort of come to bat for us and to speak out on our behalf."

For Pangilinan, the crisis highlights how access to healthcare directly impacts economic vitality. "When you are looking to recruit professionals, it's a really big market out there," Pangilinan said. "We are competing against Kelowna, Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton when there is a lack of integral services that can affect someone's decision to move here. We're hearing a lot about that."

Dolson says the consequences of that lack of service are already visible. "We have lost capacity in terms of maternity care, we have lost significant capacity," Dolson said. "People have very few options in terms of accessing prenatal care, and now we're at a crisis point where we could be entirely without maternity care."

Both women agree that

the situation is unsustainable – one threatening the health of Kamloops residents, the other the long-term health of the city's economy.

"If we don't have the necessary services, people will leave and go to communities that offer [them]. It would affect our ability to retain businesses or attract businesses ... our healthcare challenges will affect the overall economy because if people leave Kamloops, then they are taking their spending elsewhere," Pangilinan said.

For Dolson, the stakes are high. "There are people for whom there is no option for prenatal care, and it's incredibly dangerous because entirely preventable risks are going to go undiagnosed because people don't have good, safe maternity care," Dolson said. "There's a good chance that they are going to be turned away and sent to another city to give birth, which is absolutely the last thing that an expecting parent should have to do in early labour. It's incredibly high risk. It's incredibly stressful and it's unacceptable."

Dolson, a mother of two, fears the consequences if nothing changes. "We are going to see more of that," Dolson said. "Women in early labour who are told to drive to Kelowna and end up giving birth on the side of the road. We could see maternal

deaths on the road."

For Pangilinan, the Chamber's unusual step into healthcare advocacy reflects how intertwined these issues have become. "Traditionally the Chamber wouldn't necessarily advocate for things like healthcare," Pangilinan said, "but because it has a direct impact on our economy we really felt like it was very important to use our voice to share that perspective about the effects that this has on the business community and elevate those who have been bringing forward solutions for months but haven't really had success with Interior Health or the regional government."

Dolson, meanwhile, is urging residents to act. "I think I would just encourage people to use their voice," Dolson said. "There is power in that critical mass. The more that our elected officials, our decision makers, hear from the community, the more they will understand that they must address this immediately. We will continue to advocate, we will continue to rally until they address the issue, until they solve this problem."

As Pangilinan put it, "the health of our residents affects the health of our economy." For Dolson, it's even simpler. "Maternity care has been crumbling for years ... and now we're at a critical breaking point."

An 'unorthodox' path to the podium

Psychology professor discusses her academic journey in inaugural lecture

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

For an academic working in a post-secondary institution, being promoted to the position of full professor is a significant career milestone. Though perhaps not the be-all and end-all of academic pursuits, the achievement comes with a recognition of hard work, innovativeness, and dedication to the advancement of knowledge.

At TRU, this honour is also accompanied by an Inaugural Professorial Lecture, a series of lectures where professors are given the platform to discuss their research and contributions, and to showcase their expertise amongst an audience of peers, faculty, and interested students. On Oct 28, Catherine Ortner, professor and chair of the psychology department, took her turn to do just that.

Ortner described her own journey as "unorthodox". Beginning in the biological sciences, she said her passion for psychology was unforeseen, beginning with an introductory class she took as an elective during her undergraduate program.

"I found it to be fascinating," she said. "To be learning about human beings, and the ways that people think and feel and behave... [It] sort of launched me onto a different path, and I switched my major to psychology."

After graduating, Ortner found herself at a fork in the road. Would she move forward in the clinical field, or would she go into research? She applied for graduate school in Canada, where

she began her master's in clinical psychology, before pursuing her PhD. It was during this PhD that her passion for research really blossomed, leading her, almost inevitably, to this current moment.

"I spent a couple of years living in the East Kootenay and Kimberley, working in mental health counselling for a couple of years before this job came up here at TRU, and I thought, 'Oh, this is the perfect fit for me.'"

Ortner's area of research is on the predictors, processes and consequences of emotion regulation; the ways we decide to control our emotions in specific situations, and the factors that contribute to those choices. She stumbled on the subject accidentally, during her previous research work on mindfulness. Her personal curiosity drew her in, and soon she was diving deeper into the available literature, immersing herself in this new field that would become a significant part of her academic life.

"You start reading about a topic, and you uncover these different ideas, and it gets complicated, and that's kind of exciting," Ortner said. "And you go down all these rabbit holes, reading different studies, and it feels like there's just always more to learn, and there are more nuances, and it's quite exciting to be able to take it

in many different directions. And when you talk about it with people, they're always excited, because it applies to all of us in our daily lives."

Ortner, dedicated to a rigorous scientific process, is hesitant to offer any definitive 'real-world applications' of her research.

"If anybody's here hoping for a quick, sort of 5-step program for a healthy

emotional life, I'm not going to be able to provide that for you," she told the crowd at the start of her lecture. "Because, once you start down this path of research, it usually yields more questions than answers."

Still, the practicality of

emotion regulation feels intuitive: how can we choose the best regulatory methods for different moments in our lives? How can we handle uncomfortable feelings like shock, disappointment, guilt, loss and anger? What regulatory interventions could support people with clinical distress, like anxiety or major depressive disorders?

Speaking with The Omega, Ortner also suggested the possible applications for post-secondary students today who, she believes, are facing new challenges and responsibilities.

"I do see that students seem to have a lot more on their plates than they did, or at least what I think

they did 15 years ago," she said. "In terms of pressure, finances, often holding jobs at the same time as doing school (maybe full-time jobs, or multiple jobs), family responsibilities, and all of that. And that's an interesting development, and I guess it makes emotion regulation all the more important."

Yet Ortner cautions against the idea that emotion regulation is all there is, stressing several economic, social and policy factors that impact student success.

"It's certainly not the only piece of the puzzle."

Much of her work at the university has included students. Over the years, Ortner has taken on several psychology students to contribute to her research, with many of whom she has co-authored academic papers. The research opportunities offer students the chance to do actual research and engage with theory in ways that are more up-close and personal, while also supporting their post-graduate aspirations.

For Ortner, the benefits of this mentorship are reciprocal.

"I think, for both the faculty member and the student, what's most important is that relationship," Ortner said. "Relationships are just a critical part of being a human being, and so I think that's really maybe the biggest aspect of it. Learning together, and the collaborative aspect that comes out of that, that then kind of benefits the research as well when you're working in a relationship with someone else."

"You start reading about a topic, and you uncover these different ideas, and it gets complicated, and that's kind of exciting,"

Catherine Ortner

Creating connections, saving lives

Why compassion, empathy and care are so important to suicide prevention

JAKOB SCHMIETENKNOP STAFF WRITER

Mental health is an underlying issue that affects virtually everyone in some shape or form. Whether it's your personal struggle with anxiety or your neighbour who is too depressed to leave their home, these are health problems that many people try to bury deep inside, so the public doesn't see the demons that they carry.

Although it's now discussed with greater frequency than in the past, suicide may still feel like a topic that society likes to sweep under the rug. To combat this, the Federal Government is working to create frameworks of suicide prevention in our nation to raise awareness and reduce the stigma, connect Canadians with the proper information and resources. While the government works to complete this task, the BC Coroners Service review underscores the urgent reality: suicide remains one of the leading causes of death for youth and young adults in the province.

On Oct. 15, 2025, the BC Coroners Service released a long-awaited report titled *Creating Connection, Supporting Strengths: A Review of Youth and Young Adult Deaths by Suicide in British Columbia*. The report's findings paint a bleak picture, revealing that between 2019 and 2023, as many as 435 young people lost their lives to suicide, which it states is the second most prevalent cause of death among youth, and the third most common cause among young adults aged 19 to 29 years old.

Despite awareness efforts, much has gone unchanged in B.C. with regard to understanding and recognizing the risks associated with poor mental health. Overall, four provinces—Manitoba, Ontario, and B.C., have slightly improved their grade from an 'F' to a 'D' in this year's Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health national report card survey. In response to the review, the Crisis Centre BC (CCBC) is trying to help those in times of darkness. The Omega spoke with CCBC executive director Stacy Ashton to gain her insights and discuss what steps the service is taking to support those in need.

In Ashton's view, it's the time after a vulnerable individual makes first contact that it becomes crucial to ensure a hand-off to the correct care, because too often those seeking help are turned away.

"We often come into a situation where somebody was either brought into the hospital or came to the hospital because they simply didn't feel safe [with] their own self," Ashton said. "They get brought in, treated, but get sent home shortly after [due to] not meeting the criteria. If you're turned away, you're most likely feeling the same way as when you went in, and you're left with the sense of, 'who's supposed to help me?'"

Ashton says that solving that question starts with building bridges between hospitals, crisis services and community support. Her solution sounds

simple, but it could save lives: ensuring that when someone is discharged, the support isn't stopped at the hospital doors.

"What we'd love to see is that a person can request an outreach call from the crisis line, or an outreach call from someone you know," Ashton said. "Since we're operating lines 24/7, we could theoretically call as soon as we get the referral. In an ideal world, we would have a two-way conversation with the hospital and encourage all options if we felt that the risk was severe. We want to take advantage of moments of clarity, where you're able to say you've spiralled too far out of control, because you'll have a bit of leeway until you start to spiral again. So that's why we want to work with hospitals, because they're not designed to take advantage of the little windows of lucidity."

When asked if CCBC has faced push-back from hospitals, Ashton says the challenge isn't resistance, but barriers between two different systems.

All parties can agree on wanting to build those relationships, but doing so requires reworking policies and deciding how to share information between medical and non-medical systems. Ashton believes that with a small amount of political will, leadership can make it happen.

"Everyone cares, but everyone is overwhelmed. It's easy to keep your head down and just do the work in front of you instead of changing how the work is done. We've

been carving out time to focus on system-building, and it's paying off. Even small steps, like a follow-up call, show a sign of warmth and indicate that someone cares, making a big difference," she said.

In B.C., there are places within the communities where people can find resources available for those struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges, such as with the CCBC.

It's a delicate road to navigate when someone is in the heat of a crisis. For many people who suffer from severe mental illness, it can feel debilitating to ask for help, while for others, it may even be a struggle to reconcile the notion that they need help at all. In moments of solitude, there can still be opportunities for support and care. The National Suicide Hotline Crisis Helpline is a call away.

If you or someone you know is struggling, you are not alone. Help is available 24/7 through various resources, including:

Crisis Centre BC

Call or text 988 for immediate support.

Trained responders are there to listen, any time.

Interior Crisis Line (Interior Health region)

1-888-353-2273

Kids Help Phone

Call or text 1-800-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868

First Nations and Indigenous Peoples' Hope for Wellness Helpline

1-855-242-3310

If you ever feel unsafe or unable to keep yourself safe, please go to your nearest emergency department or call 911.

Farewell, TRU Fine Arts program

An October ruling by the B.C. Supreme Court officially puts the matter to rest

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

The B.C. Supreme Court made its ruling in late October, on the TRU Faculty Association (TRUFA) petition submitted last year. The petition claimed the university breached the TRU Act in their decision to stop enrolments for, and eventually discontinue, several programs in the Visual Arts department.

The court ruled that while TRU acted legally in shutting down the programs, it overstepped its bounds in its decision to suspend enrolment without formal Board consideration or resolution. Ultimately, however, the court ruled in favour of the TRU administration. In delivering her decision, Justice Maria Morellato stated that in the court's legal opinion, "the [TRU] Board acted within its statutory powers, acted reasonably, and undertook a process that satisfied the requirements of procedural fairness." None of the university's decisions on the matter of the four axed Visual Arts programs, in essence, will be set aside.

In a message shared with the TRU community this week via internal channels, Airini confirmed the court's decision while acknowledging the difficulty of the present situation.

"Like so many, I too have admired [TRU's] Fine Arts programs and the creative works of students and noted the impact of declining enrolments," Airini said. "I acknowledge that some colleagues at Thompson Rivers University have described actions regarding the closure of Fine Arts

enrolments as experiences of hurt and frustration. I also acknowledge the extended engagement of the Department and Faculty Council, Senate, the Board, and TRUFA in this process and associated decisions."

The shutdown of the Visual Arts programs has been under consideration since before 2023, according to former Provost Gillian Balfour. These programs, which include the Bachelor of Fine Arts, the Bachelor of Arts with a minor in Visual Arts, the Visual Arts Diploma and the Visual Arts Studio Certificate, were concluded in April of 2023 to be of doubtful viability. This meant that the possibility of eliminating these programs was now under serious deliberation.

Per the court ruling, Balfour presented to the Faculty of Arts on April 20, 2023, that the "decade-long decline in both the enrolment and graduation rates in the Visual Arts Programs, the costs of delivering the Visual Arts Programs based on faculty members' salaries, and the strategic plan for [the] Faculty of Arts," were all contributing factors.

That same day, Richard McCutcheon, then-Dean of Arts, asked the Registrar (with permission from the provost) to stop applications to the Visual Arts Programs. Though Balfour asserted that April was late in the application cycle for all intending fall-entry students, and all who applied to the program before that time were still enrolled in the Visual Arts programs, TRUFA claimed that it made

this decision without first referring to the Board.

In response to this alleged imposition, as well as the subsequent discontinuation of the visual arts major, minor, diploma and certificate in January 2024, TRUFA petitioned a judicial review of the university's decision on June 4, 2024, in hopes that they may be overruled.

The Courts concluded that, on the matter of the visual arts programs, there was no breach in any statutory requirements, and the decision was neither unfair nor unreasonable. Though the ruling agreed with TRUFA's assertion that the premature ending of enrolment was overreach on the part of the institution, it was also of the opinion that any attempt to remit the decision would be pointless, as the enrolment period had passed and the Board ultimately decided to eliminate the programs.

"The provost's and the dean's authority to suspend enrolment in the Visual Arts Programs has now been rendered moot, and no useful purpose would be served in doing so," the court decision reads.

The uncertainty around the Visual Arts programs has affected more than just the institution, creating anxiety and uncertainty amongst both staff and faculty. Although the decision may not have been exactly what every party wanted, the hope is that it will at least put some at ease.

"As President and Vice-Chancellor, I am sorry for any hurt experienced or frustration caused by this

case," Airini said. "Thank you to those who, over the years, have developed university policies in accordance with the [TRU] Act, and who uphold the importance of following legislation and policy. Our Act and policies provide principles, processes, and precedent for respectful decision-making."

As TRU recently stated, it will continue to review programs with low enrolment for possible closure as a part of its cost-cutting measures. This current court ruling may prove useful as a guide on navigating these delicate situations moving forward.

In response to the decision, TRUFA president Tara Lyster told *The Omega*, "TRUFA was happy with the decision. We do not disagree that the Board can cancel a program as long as the requirements of the applicable legislation are met and Board policies are followed. However, this decision confirms our view that to suspend enrolment the administration must respect the legislative requirements of the *University Act*. In other words, the university cannot suspend enrolment in a program unless the Board provides such a directive after seeking advice from the Senate."

This is a significant decision for all post-secondary institutions because it reinforces the legislative requirements involved in closing programs.

We are hopeful that the decision of the Court will provide TRU with a clear roadmap to a better process if further program closures occur."



Runnin' with the 'Pack

Women's soccer forward Esi Lufo discusses her goals, influences, and future

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

Esi Lufo, or 'Esi-Messi' as her teammates call her, has had a journey from Tirane, Albania, to the Thompson Rivers University soccer field that has been one of growth, determination, and record-breaking ambition. Now in her final year as a business student, Lufo has become a key player for the WolfPack, racking up eight goals this season and currently leading the Canada West division as the league's top scorer. Lufo sat down with The Omega to talk about her standout moments on the field, how her mentors have affected her journey and her goals, both for the remainder of the season and for her future in soccer.

O: You grew up in Albania, so what drew you to Thompson Rivers University and to playing for the WolfPack?

EL: First, it was for my education, and then I wanted a new experience. Soccer-wise, I saw this as a good opportunity to come here, and I took it.

O: When did you get started in soccer?

EL: I started playing soccer when I was five. I started playing just for fun first with a boys' team, and then I saw it as my future. My

dad was also a basketball player, so when he saw that I was into sports, he tried to convince me to go play basketball. I tried for a bit, but it wasn't my thing, and I was like, "No, Dad, I don't wanna do this. I like soccer more", so I stuck with soccer.

O: Do you have any family members or mentors who have been especially influential in your athletic journey?

EL: My whole family supported me, but I think [my dad] was the one who really showed me the way. He started playing professionally when he was around my age, even as a backup, and I think he wanted me to follow in his footsteps. He guided me through it all and became like a mentor to me.

O: What's your favourite goal that you've scored here at TRU, and why was it special?

EL: Well, I'd have to choose my two goals versus Trinity this year. I scored two and we won the game 2-1. It was a special game because Trinity is ranked number eight in the country. So scoring against them gives me a good feeling.

O: Do you have any routines, rituals, or superstitions on game day?

EL: On a game day, not much. I just love to eat my favourite snacks like three hours before the game.

I usually take a shower before the game. I try not to stay on my phone too much, so I just focus on the game and listen to music. That's like my routine, and I feel like it helps me.

O: Is there someone — either a teammate here or from past years — who has had the biggest impact on your growth as a player?

EL: I have a best friend, Jehona Shala, who's been with me through everything. Even though we're apart now, we talk on the phone all the time, and she's helped me through my toughest moments. Of course, my teammates here have supported me as well, but Jehona has been my biggest supporter. She's really helped me get through everything.

O: What personal goals have you set for yourself for the rest of this season?

EL: I want to break records. I think I'm close to becoming the all-time leading scorer in a season for this program, so that's my first goal, to set a new record here. I'd also love for us to win Canada West Team of the Year. And personally, I'm aiming to be

the league's top scorer. Right now, I'm leading the league, but we'll see how it goes by the end of the season.

O: Looking ahead, what are your plans after finishing school, both in your career and with soccer?

EL: This is my last year here. I have one more semester to go, and I'm done. After that, I wanna try and make it pro. Maybe in Canada, in the new league here, or maybe in Europe, but I want to play soccer for a few more years. Then we'll see after that.

O: Are there any soccer players you've looked up to as role models, or tried to model your game after?

EL: Yeah, I usually look at strikers in men's games to model my own play. My all-time favourite is [Lionel] Messi. I get really inspired by him, and my teammate even calls me 'Esi-Messi,' since my name is kind of similar. So yeah, he's my favourite and a big inspiration.

O: What's one piece of advice you'd give to younger players who want to play soccer at the university level?

EL: University is the best time for a student-athlete to grow, work hard, and use the experience to set themselves up for the future.

Shredding the winter blues away

The Out Here club invites you to join them on the slopes this season

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

While the weather cools down and snow begins to fall, not everyone on campus looks forward to Kamloops' cold winters. While some bundle up in their warm clothing, cursing Jack Frost and Mother Nature for conspiring against their province, students from the TRUSU Out Here Ski & Snowboard club welcome the season, yearning for soft powder and itching to hit the slopes. The group brings together outdoor enthusiasts from across campus for mountain adventures, social events, and a shared love of fresh powder.

Since TRU is situated in the heart of B.C.'s interior, the school is surrounded by some of the province's best outdoor adventure opportunities like Sun Peaks Resort and Harper Mountain, both of which are just a short drive from campus. The club was founded more than a decade ago by students passionate about the ski industry, including Julia Thrift, one of the club's early leaders, whose class project helped launch large-scale events like the Campus and Flight Big Air Show. That event, which featured jumps built right

on campus, helped the club grow into what it is today.

"The big thing for us is creating a ski and snowboard community on campus," co-president Gabi Cattaneo said. "We live in one of the best places in the world to go riding, but we don't really have that ski culture on campus the way bigger schools like UBC do. We want to change that."

The Out Here club has grown to be one of the university's biggest and most active. Each winter, members organize trips to Sun Peaks and other B.C. resorts, host social nights, and create a community where both beginners and experienced riders can feel at home.

Leading the club this year are co-presidents Cattaneo and Jake Diprose, alongside the club manager Kaitlin Bragg and assistant manager Alex Corke. This year's leadership team is passionate about growing the community and making skiing and snowboarding more accessible for TRU students. "We really just want people to feel comfortable trying something new," Cattaneo said. "Even if you've never been on skis before, there's



GABI CATTANEO/SUBMITTED

Jonathan Rozek snowboards down a run at Sun Peaks, March, 2024.

always someone in the club willing to help you out."

The executive team is working on expanding the club's offerings, from organized mountain trips and partnerships with nearby resorts to social nights that help members connect off the slopes.

"I probably wouldn't have made any friends in my first year if I hadn't joined the ski club," Bragg said.

A key part of the club's culture is inclusivity. You don't have to ski or snowboard to join.

"Even if you can't ski, you can come to our movie nights, socials, or just hang out," Bragg said. "We have people who've never been on the mountain, but they still come to our events and make friends."

Cattaneo even noted that their club stands out because they are open to everyone. "A lot of TRU's clubs are academic or cultural," she said. "We're one of the few that anyone can join. You don't need to be in a certain program; you just have to want to be part of the community."

For members, being part of the club isn't just fun; it's also good for their mental health. "You sit inside all

winter otherwise," Cattaneo said. "Skiing gives you something to look forward to. I don't experience winter depression because I'm outside every day, surrounded by like-minded people."

"Most people dread winter," Bragg said. "But when you're part of the club, you get to look forward to seeing your friends and doing something you love."

As the season kicks off, the team's goal is to keep growing the community. "We've seen consistent growth the last three years," Cattaneo said. "We want to attract more beginners, more experts, just more people getting out there. No one ever regrets joining."

When asked to describe Out Here in three words, the executive team agreed: adventurous, inclusive, and community.

"You'll have the most fun year of your life," Bragg said. "You'll make connections you might not make anywhere else on campus, and you'll end the season with a group of friends who feel like family."

Students interested in joining can follow and message the club on Instagram at @out.here.tru.



CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

Rail Riot 3 delights spectators

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

In what's becoming a tradition at TRU, once a year, the university turns an ordinary staircase on campus into one of the most exciting events of the winter: Rail Riot. For the popular event, the TRUSU Out Here Ski and Snowboard club hauls in truckloads of snow, packs it onto the concrete steps in between the OLARA building and the nursing building, and builds a full drop-in and rail setup that riders use to launch into the season.

What started as a creative spark from student Justin Tarasoff during his first campus tour has since evolved into Rail Riot, an annual winter rail-jam that has quickly become a signature tradition. Returning for its third year, this year's event showcased exactly why it draws such excitement, delivering high-energy riding, a buzzing crowd, and a sense of community that continues to define it.

One of the longest-running riders, Olson Advocaat, summed up the feeling of standing at the top of the drop-in. "It's pretty surreal when you're standing

up there looking down at the crowd and everybody's cheering. Then you drop in and you just zone out. It's sweet," Advocaat said.

With an estimated 300 people filling the space, he said the spectators change everything.

"I probably put on more of a show, go a little harder than I should,

together to celebrate something as cool as this," Advocaat said. "It's something for people to talk about. It's pretty unique to TRU."

Brock Hawes, another returning rider, described Rail Riot as the best way to kick off the winter season. Like Advocaat, he described the energy at the top of

acknowledged the risks, especially given that the mountains were still closed, leaving riders with limited practice on the hill's parks. In the stairwell, the walls are close on either side, requiring the riders to be extra purposeful in their runs, as even minor missteps can result in painful consequences.

"Just hitting the rail or hitting the wall...that'd be the worst for sure," Hawes said about his biggest fears while riding.

Organizers described the event as a clear success, and the mood throughout the night matched that feeling. The crowd never lost energy, riders kept things smooth, and everything about the setup ran cleanly.

While Rail Riot may occur only once a year, it has a significant impact on students and spectators, becoming a tradition many in the community eagerly anticipate, a unique part of TRU's identity, and a niche event unlike anything else on campus. When it returns each winter, it brings the campus together for a night that always feels unforgettable.

"It's pretty surreal when you're standing up there looking down at the crowd and everybody's cheering. Then you drop in and you just zone out. It's sweet,"

Olson Advocaat, TRU student and Rail Riot competitor

just [throw] down for the crowd," Advocaat said.

As one of the original riders in Rail Riot, Advocaat has seen the event grow, not just because of the tricks the riders put on, but also because of the sense of community brought to campus for the night.

"It just brings everybody

the run as surreal, a mix of pressure and excitement that pushes all the riders to put on their best performance for the crowd.

"I think everybody out here wants to throw down the best tricks they can," Hawes said.

But despite the hype and excitement, Hawes

Five eating habits to guide your weight loss journey

Weight loss can be difficult, but with these five meal tips, it can get easier

LINDSEE MUGFORD CONTRIBUTOR

Despite what popular influences have to say, good nutrition doesn't have to be complicated or cost a fortune in strange supplements you've never heard of. The five habits I am going to share with you are the bare minimum for any client I have helped over the years, as well as every client Precision Nutrition has coached over the last two decades. Whether you are aiming to just eat better for your health or for fat loss, the habits are the same, only the portions change. Either way, implementing these five habits is all you need for optimal health.

Eat...slow...ly

If you are trying to lose fat or maintain your weight, then the number one habit you could implement is to eat slowly. It takes your body an average of 15 to 20 minutes to determine that it's satiated. If you eat too fast, by the time your body can determine that you've had enough, you've already overeaten. In a perfect world, every meal you have would be eaten sitting down at a table with minimal distractions, just food and perhaps conversation for 20 minutes. However, this isn't always possible in our busy lives, so my advice is to try for at least one slow, nutritious meal a day, free of distractions. Even adding two extra minutes to your meal time can make a big difference. If you are

eating to maintain health, stop when you feel full. For fat loss, try to stop eating when you're 80 per cent full. Since this isn't always easy to determine, you should feel hungry again (but not so hungry you're rabid) between three to four hours after eating. On a hunger scale of one to ten, where one is post-Thanksgiving dinner full and ten is rabid beast hunger, aim to eat again when you hit a seven or so on the scale.

Prioritize protein

If you're female, chances are you're protein-deficient. While males rarely lack protein in their diets, my experience suggests that women tend to choose carbs over all else. This practice can lead to iron deficiency, digestive problems, musculoskeletal issues, and, of course, increased hunger, especially as we age. To combat this, lean protein should be a priority at every meal. While steak, chicken breast, pork loin, and fish are all great choices, I'd suggest considering whole eggs, canned tuna or other meats, Greek yogurt or cottage cheese, and even a quality protein powder to get the job done (sorry everyone, peanut butter is a fat, not protein). To determine how much to eat, hold your hand out flat in front of you. One serving is the size of your own palm, and generally, females should aim for

one palm per meal, while males should aim for two.

Eat your vegetables

Vegetables are the unsung heroes of the food world. Not only are they equally important as protein for satiety, but they also make up a large part of the vitamins and minerals we need daily. Vegetables are vital for providing an alkaline load in the blood, which is needed to keep up bone density and muscle mass. If your goal is fat loss, aim for two to three servings of vegetables for every serving of fruit. Aim for eating the rainbow; in other words, try to eat a variety of colours throughout the day, since different-coloured vegetables offer different vitamins and minerals. While 10 servings a day is optimal, you may need to build up to this if you don't eat much now. For leafy greens, a serving is both your hands held like a bowl, measured raw, regardless of how they're prepared, and a fist-sized portion for all other produce.

Don't forget about fibre

For some of us, carbohydrate intake can feel a little trickier. If you aren't eating enough protein and vegetables, then chances are your calories are coming from carbs, and probably not the good kind. Sugar, cereals, soda pop and pastries all fall under this category. While permissible in moderation,

you'll want to prioritize high fibre, whole-grain varieties instead. Try whole wheat breads and cereals rather than bleached ones. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans and legumes, whole flake oats, whole grain pasta and rice should make up the bulk of your carbs. This will keep your sugar levels from spiking only to crash before your mid-day class. It'll also keep you full longer and keep your digestion running smoothly. A typical serving is one cupped handful. If fat loss is your goal, try to keep the bulk of your carbs for after your workout.

Watch your fats

Lastly, let's talk fats. About 30 per cent of your daily diet should come from fats, with a balance between saturated (animal fat, butter, coconut oil, etc.), monounsaturated (tree nuts, pumpkin seeds, olive oil, avocados), and polyunsaturated (fish oil, sunflower seeds, peanuts, canola oil, soy, chia seeds). A serving of fats measures out to be roughly the size of your thumb. Fats are needed to synthesize hormones, flush toxins, and promote healing, so try to avoid going on a no-fat diet even if fat loss is your priority.

These five habits are all that's required for great nutrition. If you can't manage all five, stick to what you can manage and remember to cut yourself some slack. You deserve it.

Professor spotlight: Tanya Manning-Lewis

Manning-Lewis talks to The Omega about how her global experiences inspire the kinds of local impacts she wishes to achieve, and more

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

When Tanya Manning-Lewis speaks about her journey from Jamaica to Canada, her words radiate gratitude, humility, and conviction. “You can have many degrees in the world,” she says, “but if you are not kind, what exactly are you?”

An assistant teaching professor in the School of Education, Manning-Lewis brings more than two decades of experience as a teacher, researcher, and advocate for inclusive education. Before joining TRU in 2022, she taught and led initiatives across Jamaica, the Caribbean, and Canada, including helping launch the first anti-racism project in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. Her scholarship bridges social justice, race, gender, and post-colonial theory, all driven by a deep belief in the transformative power of education.

“I grew up surrounded by activists,” Manning-Lewis said. “My mother, my aunt — they were helping women and vulnerable people. From the age of nine, I was already sitting in community meetings. It taught me early that when you receive, you give back.”

That sense of purpose continues to shape her research and teaching philosophy. A 2023 recipient of the American Educational Research Association’s Outstanding Research Paper Award, Manning-Lewis explores how race, language, and identity influence learning and belonging. As a racialized Afro-Caribbean

post-colonial scholar, she uses decolonizing pedagogies and visual research methods — such as graphic novels — to centre the voices of underrepresented groups. She is also collaborating

more than anything. She had only a basic education, but she carried wisdom that no degree could give,” Manning-Lewis said.

Outside the classroom, Manning-Lewis leads a vibrant, family-centered

teaching, wearing colourful African prints and inviting students to share elements of their own heritage. “My students from Ghana, Nigeria, Morocco, Sri Lanka — they bring me jewelry and food from home. It’s

“I grew up surrounded by activists. My mother, my aunt — they were helping women and vulnerable people. From the age of nine, I was already sitting in community meetings. It taught me early that when you receive, you give back.”

Professor Tanya Manning-Lewis



CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

with educators across British Columbia to develop a province-wide Black curriculum, an initiative that connects her academic work with her lifelong commitment to equity and representation.

Manning-Lewis’ path in education began in Jamaica, where she served as a teacher and later as a school leader. Growing up, she was adventurous and spirited — “a little tomboyish,” she laughs — spending days climbing trees, boating, and exploring nature. She credits those carefree years and her grandmother’s influence for teaching her balance and empathy. “My grandmother taught me that kindness matters

life. Weekends often find her traveling to her sons’ soccer tournaments, hiking local trails, or watching movies together on Friday nights. “I’m not a winter person,” Manning-Lewis said, “but my kids love skiing — so I cheer from the sidelines.” When she finally has quiet time, she indulges in Agatha Christie mysteries and a bowl of ice cream.

Manning-Lewis’s travels continue to influence her worldview. A recent trip to Ghana left a lasting mark: “It changed who I am for good. I felt like I was home — that immediate connection with the people shifted my perspective.” Manning-Lewis often brings that spirit of cultural exchange into her

such a beautiful exchange. They teach me, too.”

To her younger self — and to the many future educators she mentors — her advice remains steady: “You are good enough. Don’t worry so much about what others think. Stay true to what’s important to you.”

What you see with Manning-Lewis is precisely what you get: a compassionate educator whose life and work continue to inspire, blending intellect with empathy, scholarship with humanity, and heart with purpose. In both the classroom and the community, she reminds her students that education is not only about learning, it’s also about liberation.

Rockin' around the movie screen

The Omega's staff shares the movies they watch to get into the holiday spirit

DOMENICA RANDICH STAFF WRITER



ROBERT MCALASTER/THE OMEGA

Even as students' lives shift from season to season, the quiet anticipation of familiar holidays offers comfort—not just in the promise of a break, but in personal traditions that warm the heart. For some, that might mean attending church or setting up an Advent calendar; for others, it might mean trading hot chocolate recipes or re-watching that comfort film that may not even be about Christmas. With that in mind, The Omega asked its staff to name their 'must-watch' movies and television shows for the season.

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

For The Omega's Sports editor Alexa Liptak, the holiday season wouldn't be the same without *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Choosing this film because it's also her dad's favourite, Liptak reaches for *A Charlie Brown Christmas* to set the Christmas mood. This short film by Bill Melendez follows the titular character, Charlie Brown, as he searches to find the true meaning of Christmas despite being surrounded by commercialism.

"I think it really brings a true spirit of Christmas that it's not about pretty things or anything. It's about being with people, and that's the best part of Christmas," Liptak said.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964)

Bringing to the table a

classic story many of us may be familiar with, staff writer Jakob Schmietenknop reveals that his tradition wasn't just about watching the stop motion film directed by Larry Roemer, but an all-day quest. Schmietenknop shared how it all started when, along with his family, they would set up the Christmas tree while listening to the family's favourite jingles. After completing that mission, that's when the party really started. "In the evening, usually there would be like some cookies, [and] I would always have to have eggnog to watch *Rudolph*. Otherwise, it would ruin the movie for me."

Now that Schmietenknop has grown up, he admits that modern audiences may find the classic feature a little boring, but in this day and age, where retro is in, what's old is often new again, especially with the help of some good ol' fashioned adult eggnog.

Avatar (2009)

As a true science fiction fanatic, The Omega's photographer, Charles Rankin, chooses *Avatar* by James Cameron as his favourite December movie. *Avatar* takes place in the future on Pandora, a fictional planet far from Earth inhabited by an alien race of humanoids called the Na'vi. When humans come to Pandora to exploit the planet's abundant ecosystem, the

Na'vi are forced to violently defend themselves or face total annihilation.

For Rankin, sometimes the movie one sees is more about the cherished memory than about the holiday.

"The first time I saw it was with an uncle of mine who's now passed. My family had no interest in watching this weird alien movie [but] my uncle and [I] were really big sci-fi buffs, and it [just happened to come] out in December," Rankin said, noting that it's that connection to his uncle that makes the tradition so important.

Jingle All the Way (1996)

Directed by Brian Levant, this comedy follows a father's adventure trying to secure his son's wish: a Turbo Man action figure that seems sold out everywhere in town. Staff writer Santiago Rojas recalled when one of his family members asked if he had seen this movie. When his answer was negative, he remembers how they all sat down to watch it every Christmas since.

"I just think it's hilarious, it's funny how Arnold Schwarzenegger acts [in] the movie. It reminds me of like... family—sitting down all together watching this movie, before or on Christmas [day]."

Love Actually (2003)

For the romance fanatics, staff writer Billie Gladue recommends

Love Actually by Richard Curtis. This film tells the story of eight couples with different plot lines who are dealing with their own romantic problems. Gladue admits that during her initial viewing, she and her mother actually turned off the movie 20 minutes in, as her father convinced them to watch something else. However, she said, once they ended up watching it completely, she fell in love with its message.

"At the beginning they say... 'if you look closely you'll find that love is all around' and it shows that it doesn't place a huge emphasis on romantic love. It's like all different kinds of relationships."

The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992)

When it comes to holiday movies, no one loves them more than Robert McAlaster, The Omega's editor-in-chief.

Out of the thousands of Christmas movies that have been released, McAlaster credits the Jim Henson classic, *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, as his favourite.

"What I love about the movie is how authentic it is," he said. "Not only is it wholesome and fun, but it's also remarkably faithful to the original Dickens' text. Add to that watching Sir Michael Caine playing the role of Scrooge straight faced opposite a bunch of puppets and I think you have something very special."

CFBX **Top** 30 Charts

— November 20, 2025 —

Artist – Album (Label)

- 1) The Soundwriters** – Better than Before (Independent)
- 2) Olivia Barrett* – Elsewhere (Independent)
- 3) The Rawn Side of Town** – One Chance (Independent)
- 4) JP Meldrum* – Practice Losing Farther, Losing Faster (Independent)
- 5) Robots and Gods* – Robots and Gods (Independent)
- 6) Anthony D'Alessandro* – City Lights (Independent)
- 7) Absolute Losers* – In the Crowd (Having Fun)
- 8) Angelique Francis* – Not Defeated (Independent)
- 9) Noam Lemish* – There's Beauty Enough in Being Here (Three Pines)
- 10) Sundiver* – How to Live with Yourself (Independent)
- 11) Sexy Mathematics* – Sexy Mathematics (Independent)
- 12) Georgia Harmer* – Eye of the Storm (Arts and Crafts)
- 13) TOPS* – Bury the Key (Ghostly International)
- 14) Ada Lea* – When I Paint My Masterpiece (Next Door)
- 15) The Knocks and Dragonette* – Revelation (Neon Gold)
- 16) PIQSIQ* – Legends (Independent)
- 17) Blackfox – 4 (Independent)
- 18) Arlene and the People* – Ever Onward Believer (Independent)
- 19) Jerry Leger* – Waves of Desire (Devilduck)
- 20) Ghost Cartridge and Mantrakid* – Echo Chamber Made (30/30)
- 21) Steph Clifford** – Cocoon (Independent)
- 23) Sofia Miller* – Prologue's Epilogue (Independent)
- 23) King Bob* – Rookie (Independent)
- 24) The Dirty Nil* – The Lash (Dine Alone)
- 25) Whispering City* – Whispering City (Independent)
- 26) HOG* – HOG (Independent)
- 27) The Honey Cowboy* – Changing of the Seasons (Independent)
- 28) Kimmortal* – Sunniest of Days (Odd Dolls)
- 29) Aversions* – Empty Century (Independent)
- 30) Kate Wyatt Trio* – Murmurations (Independent)

* indicates Canadian Content ** indicates a local artist

Having a (pin) ball

Where beer, chicken wings, and pinball meet, good times may be discovered

BILLIE GLADUE STAFF WRITER

With over 100 sporting tournaments hosted in the city every year, it's really no wonder that Kamloops is referred to as 'Canada's Tournament Capital.' While many sports, like hockey, soccer, and baseball, may come to mind when one hears the moniker, Kamloops is also home to some lesser-known sporting organizations, like the Kamloops Pinball Association (KPA).

The KPA is a non-profit organization dedicated to coordinating and growing the local pinball league. It was founded in early 2023 by league president Nick Beddington and former league vice-president Trent Kennedy. The club began when Kennedy noticed a lone pinball machine in Embers Brewhouse, formerly Alchemy Brewing. After asking the owners whether they would be open to adding more machines to the restaurant, he provided some of his own, attracting the attention of a small group of participants. Now, the weekly events consistently host more than 20 competitors.

Pinball is a classic arcade game in which the objective is to hit targets while keeping a ball in play. Each game gives a player three turns. At the start of each turn, a ball is launched onto the board. Points are scored by hitting targets, bumpers and ramps, using the paddles at the bottom of the machine, called flippers, to manoeuvre the ball, with turns ending when the ball falls through

the gap between the flippers.

Although the game is a competition, the league's goal has always been to build community. The Omega met with the league's current vice president Derek English, who stated that pinball first piqued his interest during the pandemic while playing competitively online. The draw of the game, as opposed to others, lies in the variety that gameplay can have.

"I've played many competitive multiplayer games, but over time, they started to feel repetitive. Pinball, on the other hand, offers endless opportunities to improve and learn," English said.

The KPA hosts two events per week at Embers Brewhouse, located at 650 Victoria Street. Tuesdays are free-play from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. and offer newcomers an excellent opportunity to practice and try out new machines. On Thursdays, they host a weekly tournament from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. with a \$10 entry fee. The events are all officially sanctioned by the International Flipper Pinball Association (IFPA), meaning all players are added to the World Pinball Pro Rankings. The IFPA is the governing body for pinball as a competitive sport, and is attempting to bring the game back into the spotlight through competitions from the local to the national level.

Interested parties may RSVP for the tournaments on the league's Facebook page, facebook.com/kampinball.



CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

Otter fur gloves, moccasins, earrings, and a hand-beaded graduation cap, created by the artist, Jess Owen

Artist Chat with Jess Owen

The TRU professor talks art, culture and generational muscle memory

OLIVIA SIMMS STAFF WRITER

Jess Owen comes from a long line of creatives. Speaking with the Omega, the Natural Resource Science professor shared how she finds balance between art, community, and academia. Hailing from parts of central and eastern Canada, her family has long been connected to the land.

"My mom grew up in the bush," she said, recalling her mother's stories of growing produce and raising cattle, with single 100 lb. bags of flour and sugar being some of their only food purchases for the year.

This self-sufficiency fostered creativity, as making and sewing clothes was a key part of the family's support.

"My grandmothers and aunts have all been amazing artists and seamstresses," Owen said.

"They made [alot] their own stuff."

She highlighted the importance of these practices for cultural

connection. "I just did a big bead project where I was really thinking about my grandmothers, and feeling some of their energy from the art," she shared. "It's like generational muscle memory."

The Métis are renowned for their stunning beadwork, often featuring bright floral motifs. In her practice, Owen not only follows in the long history of Métis artists but also joins a vibrant group of contemporaries, including Lisa Shepherd and Jennine Krauchi.

Utilizing materials from the land, such as birch bark and deer hide, Owen crafts intricate pieces of traditional clothing. Her works feature fish scales shaped into flowers, porcupine quills reimaged as the base for elegant, beaded earrings. Echoing her family's resourcefulness, she said a dream project would involve making everything "from start to finish," without any

purchased materials. Despite the time and care she puts into her projects, Owen emphasized she wants to see them worn. Some of her family's works are on display at a museum in Batoche.

"It's interesting seeing their stuff behind glass," Owen explained, adding that she wouldn't want her own work kept out of reach. "It's meant to be held and touched and felt."

When she's not teaching on campus or studying for her PhD, Owen dedicates her time to the Two Rivers Métis Society, where they offer workshops in hide tanning.

"It's one of the best classrooms," she shared. "Sitting around a hide with elders and knowledge holders... you're hearing their stories and they're passing on information."

She highlighted these circles, whether for hide tanning, beading, or sewing, as a valuable opportunity

for connection with others.

Given all her commitments, Owen said it can be challenging to maintain her cultural practices.

"[It's] probably a very common experience for Indigenous academics because you're going in so many different directions."

She conveyed the importance of learning to hold boundaries and say 'no' to things. "I'm still learning," she said. "I'll be learning my entire life."

Looking forward, Owen said she'd like to incorporate art in her teaching and deconstruct the colonial view of the classroom. "I think students have so much to teach as well... I want to open up that space for dialogue. That's something I aspire to do."

Readers interested in Owen's art can follow her beading page on Instagram at [instagram.com/j.obeadings/](https://www.instagram.com/j.obeadings/).

We're missing your voice.
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