

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A year in review,
on page 3

NEWS

Mark your calendar

We provide you with some important reminders for the semester

06

SPORTS

Bring on the bears

The Blazers didn't win their final game of 2025, but a lot of kids sure did

09

ARTS AND CULTURE

Picture Perfect

For years, production companies have been filming here, but why?

11

ARTS AND CULTURE

And the winner is...

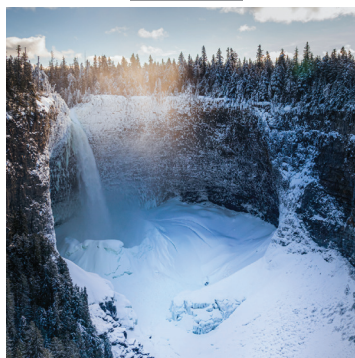
Six games competed for the title of 2025 Game of the Year, find out who won

13

NEWS

Writers of poetry and prose showcase their talents at new event

05



A snowy day at Helmcken Falls in Wells Grey park shows the splendor of B.C.

Charles Rankin/The Omega

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SPORTS

Local Kamloops athlete makes history joining the PWHL

10

ARTS AND CULTURE

New independent band featuring TRU students offer delicious tunes

12

2025: A year in review

ADESIRE AJAYI-SMITH NEWS EDITOR

Last year was marked by significant events that shook our communities, moved us to tears, ignited our passions and sparked joy.

In the digital age, where news cycles seem increasingly short and stories virtually disappear as soon as they arrive, it helps to take time to recall yesterday's moments that shaped today.

The Omega has compiled a list of nine impactful stories of 2025.

It's getting hot out here

Like the years before it, 2025 continued the trend of increasingly alarming weather conditions. It saw some of the most extreme and brutal climate emergencies in modern times and was not only one of the three hottest years on record, but also the second-worst wildfire season in Canadian history.

Globally, we saw floods and droughts, dramatic heatwaves and chilling cold spells, along with a devastating loss of life. Hurricane Melissa, which swept into the Caribbean in October, was the worst climate disaster in Jamaica's history, with over a hundred casualties in total.

As we move into the new year, trends do not bode well for global climate stability. The signs for necessary action have never been clearer.

Two decades of progress

March 31 marked 20 years since Thompson Rivers University achieved university status, changing its name from University College of the Cariboo and setting forth with new goals of academic excellence.

In the time since, TRU has taken important strides in several areas of institutional importance. It boasts a thriving Open Learning program, is a national leader in sustainability and has done significant work to partner and integrate with local Indigenous communities.

As a relatively young institution, it is exciting to see what else is in store.

Local Kamloopsian stars in breakout Canadian TV show

Hudson Williams, one of the stars of the internationally acclaimed breakout romance series *Heated Rivalry*, is a Kamloops local who graduated from Sa-Hali Secondary School.

The show has seen vast global attention, becoming Crave's most-watched original series and HBO Max's top debut for an acquired, non-animated title since the platform's launch. It has also been widely regarded as an important piece of queer media, depicting a passionate gay relationship in sports.

A Conclave to remember

In April, the world was rocked by the loss of Pope Francis, who served as the head of the Catholic Church for 12 years.

After a two day conclave, the Church chose its new head, Pope Leo XIV, the first ever American pope. Continuing on his predecessor's work, Pope Leo holds strong values on protecting the poor and marginalized, with a focus on migrants, human rights and climate change.

Culture in Cinema

The Kamloops Film

Society at the Paramount Theatre hosted several film festivals in 2025, spotlighting a myriad of important stories through cinema.

The 29th Kamloops Film Festival, which ran in March, had a captivating lineup of award-winning and critically lauded films from around the world. The second annual Queer Film Festival brought to audiences impactful 2SLGBTQIA+ stories in mid-August. And finally, the fourth annual Indigenous Film Festival explored the beauty and resilience of Indigenous storytelling in late September.

A homecoming

President Airini was announced as the university's new president and vice-chancellor in April and was formally installed in June.

Following the departure of former president Brett Fairbairn, TRU's former Dean of Education and Social Work, Airini, was called upon after a lengthy search to take the reins of leadership and oversight. She has already expressed several priorities, from improving the university's standing as a research institution to promoting ethical use of artificial intelligence in academia and more. It will be interesting to watch what she does moving forward.

Buying Canadian

The tariffs announced by U.S. President Donald Trump in February sent a ripple of shock, anxiety and frustration through many in Canada. The government's response was to encourage Canadians to purchase Canada-produced goods, spurring the phrase "Buy Canadian."

Trump's many comments about Canada becoming a 51st state, along with his tariffs, have been considered insulting by many and have been attributed to renewed waves of patriotism in the country. Political analysts have even suggested it played a part in Canada's federal elections, swaying voters further toward the Liberals.

Carney in, Trudeau out

Around the world, politics was on more minds than ever in 2025 and the same holds true for Canadians.

An increasing loss of public faith in the Trudeau government led him to step down as the head of the Liberal Party and as the Prime Minister of Canada.

Former central banker Mark Carney was chosen to fill the vacuum left by Trudeau, swearing into office on March 14. He went on to retain his seat after the 2025 federal election—the first time the Liberals won the popular vote in a decade.

The end of an era

The last of the Hudson's Bay stores ceased operations in June, marking the end of the 355-year-old businesses presence in Canada.

Beyond just signalling the dire state of Canadian department stores, the Hudson's Bay closure was a monumental moment in Canadian history. The company, which began in 1670 during the fur trade, played a significant role in shaping the Canada we know today. Throughout its vast history, both good and bad, it was undeniably a unique piece of Canada and the Canadian identity.



TRUIF members are tasked with managing more than \$200,000 in real capital. Pictured (left to right): Gagandeep Multani, Kira Lange, Michael Adeyemi, Kiet Ho, Sesathya M. Nanayakkara, Vihit Bharodia, Dexter Hays and Syed Faisal

Investing in their futures

How a TRU investment club has produced over 40 internships across Canada

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

What began as a student idea by co-founders Adam Burke and Jacob Lawrence in 2019 has evolved into one of TRU's most competitive and career-focused clubs.

Capital for the Thompson Rivers University Student Investment Fund (TRUIF) portfolio initially came in the form of \$100,000 in funding from a TRU advisory committee on investments in April 2020.

Since then, TRUSIF now manages more than \$200,000 in real capital, with a market value approaching \$270,000 and offers hands-on training for students aiming to break into capital markets, wealth management, investment banking and other finance fields that are often dominated by larger Canadian universities.

For fund manager Gagandeep Multani, TRUSIF fills an essential gap between academic theory and actual industry expectations.

"A lot of stuff which we learn in class is theoretical and not directly applicable in workplaces," Multani said. "Here, we get access to software and tools...

like FactSet and Capital IQ, especially finance jobs."

Multani added that the club's responsibilities encourage professionalism. "We are fairly judicious with the money and where [we] invest it because it is the school's money and we are accountable for it," he said.

Aspiring fund manager Caz Markus-Pawliuk says he was immediately drawn to the club's real-world alignment.

"I honestly couldn't believe something like this existed at TRU," Markus-Pawliuk said. "The goal of it is to really train students how to work investment-style jobs and, more specifically, capital markets jobs."

According to Multani, the club stands out not only for its mentorship but also for its outcomes. "In the last three years, since the time the fund started, we've had a total of 40 plus internships just within the group and that includes full-time offers as well."

"The proportion of jobs and internships which TRUSIF students have been able to take out as a total number is way ahead of any

other club," Multani added.

"And we deal with actual money for the school, which I do not think any other club does on campus."

Students from TRUSIF have gone on to intern or work at major firms, including RBC Capital Markets, Canaccord, Raymond James, Scotiabank, Grant Thornton, KPMG, TD and BMO—a track record that rivals that of clubs at larger, more established business schools.

Markus-Pawliuk notes that even entry-level positions in Kamloops can be competitive. "My manager gets 200 plus applicants for every single teller position she posts," he said. "Having something on your resume that shows you're serious about finance really helps you differentiate yourself from other candidates."

Mentorship plays a major role in the club's success. Multani recalls being personally mentored by TRUSIF co-founder Adam Burke. "He taught me how to do financial modelling personally here, sitting with me," Multani said.

Markus-Pawliuk had a

similar experience with a former fund manager.

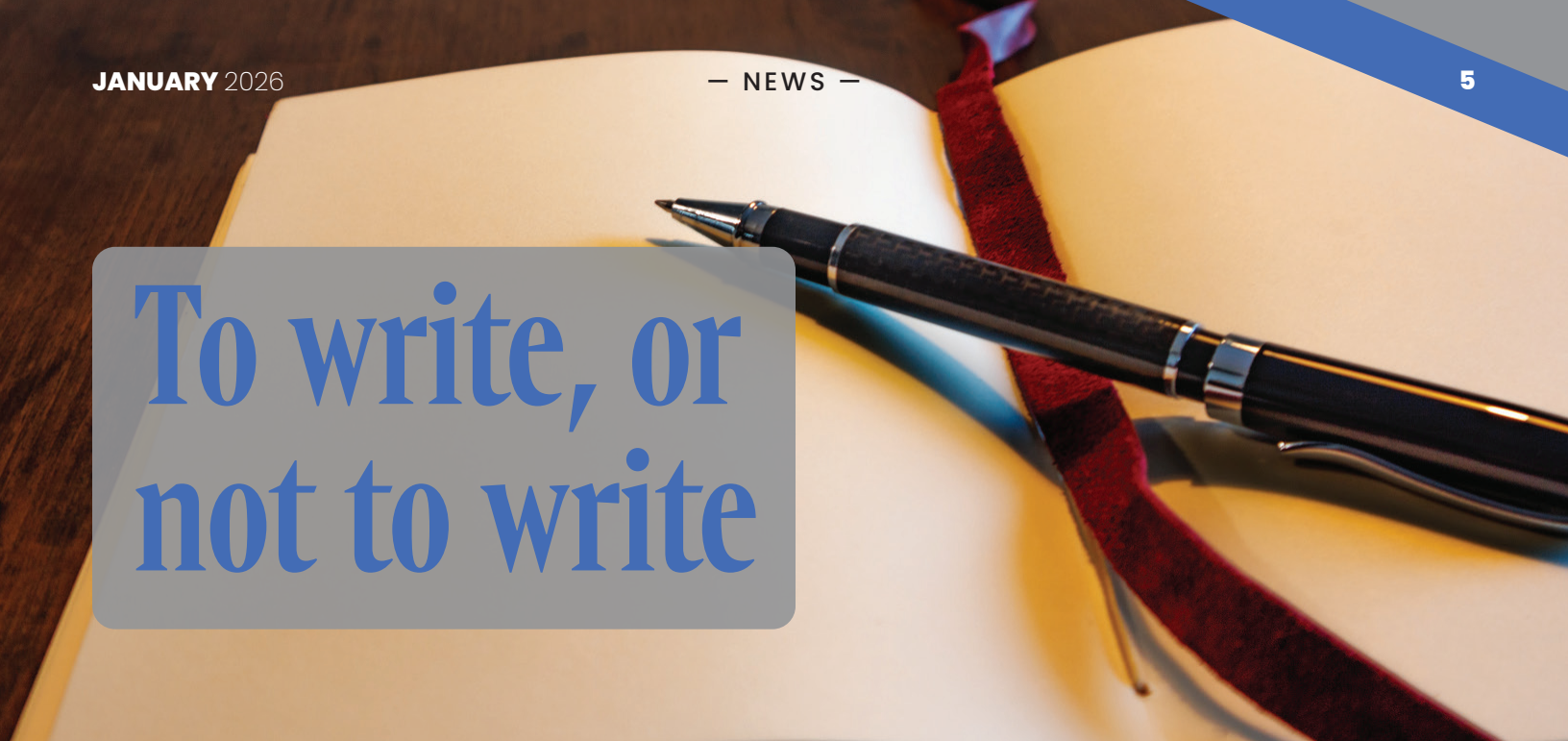
"I sat down and I spent like two hours picking Daiman [Mather's] mind," Markus-Pawliuk said. "He's actually an investment banking analyst in Calgary right now; the amount I learned from him really set me on the path now."

Students interested in joining must complete a stock pitch, but advanced knowledge isn't required.

"Anybody who knows the basics of the company they are pitching is good to join," Multani said. "We do not expect any high-level knowledge."

Looking ahead, the team aims to continue Winter recruitment, host speaker series events and pursue more industry visits. Markus-Pawliuk emphasized what he hopes readers remember: "The fact that we've sent students out to investment banking and capital markets jobs is really huge for us."

Multani summarized the reach more simply: "In Kamloops, there is no bank where TRUSIF members have not worked."



To write, or not to write

Students and faculty share their work and love of writing with the community

OLIVIA SIMMS STAFF WRITER

In early December, students often find themselves endlessly pressed for time. For the scarce moments not spent cramming in the library, warm beds and comfort shows beckon. Despite this, a sizable crowd elected to spend the chilly evening of Dec. 4 celebrating writers on campus during an open mic night event hosted by the TRU Writers Club.

About two dozen students and faculty read aloud their creative works. Many approached the microphone nervously, acutely aware of the many eyes and ears focused on them. But more often than not, readers left the podium with wide-brimming smiles, met with applause and the commendations of both friends and strangers.

"[It's about] building student confidence," Justin Madu, a Literature, Languages and Performing Arts (LLPA) professor, told the Omega. Madu started the reading events several years ago and with the help of fellow LLPA professor, Thom Vernon, they have

since tripled the number of reading events per semester. As an instructor, Madu emphasized the value of students reading their work for an audience.

"[It can be] really anxiety-provoking when you're not used to it and I say eventually you need to just learn to love the feeling, the same way people teach themselves to love roller coasters."

"I think it's a good opportunity to get out of your comfort zone," Kathleen Loughton, one of the student readers, said. "It can be really intimidating at the beginning, but it's good to just get it off your chest."

The excerpts varied greatly in medium, from poetry and prose to research insights and theatrical performances. Despite this, common themes emerged from otherwise disparate works. The complexity of human relationships, particularly as it relates to friendship and sense of belonging, was explored by several readers. Rotting and grotesque imagery also featured in many pieces.

But lest you picture an overly-serious, candle-lit room of Keats and Kaur imitation, know that the evening was also filled with moments of levity, humility and humour. One such highlight was a collaborative poem read by English student Zoë Fulton. Fulton and Loughton, along with friend and fellow writer Clo Giroux, explained their creative process:

"We were sitting on the seats near Common Grounds," Giroux said. "Kathleen started it and then we just kept saying random stuff. We couldn't think of something to rhyme with 'intersectional'. And the only thing that could come into my head was 'erectional'."

A sort of "We Didn't Start the Fire" for the chronically online crowd, their oeuvre rhymed "minutes" with "pivots," asked "Why can't I look my mother in the eye?" and featured hard-hitting couplets like "What is it like to be a dog? Furry art, hedgehog."

In addition to helping students face their fears and providing the audience with

much-appreciated comedic relief, the event also served to promote the newly formed TRUSU Writers Club.

Gentry Davidson, the club's president and one of the event's readers, spoke to the Omega about the club's formation.

"[For] the past few years, I've been trying to find other writers to talk to, but there hasn't ever really been any spaces for that on campus," Davidson shared, adding that it wasn't until recently that he felt like he even had the time, resources and confidence to start a club. "But now I do," he said. "I started on planning preparations last semester ... We want to create an inclusive, positive space for writers here on campus."

The LLPA's reading events, held three times per semester and advertised via poster, are open to all students and faculty. Readers interested in getting involved with TRU's creative writing community are encouraged to connect with the Writers Club on Instagram at [trusuwritersclub](https://www.instagram.com/trusuwritersclub).

Save these dates (and your sanity)

Important dates for busy students

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

The Winter semester has a way of settling in before you realize how much is happening at once. Between classes, adjustments, life, work and personal commitments, it's easy for important deadlines to blend into the background until they're suddenly right in front of you. Knowing key dates ahead of time can help with staying organized and knowing when choices need to be made. Whether you are adding courses, adjusting your course load, planning a much-needed break, preparing to graduate or getting ready for finals, these are important dates to keep an eye on.

Jan. 23—End of course change period

This is where the semester begins to feel real. It's the final day to make changes to your schedule. If something about your classes doesn't feel right, this is your opportunity to fix it.

Feb. 17 to Feb. 20—Mid-term break

Mid-term break runs from February 17 to 20 and lands right when the semester starts to feel real. Classes pause, but life

doesn't; this is the time to travel, rest, catch up with class materials or to get ahead on semester tasks. Whether you are resetting your routine or pushing through assignments, this mid-term break is a much-needed chance to breathe before the second half of the term picks up speed.

March 13—Last day to withdraw from a semester course with no academic penalty

This is the last day to withdraw from a semester-long course without academic penalty, which gives you time to reassess your courses and course load before the course further advances. Withdrawing can be a strategic decision to ensure that you are right on track with your academic pursuits. At this point, it's advisable for you to speak to your Academic advisor before proceeding with any course withdrawal.

March 31—Deadline to apply to graduate for Spring Convocation

For students planning to graduate this spring, this is the deadline to apply for Spring Convocation to ensure the formal review of your degree requirements. Missing it can mean

delays, not just in the graduation ceremony but in officially finishing your program. If graduation is on your horizon, this is the date to circle, highlight and double-check.

April 16—Start of examinations

Final exams begin on April 16, marking the shift from lectures to the final testing period. For many courses, this means cumulative assessments that pull together everything covered during the semester. Exam schedules, locations and formats can vary, so checking details early can save unnecessary stress. From here on out, it's about focus, pacing and finishing strong.

April 29—End of examinations

The semester officially wraps up on April 29 with the end of examinations. It's the finish line after weeks of deadlines, late nights and final pushes. While exams may be over, it's a good idea to still keep an eye out for grade releases and any follow-up requirements.

June 9 to June 12—Spring Convocation (Kamloops)

Spring Convocation in Kamloops marks more than the end of a

program; it represents the accumulation of years shaped by discipline, uncertainty, growth and persistence in studies. For many students, the academic path to this moment is not linear. It included shifts in direction, moments of doubt and the constant balancing of academic expectations with life beyond the classroom. Convocation offers a pause in all of that movement, creating space to acknowledge what has been carried and completed. While the ceremony itself may last only a few hours, the significance of reaching it tends to stay with students long after the day is over.

At the end of the day, the Winter semester isn't just a stretch of weeks; it's moments where timing actually matters. Some dates give you options, others take them away and a few simply signal that you've made it to the next phase. Keeping these deadlines in mind won't eliminate stress, but it can help you move through the term with more intention and fewer last-minute adjustments. As exams wrap up and April arrives, the goal is to finish feeling informed, steady and confident.



TRU celebrates newly tenured scholar

Salvador Barragan discusses the intersection of ethics and management

OLIVIA SIMMS STAFF WRITER

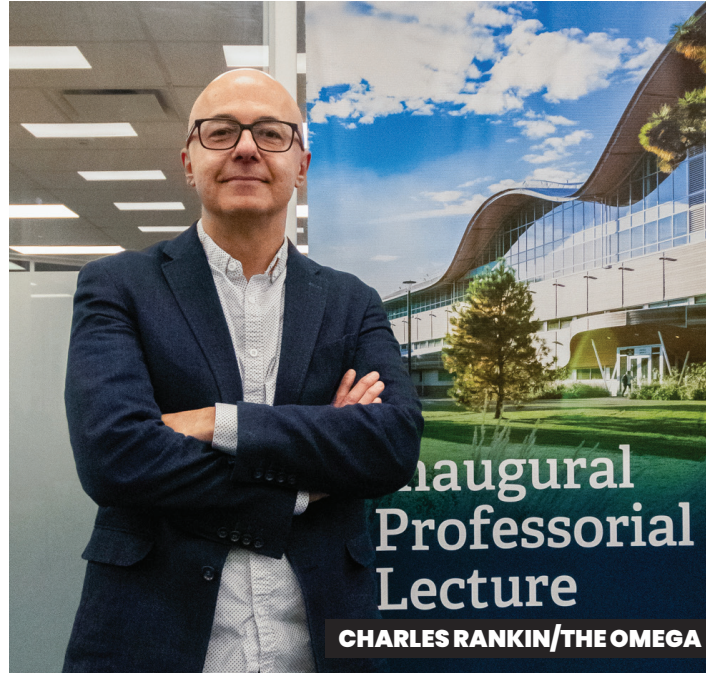
Several times a year, the TRU community gathers for an Inaugural Professorial Lecture (IPL). This event commemorates the promotion of a faculty member to full professorship, a position that recognizes one's excellence in the domains of service, teaching and research.

The honoree delivers their first lecture as a newly minted full professor, wrangling the complex world of their research into a digestible presentation for a general audience. On Nov. 18, Salvador Barragan delivered his IPL to a crowded room at the Collaborative Student Space in OLARA.

Originally from Mexico, Barragan completed his MBA at IPADE Business School before coming to Canada to study Management at the University of Lethbridge. He received his PhD in 2013 from Saint Mary's University in Nova Scotia; his thesis focused on high-performing female managers in Mexico. Joining TRU as an assistant professor at the Bob Gaglardi School of Business in 2014, Barragan made an immediate impact as both a researcher and instructor.

"He's an amazing scholar," said Bruce Martin, professor of Human Enterprise and Innovation. "He has such deep insight and he is willing to spend the time to dig deep into the data."

Barragan and Martin are frequent collaborators; together, they spearhead TRU's Innovation for Social Good research cluster.



Professor Barragán delivered his inaugural professorial lecture on Ethics and Management in November, 2025.

Martin emphasized the significance of the IPL as an opportunity to recognize outstanding scholarship and to share emerging research with a broader audience.

Barragan's students, many of whom attended the lecture in support, emphasized his approachability and openness as a teacher.

"In his class, no answer is wrong," shared Oluchi Ajouku, a second-year MBA student.

Omaumi Agboola spoke to the practicality of Barragan's leadership class, saying she enjoys the "outside the box" thinking that the professor encourages. He allows students to be creative with their solutions to business challenges, as long as they can defend their rationale to the class. Agboola cites Barragan

as an "instrumental" figure who helped her develop vital career skills.

As a management scholar, Barragan investigates the intersection between culture, identity and business. Looking beyond just the numbers, he pulls qualitative findings from participants' lived experiences. In a 2018 paper, for example, he conducted 22 interviews with female Emirati entrepreneurs to better understand the barriers they face in their personal and business lives.

Recently, Barragan's research has focused on social enterprises, the central subject of his IPL. These organizations straddle the line between non-profit and private business, he explained, using a commercial model to chase both a social mission and

financial sustainability.

Barragan and his team were awarded a \$75,000 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant to study Binners' Project, a social enterprise located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The Binners' Project enters into contracts with the city to collect bottles and cans at festivals, providing economic opportunities for marginalized groups, Barragan explained, while building community and destigmatizing bottle picking.

Over time, the researchers have observed Binners' Project transition from a traditional non-profit model, with the majority of their revenue coming from external funding, to a self-sustaining social enterprise.

However, social enterprises like the Binners' Project often face ethical dilemmas arising from competing financial and social goals. One example Barragan highlighted is the difficulty of finding enough workers to uphold its contracts, while ensuring that employment opportunities remain available for the intended groups.

These dilemmas, where humanity and business collide, are Barragan's specialty. "I think of [him] first and foremost as a humanist," Scott Rankin, associate professor of Human Enterprise and Innovation, told the IPL audience. "He puts the human first, in the classroom and with his colleagues. And that's a harder path to take."



CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

A rack of gender-affirming clothing can be found outside Gender and Sexual Diversity Office at TRU.

Affirming identity through style

Access to gender-affirming clothing may seem small, but has huge impacts

ELLEN KAZEMBE STAFF WRITER

The Gender and Sexual Diversity Office at TRU has introduced a continuous gender-expression clothing initiative designed to meet the needs of students seeking gender-affirming items. The idea began when the office first researched how other post-secondary institutions support gender-diverse communities.

"When I started this position a couple of years ago, Sarah Wolfe and I made some site visits to two universities in the Lower Mainland," Noah Fischer said. "We went to SFU and we went to UBC and really the purpose of that was to explore what gender and sexual diversity supports looked like at other places already, because this was a very new position for TRU."

During that visit, Fischer noticed a simple but powerful idea. "One of the things that I noticed was that they had a rack of clothing and gender-affirming items... such as undergarments, binders, etcetera, outside of their dedicated pride space."

Fischer initially assumed TRU might one day have a similar space, but waiting didn't feel right anymore. "I kind of just grew tired of waiting and it felt like a simple enough thing to do that would make a really big difference for people," Fischer said. "People are really in a difficult place right now and they don't necessarily always have the ability to access clothing that affirms their identity."

Unlike one-day clothing swaps, this model is open every day, anonymous and intentionally unstructured. "The clothing is always outside of my office and I do not pay attention to who is accessing what," Fischer said. "None of the clothing is separated or organized according to gender or size or anything of the sort."

Anyone can donate items by dropping them in the box outside his door and anyone can take what they need. "If they want to grab something and they need something, then that's kind of just the trust that I'm putting in

the system," Fischer said.

The impact speaks for itself. "I don't necessarily see people taking them, but when I come in after the weekend, I have to completely restock stuff," Fischer said. While he once wondered how to ensure items went to those needing gender-affirming clothing, he decided against policing access. "If people need to access the clothing, they need to access the clothing and it's really not in my nature to police that."

A partnership with the Kamloops United Church Thrift shop strengthens the initiative through \$12 vouchers. "They already were hosting private queer shopping nights once a month," Fischer said. "If people ... don't find something that they like or ... that fits properly ... then they're able to ask for one of these vouchers."

Future expansion is likely, though space is a limitation. "Really, the only thing standing in my way is space," Fischer said. Donations already

include makeup, bedding, personal hygiene products, shoes and unused undergarments. "Basically, if people are willing to donate it, I'm accepting it."

For him, the initiative carries urgent social meaning. "I think that we're living in such a challenging time right now," Fischer said. "At the end of the day, I'm still a cis white male, right? And so doing this work just involves such a commitment to making sure that all dimensions of the community feel supported."

He connected the project directly to rising hostility toward gender-diverse communities.

"Particularly in the context of trans people being disproportionately targeted, gender diverse people being disproportionately targeted right now," Fischer emphasized. "I think that this offering sends the message that TRU cares and we want to support all students... This is a real issue that many people are facing and we're doing something to respond to that."



CHARLES RANKIN/THE OMEGA

The Kamloops Blazers hosted another successful Teddy Bear Toss, collecting over 2,000 toys.

Blazers teddy toss bear-y successful

Bears rained onto the ice in the Sandman Centre, keeping the tradition alive

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

The Kamloops Blazers hosted the Penticton Vees on Dec. 5, 2025, for their annual Teddy Bear Toss night at the Sandman Centre.

What is now a popular tradition for many junior and minor league hockey teams, the teddy bear toss began back in 1993, right here in Kamloops, in the same arena the Blazers still call home. The event, conceived by then-Blazers marketing director Don Larson, was simple: invite fans to bring stuffed animals to the game and throw them onto the ice after the home team's first goal, with donations going to local hospitals or charities.

As the action began for this year's game, the building was buzzing with anticipation, with many fans wondering when the home

team would trigger the toss. While Blazers fans were sure the goal would come early, they were ultimately proven wrong when it was the Vees who struck first, opening the scoring just 2:31 into the game on a shot from Jiri Kamas.

Early in the second period, 18-year-old defenceman Kayd Ruedig scored the first goal for Kamloops when he picked up a loose puck off the play in the Vee's end and deked the puck around Vee's defenceman before releasing a shot on the net. Once the puck crossed the line, it triggered the rain of stuffed animals from fans down on the ice as the team celebrated the goal. Volunteers, players and staff worked together to clear the ice. Early estimates suggested the haul reached around 2,000 toys, all of

which headed to local hospitals, charities and community organizations.

As play resumed, the momentum shifted in the Vee's favour, as Penticton responded with two quick goals just minutes apart to take control of the game 3-1. The WHL's point leader, J.P. Hurlbert, found the back of the net on a play set up by second-place scorer Nathan Bhem.

In the third period, the Vees took full control of the game and netted four goals on Blazers Goalie Logan Edmonstone. Penticton spoiled the Blazers' teddy bear toss and took home a 7-2 victory.

For the past 32 years, the Teddy Bear Toss has been an annual tradition for the Blazers. The first toss took place on Dec. 5, 1993, when defenceman Brad Lukowich scored

the first goal, triggering a rain of stuffed animals on the ice. The community responded well and more than 2,400 bears were thrown onto the ice that night, starting the iconic hockey tradition. From that night forward, what began as a local promotion soon spread throughout junior hockey leagues, the NHL and even around the world. Today, many hockey teams host annual teddy bear toss games and fans bring plush toys to enjoy seeing them rain down after their team scores.

The legacy the special game has created is powerful; a simple idea has grown into a global symbol of community, generosity and holiday spirit, all born from that first toss in Kamloops more than three decades ago.

Kamloops' goalie makes history

Kendra Woodland is the first Kamloops player to sign with a PWHL team

ALEXA LIPTAK SPORTS EDITOR

After being passed over twice in the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) drafts, Kamloops local Kendra Woodland never gave up hope on her hockey career. She kept training at home in Kamloops until she was invited to a pro-tryout with the Ottawa Charge this past July, a moment she'd been waiting for since finishing her career with the University of New Brunswick Reds. Finally, the words she had been waiting to hear after all the hard work she put in camp came last November: a one-year contract with the Ottawa team. "I think I got 40 pounds lighter," Woodland said of when she heard the news.

Despite the setbacks, the goaltender's story marks a turning point for women's hockey in Kamloops. She's the first player from the city to sign with a team in the PWHL. After going undrafted twice, Woodland earned her spot with the Charge as the third goalie on their depth chart.

"It was a year and a half of wondering and working and hoping," Woodland said, "I still loved the game. I wasn't ready to stop training or stop competing."

Now in its third season, the PWHL is quickly growing into one of the most competitive and closely followed women's hockey leagues in the world. The Ottawa Charge, one of the original six teams in the league, has become a strong contender over the first two seasons. While the team missed

the playoffs during its inaugural year, the Charge consistently filled arenas and even led league-wide attendance numbers.

However, this season is bringing some different challenges to Ottawa. This past month, the Ottawa city council approved demolishing their home rink and constructing a new facility with fewer seats. While the team navigates the uncertainty of their home rink, their roster this season is experienced and fiercely competitive, especially in goal, where three netminders battle daily for a chance to dress on game nights. It's an environment that demands resilience, patience and a strong internal drive from anyone trying to stand out.

For Woodland, those qualities were shaped long before she arrived in Ottawa. She grew up with older brothers who also played hockey, which meant she grew up on the ice and her playing the game was never in question.

"[We played] and passed in the basement, the backyard, they were taking shots on me and everything," Woodland said, "I think my start, definitely, I owe to my brothers a little bit."

However, when it came to choosing her position, Woodland joked she became a goalie because she didn't like it when she couldn't score goals and decided that turnabout was fair play. So, if she couldn't score, she'd stop her brothers from scoring, too.

She grew up playing hockey on boys' teams. Woodland admitted it wasn't always easy. Like many girls in small-town hockey communities, this meant getting dressed in boiler rooms, equipment closets and even rink lobbies because there were no girls' facilities. Those early years taught her how to compete, how to push through discomfort and how to keep showing up even when the path wasn't easy. "By the time I was 17, 18, they had it all mapped out for me. I think I had played in almost every rink in B.C. by that time and knew where all the rooms were and everyone was really accommodating," Woodland said.

It wasn't all difficult moments, though. Woodland said that the majority of her youth teammates are still some of her best friends to date. After receiving her contract, she received messages from many of them congratulating her. It wasn't until her first year at UNB that Woodland played women's hockey for the first time, which brought a change in team culture and camaraderie.

Growing up, Woodland said she wanted to play for the Vancouver Canucks or the Olympic team. For many young girls, before the creation of the PWHL, there were very limited options for women's hockey. The Olympics provided the highest level of women's hockey you could play; however, the opportunities to represent your country aren't an

everyday opportunity. The PWHL provides a place where someone like Woodland can train, play and build a career.

In Woodlands' season opener, she wanted to pay respect to her hometown and to the Kamloops Blazers, who have bred many great hockey players in the city for the support they have given her throughout the years. That game, she debuted a vintage Blazers bomber from Darryl Sydor himself to start off the season in the right style.

For Woodland, representing Kamloops means more than just a hometown shoutout. It means becoming the kind of player young girls can look up to, just as the entire city looks up to Carolina Hurricanes forward Logan Stankoven. He's become a hometown hero, a player whose success the community rallies around.

Woodland doesn't compare herself to him, but she knows the impact he's had.

"I just wanna make sure that females everywhere, especially in Kamloops, know that nothing's too far to reach. As long as you're working hard and you put your mind to something, you can achieve it," Woodland said. "I think that's just a really important message to send."

Now, as she fights for her spot in Ottawa's crease, she's carving out her own place in Kamloops hockey history. This is just the beginning of Kendra Woodland's career.

Lights, camera, action!

How Kamloops went from quaint B.C. city to a viable film hub in two decades

JAKOB SCHMIETENKNOP STAFF WRITER

Kamloops is no stranger to cameras. Long before Hollywood stars like Pedro Pascal or Chris Pratt were spotted in the Interior, the region was quietly laying the foundation to become one of British Columbia's most active filming destinations. In the early days, film crews passing through the Interior often saw Kamloops as little more than a convenient backdrop, useful, but not essential, yet. What changed over time was the industry's appetite for landscapes that could double for almost anything: the Midwest, desert plateaus, dense forests, or small town Americana. While major cities in B.C. were already booming, the Interior's blend of rugged geography and accessible infrastructure made it a kind of hidden gem waiting to be fully realized by location scouts.

According to Thompson-Nicola Film Commissioner Terri Hadwin, the Kamloops modern screen identity dates back roughly 20 years. While productions had travelled through the region before, major early-2000s films such as *An Unfinished Life* (2005) and *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (2005) helped put this corner of the province on the radar. Blockbusters like *The Pledge* (2001), starring Jack Nicholson and *Firewall* (2006), starring Harrison Ford, were really what got the cameras rolling in Kamloops.

"That's when things really kicked off, those were some of the catalysts that got us noticed," Hadwin

said. "We offer landscapes you just won't find near the metropolis of Vancouver."

Within roughly an hour's drive, crews can access everything from sagebrush hills to forested mountains and river canyons. Along with our regional airport, travel becomes simple and the city becomes an appealing package for production companies. Though when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, there was an unexpected turning point.

As productions searched for lower-density, more spacious locations, Kamloops rose to the surface. Crews could work with fewer interruptions while still remaining within driving distance of Vancouver. That momentum never fully faded, even after restrictions were lifted. Instead, it created a pipeline that local advocates worked hard to sustain.

One of the larger developments was the creation of Thompson-Nicola Film Commission's programs and partnerships, which helped connect visiting productions with local vendors, talent and locations. These efforts showcased an important truth: Kamloops isn't just visually appealing, it's logically feasible. Crews have access to hotels, food and transportation without relying on pricey ferries.

Producing movies in B.C. creates more than just headlines. Local business owners often feel the ripple effects of Hollywood's arrival in Kamloops. Restaurants, equipment suppliers, tradespeople and even those a bit out of town who

own rural property all benefit when productions arrive.

These benefits also extend to the people behind businesses. When productions come to town, they often hire local carpenters, drivers, medics, caterers and security personnel. Such roles provide stable, well-paid work during filming windows. For many, that means developing new skills and making industry connections that can often become a pathway into ongoing film-related opportunities, deepening the local talent pool and reinforcing Kamloops' reputation as a reliable, film-friendly community.

A single project can inject tens of thousands of dollars into our local economy within a matter of days, which also stretches into the smaller surrounding communities.

"There was a production here [in late October]. They were here for five days and they brought a crew of well over a hundred. All that crew needs to stay in hotel rooms and that's not including those who are locally hired to assist with production. So that leads to creating jobs," Hadwin said.

The growth Kamloops is experiencing could help create lasting careers for those interested in film. Due to a lack of opportunities, many students may leave the area for Vancouver or Toronto. Expanding the local ecosystem through crew training, equipment rental houses and post-production resources allows the community to hold onto emerging talent

rather than export it. In the past year, Canadians have been wanting to buy local and boost Canadian talent in a stretch to not only combat the buffoonery of President Trump but also help find our identity.

Indigenous narratives and partnerships have become increasingly important in shaping the region's film identity. The surrounding Secwepemc territory provides cultural context and stories that can only be told here, offering opportunities for authentic collaboration and representation. Productions have begun consulting communities more intentionally, something local advocates hope continues.

The future of Kamloops as a film hub will depend on thoughtful cooperation among government, industry and community groups. Incentives and funding programs will continue to play a role, but so will grassroots enthusiasm. Residents know their landscape is special and hopefully the rest of the world will learn too.

As more productions arrive, the challenge will be to keep the balance supporting artistic growth while maintaining the character of the place that drew filmmakers here in the first place. If done right, Kamloops could evolve from a convenient stand-in to a filmmaking destination recognized for its own identity: one that is defined not only by scenery, but by community, culture and opportunity.



Potroast, a new independent band from Kamloops, will perform next for an on Jan. 22 in The Den. Pictured from left to right: Austin Husa, Amelia Donald, Bohdan Dowker, Grace Boehm, Nicole Fernandes and Marvellous Ifezue. Other band members not pictured include Kei Massalski and Aiden Evans.

There's nothing like a good Potroast

Student band offers up tasty tunes with a simmering style

BILLIE GLADUE STAFF WRITER

When a group of musicians with wildly different tastes get together, you get Potroast, a band comprised of TRU students. The band was formed in the spring of 2025 when pianist Marvellous Ifezue asked singer Nicole Fernandes to jam after a karaoke event, with the hopes of starting a band. Since then, the group has formed and goes by the name Potroast. The group has eight active members and features a wide range of instruments, from guitars to violins and talkboxes.

The name Potroast came from a former member who, during rehearsal, remarked, "Some pot roast would slap right now." Another member said that it would make a good band name and as they had yet to choose one, it was used for the first performance. Originally, it was meant to be a temporary placeholder that the band had planned to change at some point; however, nothing else has resonated quite as well.

Although they've been

practicing writing original songs, their shows are composed of covers, featuring a wide variety of genres, which affords each member the opportunity to reflect their personal musical influences.

"We've come to learn that Potroast signifies our musical taste. We've all got diverse musical tastes and we try to make it work," Fernandes said.

They use a shared playlist—which is now over four hours long—to keep track of songs each member is interested in playing. Building setlists for performances comes very naturally and if someone is really passionate about a song, everyone will go along with it. Even when playing covers, the band takes creative liberties with their renditions, giving songs of all genres a rock sound.

The most significant improvement they've noticed has been in finding their sound and getting the instruments to play cohesively. Early on, with

up to eight instruments and each person playing across the entire frequency spectrum, the sound came across as muddled. By assigning each instrument to a specific range, such as having the violin play only the high range, it isolates different sounds and allows each instrument to shine. Another technical challenge when playing live is that each member cannot hear themselves through the speakers while performing. To combat this, they use in-ear monitors that block external noise and let them hear the audio mix clearly.

But the greatest challenge faced by Potroast, they say, is simply finding locations and time to practice. Practices are held at least once per week, but ideally up to three times per week, as multiple shorter rehearsals are better for memory retention. Finding a practice space is a hassle because of all the equipment that has to be moved around, such as the drums, an audio mixer

and a piano. It's not just a matter of space; as some might imagine, it's also challenging to find a space where noise is isolated and doesn't disturb others.

What makes this band special is the genuine camaraderie they share. Guitarist Austin Husa said, "The thing that's changed the most is just getting to know each other and becoming friends, that's what I look forward to now about coming together."

Even if no upcoming shows are planned, they still get together to practice. As the band's technique strengthens, so does the bond between bandmates.

On Jan. 22, Potroast and the TRUSU Comedy Club will be hosting an event in The Den. Snacks and a happy hour menu will be served while you enjoy an evening of music and stand-up comedy. Ticket prices are to be announced. To stay updated on the event and other Potroast shows, follow them on Instagram at [potroastband](#).

Clair Obscur wins top honour

The winner of the 2025 Game of the Year award wasn't much of a surprise

LUIS ZABLAH STAFF WRITER

The race for the prestigious distinction of Game of the Year (GOTY) was tight in 2025, with a large number of titles up for consideration. At the 12th annual Game Awards on Dec. 11, six games were up for consideration. Each featured incredible stories, with themes ranging from loss and reconnection to vengeance and just plain goofy fun. But in the end, one epic tale reigned supreme. Before we get to the winner, let's take a look at its competition.

Death Stranding 2: On the Beach (Developed by Kojima Productions/Sony Interactive Entertainment)

Hideo Kojima's sequel to *Death Stranding* builds on an already unique vision, delivering a film-like experience in the ever-mysterious, fictitious world Kojima has expertly crafted.

This time, traversal is improved, with a higher focus on stealth and combat options and an expanded progression system. The sequel is far more accessible for general audiences while still preserving Kojima's signature style.

At the 2025 Game Awards, *Death Stranding 2* was nominated for seven categories, including GOTY, but surprisingly walked away completely empty handed.

Donkey Kong Bananza (Developed by Nintendo)

Nintendo surprised fans by reintroducing a golden-age character with a new coat of paint (or perhaps fur?), a refreshed personality and some brand-new, unique designs.

Donkey Kong (DK) is back and better than ever.

At its core, it's a bright, active platformer that, for the first time ever, borrows role playing game (RPG) elements, with the integration of skill points and attribute upgrades, while maintaining DK's trademark charm. With the new "Bananza" transformation mechanics, the game introduced refreshed traversal and combat, leaving fans with a delightful surprise.

Donkey Kong: Bananza stands out from previous DK games by delivering a fresh take on an age-old character, having a fully destructible 3D world, transforming-based abilities and a more open sandbox-style adventure, unlike the previous, more linear 2D platformers that came before. This fresh adventure helped *Donkey Kong: Bananza* earn its Game of the Year nomination.

Although Nintendo didn't manage to secure GOTY with *Bananza*, it did win the award for Best Family Game of 2025.

Hades II (Developed by Supergiant Games)

Supergiant's long-awaited sequel continues the studio's winning streak of a game made with unique characters driven by a rogue-like experience.

With a new protagonist, *Hades II* keeps its addictive loop of runs and upgrades, while introducing new environments, enemies and systems that make each gameplay attempt unique. With the blend of story and pacing, each failure feels meaningful.

Along with GOTY, *Hades II* was nominated for five

other awards, ultimately taking home the prize for Best Action Game of 2025.

Hollow Knight: Silksong (Developed by Team Cherry)

The highly anticipated *Hollow Knight* follow-up delivers a new, redefined platforming experience with a fresh, expanded world. *Silksong* replaces the Knight's slow movement with a faster, more strategic style built on agility, aggression and combat. Its narrative takes place within a new kingdom, with quest-driven progression and a more dynamic, explorative environment, expanding on everything *Hollow Knight* did right and more.

Fans of the series can expect a revamped game with new tools and a major overhaul of the special ability system. *Hollow Knight: Silksong* evolves exploration without sacrificing difficulty. The developers' art direction and design are intact, adding a fresh coat of paint.

Like *Hades II*, *Hollow Knight: Silksong* was nominated for five other awards in addition to GOTY, but only managed to take home the award for Best Action/Adventure Game of 2025. But hey, that's still one more than *Death Stranding 2* (whomp whomp).

Kingdom Come: Deliverance II (Developed by Warhorse Studios/Deep Silver)

Kingdom Come's sequel sinks its teeth back into the historical RPG genre once again, this time doubling down on the map's size and adding new systems like firearms that expand on the depth that far exceeds the original.

Warhorse's sequel dives into its historical RPG roots once more, adding a significant number of gameplay improvements and a heavier story.

With reworked combat, more weapons and a full new blacksmithing/crafting system, *Kingdom Come: Deliverance II* sets a realistic tone and pays attention to detail that helps it stand out among the number of similar games.

In addition to GOTY, *Kingdom Come: Deliverance II* was nominated for two awards but left the event empty-handed.

WINNER: Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 (Sandfall Interactive/Kepler Interactive)

With an emotional story and boundary-pushing graphics, *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* grabbed the gaming community's attention and never let go.

Expedition 33 immerses players in turn-based tactical gameplay, where players and opponents take turns with each attack, rather than in streamlined real-time battles. The game adds a fresh new level to classic JRPG (Japanese role-playing game) mechanics, with real-time dodging and parrying that punish or reward players depending on whether they miss or hit. Featuring locations, clothing and dialogue inspired by the Belle Époque of France, the game's painting-like aesthetic led to the massive praise from players and critics alike, resulting in *Expedition 33* earning nine awards, including Best Narrative, Best Independent Game, and, of course, Game of the Year.

Professor spotlight: Catriona Leger

All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players

DOMENICA RANDICH STAFF WRITER

Since The Omega relaunched during the Fall semester of 2023, we've had the privilege of presenting to readers our Professor Spotlight series. In this series, we interview some of the student body's favourite professors and sessionals, offering readers a chance to get to know our learned instructors on a deeper, personal level.

Born in Montreal, Que., raised in Ajax, Ont. and graduated from high school in Pitt Meadows, B.C., Professor Catriona Leger from the Literatures, Languages and Performing Arts department in the Faculty of Arts has fought to stay true to her passion for theatre. Leger's pursuit of the stage began in grade two and has since taken her all across the country. Now, Leger has made dreams into reality as an actor, director, movement coach, artistic leader and teacher whose resume is to die for. Revealing her backstage tricks, The Omega interviewed Leger to find out how she shines in the supreme act: life.

DR: How would you describe the type of person you were when you went to UBC?

CL: I was really shy to speak up for myself or to express my own opinion. I was always worried about being wrong. To go to study theatre [and] acting, it was an avenue for me to express myself in a way that was really safe because it was through someone else's words; interpreting a text; interpreting a play; and interpreting a character.

DR: Is there one piece of advice from that time you now give to your own students?

CL: Yes. When I was studying in Paris ... Philippe Gaulier would say, in regard to the audience, 'We want to love you. Just let us love you,' which is an extremely freeing piece of advice.

DR: What drove you towards that school in 2006?

CL: Those are my lost years, like Shakespeare's lost years. I worked as an actor; travelled across the country. [I] lived in a 150-year-old log home in the Gatineau Hills, worked in retail [and] marketing promotions at the convention center; went back to school and studied horticulture and landscape design. I did what you do as a young actor trying to make it. And then, I started working for Lululemon ... and I worked my way up to head office. Shortly after that promotion, I took a look at my life and I was like, 'I don't want to be doing this. It's too early to give up on theatre,' and so, I quit my job and started telling people I was going to study with Philippe Gaulier in Paris.

DR: Two years later, not only were you working in theatre, but it was also when you started instructing in different schools as you were getting your master's degree in fine arts at UBC. How did you balance your studies, job and acting career without feeling burnt out?

CL: There's always this fear, I think, as a gig worker when you're working as an actor or director, that the work's

going to dry up. But it also came to a point where I was like, 'I'm not going to say yes to every single thing that comes my way'... I think the pinnacle of that was to be given the role of artistic director at the Company of Fools. To be given that opportunity in 2015 was amazing, but ... it was in really poor financial shape. So, there was a sense of responsibility, of course, to not only keep it afloat, but to improve things.

DR: Is there a production you hold close to your heart as your career advances in each directing and acting?

CL: For my thesis production for my master's degree, I did a production of *Romeo & Juliet* (2010) at UBC. It was a really special production. I spent so much time planning and working on it. [As for acting,] when I look back, I think about two productions that I did with a Company of Fools. *As You Like It* (2014) where I played three characters. And *Someone for Everyone* (2011); in that show, I think I played 14 different characters. I remember just running around backstage going, 'Oh, which [character] is it now?'

DR: In 2013, you participated in devised theatre and helped create a production from scratch. When *Ladies of the Lake* (2013) was performed, how did you feel?

CL: I mean ... when you're devising, you don't have a clear map. Because [Kate Smith] and I created it together with John Doucet, we didn't have a clear leader. So, it was a bittersweet experience because it did get

put into the Undercurrents Festival at GCTC ... but it was a testament to being—how working with your friends can be a blessing and a curse because it caused a lot of friction in our relationship for a while.

DR: When you got to TRU in 2019, you had already excelled not only in acting but also directing, hosting and teaching in the industry. Which of these do you favour?

CL: Oh my gosh... I love teaching because I love to help people develop and find their strength, confidence and abilities ... And then there's a product at the end that we get to share with the public that people get to come and see. And it's short. So, there's always like, there's always a new project

DR: You've also made appearances on T.V. shows and movies such as *Single and Ready to Mingle* and recently *My Secret Santa*. Now that you are an assistant teaching professor, do you plan to keep acting as you did before?

CL: Well, in theatre, when I can. It's a little bit easier to do movies now because of my teaching schedule. But yes, I do plan to continue doing it.

DR: Lastly, what is one message you want to give to young actors around the world?

CL: Besides, 'We want to love you, let us,' here's something I say in my classes a lot, 'You are only limited by your imagination and sometimes...gravity.'

Retro roundup

Whether you enjoy shooters, RPGs or side-scrollers, these vintage games will keep you entertained for hours

JAKOB SCHMIETENKNOP STAFF WRITER

Video games are works of art in which developers spend years crafting tedious pixels purely for the player's enjoyment. The ultimate test of a game's quality lies in its replayability. It's one thing to replay a game a year after its release, but the real test is if you can pick up a game that's over 10 years old and still find it enjoyable. While some 'classic' games may find their audiences through gimmicks and cheap tricks—we're looking at you, *Duck Hunt*—those with the best stories and game mechanics often prove most popular. With that in mind, the Omega has compiled a list of some of our favourite 'retro' games that we think are worth coming back to based on gameplay mechanics, theatrics such as soundtracks and storylines and overall enjoyment.

Skate 3 (2010)

Electronic Arts (EA) ground *Skate 3* so well that the recipe may not be able to be replicated again. Though the game features something it calls a storyline, many gamers are drawn to it merely to explore an open world. When it was released, the arcade aspect of creating a custom skatepark, where players can perform an endless variety of tricks, appealed to gamers, including skaters. The locale is visually bright, with some grit that adds to the realism, along with pro-skaters like Coach Frank (voiced by Jason Lee).

Dark Souls (2011)

The series itself delivers one of the most rewarding gameplay loops of all time. Its combat is precise, with unforgiving battles that are notorious for making you learn from your mistakes. Featuring minimal exposition and an ambiguous, dark, decaying atmosphere, *Dark Souls* allows a sense of discovery and accomplishment that few games can match. It's difficult, but every victorious battle feels rightfully earned.

Red Dead Redemption (2010)

Red Dead Redemption captures the good, the bad and the ugly of the dying wild west. Better than many games before (and many more after), RDR sought to capitalize on the open-world video game craze of the 2000s and did so in spectacular fashion. Though some might argue that its sequel (a game or movie that is simultaneously a prequel and a sequel), *Red Dead Redemption 2*, is the better entry in the series, the mark left on the gaming community by the original as one of the best of all time is undeniable.

Batman: Arkham Asylum (2009) & Batman: Arkham City (2011)

Initially, we were going only to include *Arkham City*, but when you're talking about this series, you can't mention one without the other.

Arkham Asylum



Batman, John Marston and the Sole Survivor are three of the protagonists featured in our top retro games.

reinvented superhero games with its tight level design, mechanics from the point of view of the world's greatest detective and the iconic, flawless free-flow combat. *Arkham City* expanded on that system, inviting players to explore a dark, dangerous open world packed with many villains from Batman's rogues gallery. Featuring the voice talents of the late Kevin Conroy (who voiced the character in over 55 productions, including cartoons, series and video games), the *Arkham* series became somewhat of the gold standard for superhero action games.

Fallout 4 (2015)

As *Fallout 4* celebrated its 10-year anniversary on Nov. 9, it just squeaks by to make the list.

Fallout 4 delivers one of Bethesda's most replayable and immersive adventures. The world is packed with secrets, factions you can join and stories that reward exploration from the moment you step outside the Vault. With improved gunplay, crafting mechanics that are well thought out, settlement systems and countless ways to build your character, it's an open-world RPG that players can easily sink hundreds of hours into. Its music, atmosphere and sense of discovery still hold up beautifully.

Dragon Age: Inquisition (2014)

The epic RPG blends story,

strategy and freedom. From the war-torn lands of Thedas to the depths of hidden dungeons and ancient ruins, every location feels alive, rich with lore and brimming with stories waiting to unfold. Players step into the role of the Inquisitor, a leader tasked with uniting factions and closing a cataclysmic tear in the sky that threatens the world. The game shines with its unforgettable cast of companions, each with their own motivations, secrets and personal quests, making every relationship feel consequential. With breathtaking landscapes, intricate politics and a sense of grandeur rarely matched in RPGs, *Inquisition* is a game that demands time and attention, rewarding it with one of the most immersive, emotional and enduring fantasy experiences of the decade.

Super Mario Bros. (1985)

The game that started it all. *Super Mario Bros.* defined platforming games with responsive controls, inventive level design and a perfect balance of challenge and fun. It has colourful worlds, memorable enemies and iconic characters: Mario, Luigi, Bowser and Toadstool (later renamed Peach), creating a universe that still feels vibrant and alive decades later. Combined with unforgettable music and clever secrets, it's not just a game but a cultural touchstone that shaped the future of video games.

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