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Ceasefire in Gaza!

BY QUINLIN OSADCZUK

The war which began on October 7th, 2023, is one which has long captured the attention of the international community, first out of fear, then disgust — yet this conflict between Israel and Gaza began far before then.

While the wider conflict began with the formation of the state of Israel and its subsequent wars with the Palestinian authority in 1948 and beyond, the establishment of an independent Gaza — and, therefore, the roots of this particular war — began in 2005¹. As the Second Intifada (an earlier war between Israeli and Palestinian forces) had ended not long before, Israel had decided to re-orient its approach to national security. As a part of that process, the four Israeli settlements in Gaza were dismantled and military forces were withdrawn, though the Israeli government accordingly kept control over Gaza's external affairs, including with reference to its coastline.²

Meanwhile, in Gaza, local militias affiliated with political parties and movements in the West Bank began to consolidate power, taking authority over various parts of the strip.³ The two main forces there were the same which had been the West Bank's two largest parties elected in 2006, those being one called Fatah, the second-largest, and Hamas, the largest. Over the course of the surrounding months, from September 2005 onwards, clashes began to erupt between Hamas-affiliated and Fatah-affiliated militias as tensions between the two parties began to spark up across the Palestinian Authority (the governing body which answers to Israel, though is responsible for governing Palestine). These tensions came to a head in Gaza on June 10th, 2007, when militias from both sides began what amounted to a civil war in the strip.⁴

As we know well, Hamas won that civil war, and has governed the strip since. Since June 15th, 2007, when Hamas formally took control of the strip, Gaza has been under a complete blockade from the Israeli government, including by land, sea, and air, with exceptions for aid shipments subject to the approval of the Israeli government.⁵ Further, since then, there have been clashes along the border every single year since Gaza's "independence," if it can be called that. This is at times



Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

at the hands of the military forces of Hamas, such as through rocket attacks, or at the hands of bombings from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).⁶ Those clashes escalated and came to a head on October 7th, 2023, where Hamas forces launched a surprise offensive across the Gaza-Israeli border, leading to the deaths of 1,195 Israelis and foreign nationals, of which 815 were civilians, alongside

taking 251 hostages.

Since then, the Israeli armed forces have seized most of Gaza, directly inflicting some 68,000 deaths in the strip,⁷ while Hamas has killed 470 IDF soldiers since the start of Israeli operations in the region at time of writing.⁸ The United Nations has deemed Israel's actions in the Gaza strip to be tantamount to a genocide, with several scholars on the matter in concurrence — though not the point of this article, it should still provide some con-

Already, the plan has been endorsed by many of the nations surrounding Israel and Palestine, as well as various Western nations, like Canada and the UK.¹³

The plan, in short, would see the return of all hostages to Israel, the demilitarization of the Gaza strip, prisoner exchanges, the presence of an international "stabilizing" peacekeeping force, a new transitional government, and a conditional roadmap to Palestinian self-determination and statehood. Accordingly, the IDF has completed a partial withdrawal from the strip,¹⁴ handed over all remaining living hostages and the bodies of those which they can reach,¹⁵ and some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners held by the Israeli government have been released.¹⁶

Despite the potential cause for optimism, there have been several interruptions and cause for concern; there have been numerous violations of the ceasefire, predominantly from the IDF.¹⁷ Further, Hamas has failed to return several of the bodies of some of its hostages, stating that they will need specialized equipment to excavate the sites where the hostages were held,¹⁸ bombed during the war; due to this, Israel has halved the amount of aid trucks entering the strip.¹⁹

While the likelihood of the ceasefire being fully followed remains doubtful, there are still causes for celebration. Despite ceasefire violations, there exists now a coherent international effort to enforce peace between the two figures involved in this conflict, including at least a pause to the genocidal actions being taken. While the future for Gaza, Palestine, and Israel remains uncertain at best at this moment, there also exists the potential for a lasting peace; we can only hope it might be reached.

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² Le Monde Infographic. "The Gaza Strip blockade explained in one map." Le Monde, 10 October 2023. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/10/10/the-gaza-strip-blockade-explained-in-one-map_6162224_4.html

³ Associated Press. "Looters strip Gaza greenhouses." NBC News, 13 September 2005. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9331863>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

⁴ CNN. "Hamas controls Gaza, says it will stay in power." CNN, 14 June 2007. <https://www.cnn.com/2007/06/14/middleeast/07.gaza/index.html>

⁵ "The Gaza Strip blockade explained in one map." Le Monde, 10 October 2023.

⁶ "The Gaza Strip blockade explained in one map." Le Monde, 10 October 2023.

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⁸ gov.il. "Swords of Iron: IDF Casualties Ministry of Foreign Affairs." Gov.il, 3 November 2023. <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-idf-casualties>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

⁹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner. "Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds." ohchr, 16 September 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁰ 1010 Sabbagh, Dan, and Jason Burke. "Israel launches strikes on Gaza as fighting resumes after truce expires." The Guardian, 1 October 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/01/israel-hamas-war-ceasefire-ends-fighting-resumes-gaza-palestine>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹¹ Bang, Raffi. "Gaza ceasefire deal - the latest on the truce." BBC, 18 March 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy5kqz5v8vde>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹² BBC. "Donald Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan in full." BBC, 9 October 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70155nked7o>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹³ Reuters. "Global reaction to Trump's proposal for a Gaza peace plan." Reuters, 30 September 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/global-reaction-trumps-proposal-gaza-peace-plan-2025-09-30/>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁴ Doucet, Lyne, and Alice Cuddy. "Ceasefire comes into force as Israel's military pulls out of parts of Gaza." BBC, 10 October 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjw7jp2nps>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁵ The Associated Press. "All living Israeli hostages released amid major Palestinian prisoner swap." CBC, 12 October 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/israel-gaza-hostages-released-9.6936699>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁶ Kallim, Carrie. "Israel releases nearly 2000 Palestinian prisoners as part of ceasefire deal." NPR, 14 October 2025. <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/14/1141411415/17/israel-releases-nearly-2000-palestinian-prisoners-as-part-of-ceasefire-deal>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁷ Knell, Yolande. "Gaza: Deadly flare-up tests Israel-Hamas ceasefire." BBC, 20 October 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz3k8k4v1o>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁸ Bruce, Graeme. "Hamas says it needs special equipment, more time to recover hostages' bodies." CBC, 16 October 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/hamas-israel-gaza-bodies-hostages-palestinians-9.6940446>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

¹⁹ Mednick, Sam, and Giovanna Dell. "Israel plans to halve aid into Gaza over slow return of dead hostages, a test for the Gaza ceasefire." World News, 14 October 2025. <https://www.castanet.net/news/World/577832/Israel-plans-to-halve-aid-into-Gaza-over-slow-return-of-dead-hostages-a-test-for-the-Gaza-ceasefire>. Accessed 25 October 2025.

Gaza Blockade Persists, Greta Thunberg Arrested

BY QUINLIN OSADCZUK

While the war in Gaza is officially over, at least for now, the policies of both Hamas and the Israeli government continue; there is no vacuum, even as Israeli troops withdraw from portions of the strip and both governments release hostages and prisoners of war. Meanwhile, the Israeli government's military forces continue to enforce a near-complete blockade of civilian aid from land and by sea. With the situation officially deemed a famine by the United Nations,¹ and without a strictly legal means for further aid to enter the strip to alleviate the crisis, various NGOs and aid groups have resorted to more legally dubious solutions: namely, to bring a flotilla of aid ships into Gazan waters despite the naval blockade.

This is not a new strategy. In fact, aid flotillas have been making attempts at reaching the Gaza strip since 2008, with few successes. These efforts have typically been organized by the Free Gaza Movement² and various other NGOs, with the most recent flotilla setting sail in late September of this year. Among those on that most recent outing was Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, alongside various other volunteers including French politician Rima Hassan.

This flotilla was the second of its kind this year, the first launching in May also being intercepted before arrival to the Gaza strip. The most recent flotilla, however, was much higher in profile, with Thunberg and Hassan increasing visibility for the attempt at aid distribution by their sheer presence. It is worth



Photo provided by Stefanos Rapanis.

noting that the flotilla was bombed by a drone³ during preparations to set sail on May 2nd, 2025, prompting a naval escort from Italy and Spain for a portion of the remaining trip before closer approach to the Gaza strip.

What followed was the best attempt at delivering aid to the Gaza strip in the history of the flotilla effort — closer than any other in the history of the strip. Nevertheless, all ships were intercepted,⁴ boarded, and the participants placed under arrest, Greta Thunberg among them. What followed as Thunberg and others were incarcerated was reported as a series of physical and psychological abuses against Thunberg, including being kicked, punched, made to kiss the Israeli flag, and being generally mocked. These claims were made by Greta Thunberg herself,⁵ as well as by numerous witnesses⁶ detained from the flotilla, including further claims that the detainees were denied food and water except from their cell's toilet, denied communication with their lawyers, and that the National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, spoke with detainees personally.⁷

The Israeli government has refuted most of these claims, stating that "All of her legal rights were fully upheld [...]. She [...] never lodged any complaint with the Israeli authorities regarding these ludicrous and baseless allegations — because they simply never happened.⁸ Furthermore, the Israeli foreign ministry broadly denounced the claims as "brazen lies," though minister Ben-Gvir shared his perspective online: "I went to visit Ketzioth prison and I was proud that we are treating the 'flotilla activists' as terror supporters, whoever

supports terrorism is a terrorist, and deserves the conditions of terrorists," he said. "It is worthwhile for them to experience the conditions in Ketzioth prison, and think twice before they come close to Israel again."⁹ With the recent agreement to a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, it remains to be seen as to whether further aid will make it into the strip; Israel has moved to further halve all aid¹⁰ entering the strip through the Rafah crossing until Hamas returns the missing bodies of some of the dead hostages, which Hamas claims¹¹ it is having trouble finding in the rubble of the strip. The naval blockade remains up around the coast, further preventing aid to enter the strip via international waters, leaving the Palestinian aid movement approximately where it was before the ceasefire. In any case, one cannot underestimate the value of a ceasefire in preventing further suffering and death. With Israeli Defence Forces pulling out of parts of the strip in a prolonged withdrawal, the ceasefire has largely put an end to violence, though not without accusations of breaches¹² from both sides. What remains to be seen is how Gaza will rebuild. According to various sources, over 80% of the Gaza strip is considered "destroyed,"¹³ and estimates vary between \$70¹⁴ and \$120¹⁵ billion needed to rebuild the ravaged land comparable in size to the city of Detroit. What is known now, however, is that with a blockade of some form or another seeming likely to continue no matter what, it may be only a matter of time before the next flotilla sets sail.

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² Ali, Mariam. "Freedom Flotillas: A history of attempts to break Israel's siege of Gaza." Al Jazeera, 9 June 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/9/freedom-flotillas-a-history-of-attempts-to-break-israel-siege-of-gaza>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

³ Becattori, Elena. "Gaza-bound flotilla says it was attacked by drones. Italy and Spain send help." PBS, 24 September 2025. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/activist-flotilla-seeking-to-break-the-israeli-blockade-of-gaza-says-drones-attacked-its-boats>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

⁴ Hale, Erin, and Stephen Quillen. "Israel intercepts Freedom Flotilla Coalition vessels en route to Gaza." Al Jazeera, 8 October 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/8/israeli-military-intercepts-gaza-freedom-flotilla-vessels-report>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

⁵ Wenman, Magnus. "Greta Thunberg: 'They kicked me every time the flag touched my face.'" Aftonbladet, 15 October 2025. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/251gKq/greta-thunberg-they-kicked-me-every-time-the-flag-touched-my-face>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

⁶ News Agencies. "Greta Thunberg mistreated by Israeli forces in detention, activists say." Al Jazeera, 4 October 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/4/greta-thunberg-mistreated-by-israeli-forces-in-detention-activists-say>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

⁷ Starcevic, Seb. "Greta Thunberg accuses Israeli troops of abusing her in captivity." Politico, 15 October 2025. <https://www.politico.eu/article/greta-thunberg-accuses-israeli-troops-abuse-gaza-flotilla-activist>.

⁸ Croft, Alex. "Greta Thunberg claims she was 'kicked and had wh*** written on suitcase' in Israel." The Independent, 17 October 2025. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/greta-thunberg-israel-detention-gaza-aid-flotilla-torture-b2847089.html>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

⁹ Berman, Lazar, et al. "Israel denies abuse as Ben Gvir touts harsh handling of Greta Thunberg, flotilla activists." Times of Israel, 5 October 2025. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-denies-abuse-as-ben-gvir-touts-harsh-handling-of-greta-thunberg-flotilla-activists>.

¹⁰ Bruce, Graeme. "Hamas says it needs special equipment, more time to recover hostages' bodies." CBC, 16 October 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/hamas-israel-gaza-bodies-hostages-palestinians-9.6940446>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

¹¹ Bruce, Graeme. "Hamas says it needs special equipment, more time to recover hostages' bodies." CBC, 16 October 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/hamas-israel-gaza-bodies-hostages-palestinians-9.6940446>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

¹² Croft, Alex. "Fears for Gaza ceasefire grow after Israel and Hamas accuse each other of breaching Trump's peace." AOL, 17 October 2025. https://www.aol.com/articles/fears-gaza-ceasefire-grow-israel-151837219.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93dC5uZ29uZ2xlLnVhbnR8&guc_referrer_sig=AQAAAJkKhPahDeXdsu0-OCBTY9u_zzhUc-2M2yqNyRjwP8R8JYrX14PvMGJPRuhKzWTFU-

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¹⁴ World Bank Group. "GAZA AND WEST BANK INTERIM RAPID DAMAGE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT." The World Bank, February 2025. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/133c3304e-29066819c1119f6e85366b-0280012025/original/Gaza-RDNA-final-med.pdf>. Accessed 18 October 2025.

¹⁵ Kleiman, Shachar. "Rebuilding Gaza could cost more than \$120 billion." israeltoday.co.il, 16 October 2025. <https://www.israeltoday.co.il/read/rebuilding-gaza-could-cost-more-than-120-billion>.

On the Importance of Public Libraries

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN

When most people think of public libraries, they think of a building stacked full of books that they can check out and simultaneously avoid racking up any annoying late fees. Libraries abandon the custom of long lines often seen at the DMV or hospital, large fees and extensive paperwork at a permitting office, or the grueling ins and outs of income tax. They are the only government body that will do everything in their power to ensure that every person who walks through their doors leaves at least a tiny bit more supported, hopeful, or set up for success.

Libraries have gone through a lot of change over thousands of years. Generally, the average public library is not entirely made up of clay tablets or papyrus scrolls: the times have evidently changed. Public libraries also no longer restrict access to the elites; meaning that you do not have to be incredibly rich to wander endlessly through the heaps of knowledge kept between pages. The ability to read is also no longer a skill known to the privileged — at least here in North America and other more developed parts of the world — which gives more people access to the plethora of materials within a library.

Starting with the basics: libraries have a lot of books. One cannot have a library without books, and this article would not make much sense without dwelling on that fact, even momentarily.

A good library will have something in it to offend any individual person. The variety of perspectives held within the stacks of books are meant to challenge an individual's notions of the world, continually trying to push for

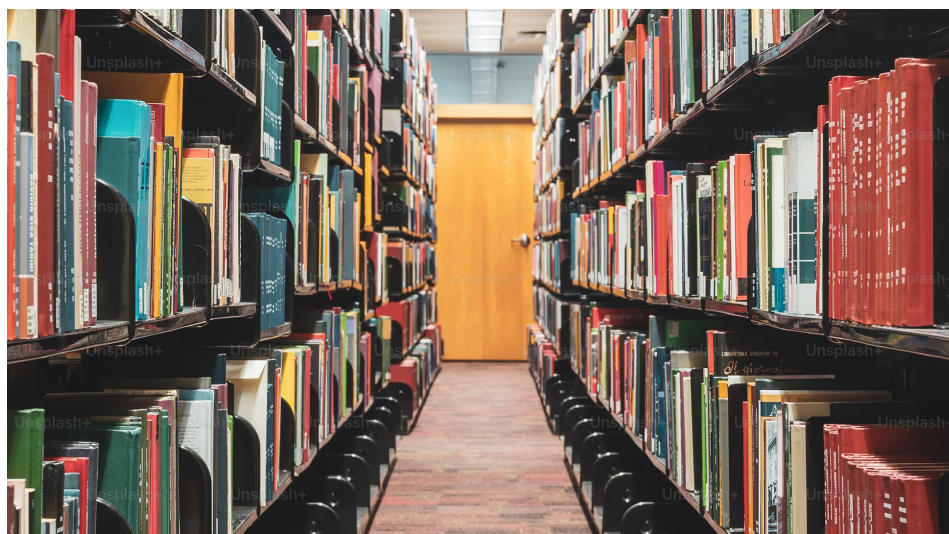


Photo provided by Zetong Li

them to think outside of what they know and believe. Libraries store information from the past so we are allowed to look back on how we have progressed, whether that be for better or worse. If limited access is put onto these resources, we become doomed to repeat mistakes of the past.

Book bans are not just a symptom of authoritarian regimes, but are also a phenomena that is creeping its way into Canada. Alberta has recently attempted to remove classic titles from school shelves,¹ but revoked this decision due to public criticism; instead refocusing on removing titles that were deemed to be inappropriate due to sexual content. This decision has not had a direct effect on public libraries, but is still an attack on freedom of information that should not be brushed over.

Books are also not the only thing you can check out from a library; you can loan out movies, video games, CDs, hobby kits, Wi-Fi hubs, electronics, instruments, magazines, and so much more. Not only does this allow for people to save money, but it also promotes literacy. In an era of misinformation, encouraging literacy and critical thinking is crucial.

Libraries also serve as a third space, which is a space for people to go outside of home and work where they can engage with their community. Other third spaces include coffee shops, gyms, bars, or stores, but they come with the expectation that you make a financial commitment to be there. So, the next time you have to charge your phone, get out of temperamental weather, study for a class, or schedule a meeting: forgo paying for a coffee to earn your stay in a cafe and drop by your local li-

brary instead.

The space for social interaction that libraries offer is vital, especially in a post-COVID world where people are still finding ways to reconnect with one another. They offer a place for people to study, families to spend time together, meetings to take place, and individuals to seek the plethora of resources that libraries have to offer.

Resources that are offered will vary from library to library. Some have food pantries, understanding that a portion of their patrons struggle with food insecurity and attaining healthy and balanced meals. They can be a space for lawyers to offer immigration advice pro bono for community members who cannot afford that advice otherwise. Individuals can also attend language learning workshops to practice their conversational skills with others who might be equally unfamiliar with a language. By attending craft workshops, people can save money on investing in a new hobby and instead can try it out before they make a commitment. Children are also able to access workshops to develop their literacy, numeracy, and cognitive skills outside of school or even before they are even at the age of attending school.

The services a library offers are crucial, and even if you are not directly accessing them — even though you should be, they are free — they offer help to many different people. Kelowna has three public library locations: downtown, Rutland, and Mission. Visit one of these locations to see what they have to offer you!

¹ Crooks, Leyland. "Canada: Alberta Passes Book Ban after Schools Remove Handmaid's Tale, 1984 and Other Classics." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 3 Sept. 2025. www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/03/canada-alberta-book-ban-passes.

Don't Romanticize Life, Just Live It

BY GABRIELA CHAN

We are in the trenches. It is late October, which means the first batch of mid-term grades are trickling in and second mid-terms, research papers, and final projects are looming around the corner. I have postponed writing this article until two days before it is due, partly because of schoolwork, but also because I found my current situation somewhat ironic.

I planned to argue against the notion of romanticizing life while experiencing, in real-time, how excruciatingly challenging it is to face the unromanticised reality of an accumulated workload, neglected laundry, and a near-empty fridge.

I could let the laundry and fridge be, spend eight dollars on a coffee and blueberry muffin; prop these Gilmore Girls-esque treats next to my half-written essay and a window with an autumnal view; snap a cute photo of this set-up then post it on Instagram. I would get several likes and instantly feel better, less stressed. Only it would not have been long before this "main character energy" wore off, before I remembered life is not a coming-of-age drama.

The "romanticize life" trend dates back to 2020, when the world had collectively fallen into a different, much deeper trench called the COVID-19 pandemic.

On TikTok, an audio track¹ was posted and reposted over homogenous montages of girls skinny dipping in glistening lakes, hiking up picturesque mountains, clanking mugs of hot chocolate with their friends, and such.

The track went: "You have to start romanticizing your life, you have to start thinking of yourself as the main character, 'cause if you don't, life will continue to pass you by, and all the little things that make it so beautiful will continue to go unnoticed, so take a second, and look around, and realize that it's a blessing for you to be here right now."

According to that last sentence, the drive to "romanticize life" seems positive. The idea is to be more appreciative, notice the little things, and express gratitude for simply being alive. That was something many viewers needed to hear, being stuck home with not much to do as a life-threatening virus circulated the globe.

A wave of "romanticize life" content subsequently splashed over social media. The trend has impressively sustained until now. Some call it a Gen-Z movement against postmodern cynicism,² but really, this movement has rejected one extreme — the view that our lives have no ultimate meaning — for another extreme, rooted in the word "romanticise."

To romanticise means "to talk about something in a way that makes it sound *better than it real-*

ly is."³ Considering this, wouldn't asking yourself to romanticise life imply that your life is

not good enough to begin with? What does a romanticized life even look like? This lifestyle, worldview, or movement (call it what you will) is primarily reliant on aesthetics. It is taking a task as mundane as writing a paper and framing it in a desirable light, often through visuals. That may begin with a set-up like the one I described at the start of this article, and voila! Boasting about your study set-up on social media seems to turn what would have been a dull activity into something worth appreciating — at least, that is what your likes and follows are telling you.

There is nothing inherently problematic with trying to cultivate joy in mundanity, or with curating a pleasing study space; the problem is that this newly-framed life does not quite hold beyond social media. After all, you cannot edit

life better by giving it a poetic title.

Take the lifestyle content creator, Michelle Choi's Youtube video title on May 6, 2025: "I went to Korea to cure my homesickness."⁴ Korea is Choi's home country, and while returning to your home country when you miss it is a valid course of action, the way this caption is phrased glosses over the emotionally taxing experience of coping with homesickness. It participates in the romanticization trend by oversimplifying hard times in life.

The danger of the trend lies in how it instructs people — 2.31 million subscribers, in Choi's case — to believe not only that a simple, idealized life exists, but also that such a life can be achieved through fairly straightforward measures: if not a few additions to one's daily routine, then a quick trip across the globe.

Romanticizing life is a form of denying hardship when instead you could have accepted and dealt practically with the hardship. The truth of the matter is, one has very little control over when mid-terms and assignments come cascading towards us, nor can you curb your far-from-aesthetic but natural emotional breakdowns.

Instead of glamorizing life, why not just live it?

Yes, it is daunting to live through hardships, but life is supposed to be hard sometimes. It is not supposed to be romantic. Even with no photos to prove it, no dreamy audio track to narrate your story, life gets good naturally if you accept its challenges and allow difficult emotions to come and subside.

Now that I have made my case, I offer to live up to it by washing my clothes, getting my groceries, and finishing my assignments despite how unromantic it all is.



Illustration by Iso Maauid Rodriguez

ly is."³ Considering this, wouldn't asking yourself to romanticise life imply that your life is

life into a montage of joyful moments and cut out the emotional hurdles. You cannot make

¹ Liguori, A. [@anghaliggi]. (2021, January 24). The last sentence is my fav [Video]. TikTok. <https://www.tiktok.com/@anghaliggi/video/6921376285377826654>

² Duffy, E. (2022, April 1). How The "Romanticize Your Life" Tik Tok Trend Is a Gen Z Rejection of Postmodernism. Chicago Thinker.

³ Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.) Romanticize. In Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved October 27, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/romanticize>

⁴ Choi, M. (2025, May 6). I went to Korea to cure my homesickness [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE-HAENQa_U

Mysteries and the Craft: A Portrait of Writer-Director, Celine Song

BY GABRIELA CHAN

In October 2024 at the Austin Film Festival,¹ Oscar-nominated writer and director Celine Song talked about the difference between being an amateur writer and a professional writer. She believes that being an amateur writer means “writing for what makes me happy, what makes me thrilled.” On the other hand, a professional writer is not just someone who is paid to write:

“The truth is, I think being a professional artist is to think of art as a way to communicate with your audience ... to make sure that they’re not left in the dark, and that they’re also able to believe and be immersed in [the story].”

Put succinctly, the amateur writer writes for themselves and the professional writer writes for an audience; how does Celine Song navigate the tension between these two modes of the craft? Indeed, a tension exists, because neither mode of creating cancels the other out. Writing, particularly for film, often interlaces the personal with the universal, as well as with norms in the industry.

Celine Song is no rookie. When she wrote the screenplay for her 2023 debut feature film, *Past Lives*, she had already been a professional playwright for ten years. Yet she says that the amateur writer still lives in her. It lives because “I have to believe the thing that I’m working on.”²

What keeps a writer writing is never just the prospect of having one’s work be read by people, but also the personal thrill and fulfillment that comes from the act itself. Song achieves a brilliant balance between these two objectives of writing by interweaving personal stories with universal themes. In writing and filmmaking, she challenges the boundaries of making art with an attitude of curiosity and a faithfulness to her craft.

Celine Song explores themes of love, place, and identity in her films, *Past Lives* and *Materialists*, the latter of which was released in summer 2025. A distinct characteristic of Song’s films is that her lived experiences play a foundational role in the storytelling. Her debut feature, *Past Lives*, is semi-autobiographical, featuring a female protagonist who migrated from Seoul, South Korea, to Toronto, Canada at a young age with her family.

The film opens with Nora sitting at a bar between Arthur, her American husband and Haesung, her Korean childhood sweetheart. Behind the camera, two off-screen voices guess at who these three people are to each other. A slow zoom-in on Nora ends with her looking directly at the camera.

This scene mirrors a situation in the Korean-Canadian filmmaker’s life³ when her childhood boyfriend was visiting her and her husband in New York City, and she had to translate for the two men, neither of whom spoke the other’s language. Eventually, Song met eyes with a stranger across the room who was evidently wondering about this trio’s dynamic.

That pivotal night, Song realised that her identity as an immigrant bridged her past and present lives. She turned that personal revelation into a widely acclaimed story. *Past Lives* would win her various awards in the film scene, including the Vanguard Award for “the art of storytelling and creative independence” at the Sundance Film Festival,⁴ where the film was first screened.

One could argue that the reason Song’s films have garnered global attention is because the writer-director’s works emanate a fascination and curiosity



Photo provided by Photo by Martin Kraft, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.jpg about life which, in this day and age, we could all use a bit more of. In her films, Song is interested in what she deems “mysteries.”

For *Past Lives*, that was *in-yun*, a term used to describe the providence or fate that ties two people together and operates across lifetimes. The concept has existed in Korean culture for thousands of years, but no one has truly been able to define it.

In the movie, Nora says, “If two people get married, they say it’s because there have been 8,000 layers of *in-yun* over 8,000 lifetimes.” How do you trace 8,000 layers of fate over 8,000 lifetimes? You cannot, and that is why *in-yun* remains a mystery.

While this mystery originates from Korean Buddhism, it operates in *Past Lives* as something that can be felt beyond Korea. As Nora grows up and crosses geographical and cultural borders, the film ultimately explores a universal experience: the way that people move through time and space. In Song’s words:

“Maybe you don’t know what it’s like to immigrate across the Pacific Ocean, but you do know what it’s like to be not 16 and to think ‘Man, I used to be 16. I’m never gonna be 16 again.’”⁵

Song trusted that the story of Nora, Haesung, and Arthur was something many people would relate to, and she was right.

In the ending, Nora and Haesung exchange goodbyes on a quiet, dimly lit street in New York City. Haesung gets on an Uber and rides off to the airport. A slow pan of the camera follows Nora walking home. In contrast to the silence in the previous scene, now, a swelling piano score builds in the background, immersing the viewer in Nora’s stirring emotions despite her steady walking pace.

In line with the score’s crescendo, Nora finally bursts into tears when she meets her husband in front of their apartment building and enters his embrace. Much more than a grief for young love, what Nora feels is also a grief for Seoul, her hometown; a grief for a past version of herself that she knows is long gone. These emotions resonate universally, because in growing up and travelling places, we have all un-

willingly left certain things behind.

Song’s debut film weaves personal memories with ubiquitous themes of place, identity, and nostalgia. As with any semi-autobiographical work, it is basically impossible to parse out which elements of the story are taken from Song’s own life and which were editorial choices made to facilitate our experience of the film; trying to make that distinction is not the point anyway, because the point is that a professional writer can indeed still write for themselves.

In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*,⁶ Celine Song describes *Past Lives* as “a special movie because it’s my first movie and it’s so personal, but it also taught me that I’m a filmmaker, and to me that discovery is what makes me the happiest.”

Here, Song reiterates the objectives of the amateur writer: the thrill and happiness of creating something that fosters self-discovery. These things remain important to the writer-director besides the critical reception of her art. Song has carried that fascination about writing and filmmaking onto her second film.

If her debut film was dipping its feet into the waters of romance, *Materialists* is a deep dive. In this modern day romcom, the protagonist is a matchmaker named Lucy. That profession might sound outlandish, but matchmaking is as real as other contemporary dating trends like speed-dating and dating apps. In fact, the day job that Celine Song had for a brief six months during her twenties was exactly that.

While setting clients up, Song learned a lot about different people’s perspectives on love and has since regarded love as enticing and “entirely mysterious,”⁷ because at the end of the day, it is not something that can be boiled down to numbers.

Song believes that “we’re all very baffled by it.”⁸ Lucy in *Materialists* embodies the bafflement of navigating love in a society that increasingly equates material wealth to personal fulfillment — a society worryingly similar to our own. This cold and calculative character speaks of love like a business transaction. To Lucy, dating has everything to do with the value that a partner can bring to the table.

At a wedding for one of her successful matches, her client gets cold feet and confesses to Lucy that the only reason she said yes to her fiance is because it makes her sister jealous. In a calm voice, Lucy tells her that that just means “he makes you feel valuable,” and Lucy’s response does the job. Her client goes through with the wedding.

Lucy has convinced her client that marrying to boost one’s ego is what love can look like, yet she herself is forced to confront that self-preserving, tactical notion of love when she meets Harry. A wealthy financier, tall and conventionally attractive, Harry checks all the boxes in Lucy’s own list, but does being with him truly satisfy her; or does she choose John, her ex-boyfriend who cannot promise her financial stability but puts his love and loyalty for her on the table?

Without spoiling the ending, let us just say that not everyone was happy with Song’s sophomore film. Some critics believed that the chemistry between the lead actors fell short, making the love between the ending pair not very believable.⁹ Various comments on social media platforms¹⁰ also called *Materialists* “broke man propaganda.”

Song adamantly defends her film against that backlash in an interview with *Refinery29*¹¹. She critiques

the classism of calling John a “broke man” and deeming someone unworthy of love because of their economic status:

“The whole movie is about fighting the way that capitalism is trying to colonize our hearts and colonize love.”

Song’s response reflects that she is acutely aware of the problematic ways of thinking in our society, and that she has an unwavering faith in the art that she makes. This is another example of how she balances writing for herself and for an audience. *Materialists* is extremely relevant to modern day society: the film plays out a twisted notion of love for an audience that is way too familiar with it.

Resisting the capitalist tendency to think of romantic relationships in terms of material wealth, Song forces us to confront the big mystery of love — which, against our obsession with the tangibles, is the intangible that persists and continues to baffle us:

“It is the one domain in human life where the only answer is that you have to let yourself be a complete fool and not very smart at all ... and just say ‘I don’t know. That’s just how I feel.’”¹²

How do you top an award-winning debut feature like *Past Lives*? It would have been easy for Celine Song to recycle characteristics from her first film, maybe continue down the lane of the emotional drama genre. Instead, Song crafts a romcom that differs in tone and is daring in subject matter but remains consistent in two things: a willingness to tackle the mysteries of life and a faithfulness to a film’s vision.



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Absolutely No Rehearsal: In Conversation with Francisco Rubio

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

Photo courtesy of Futongrab on Wikimedia Commons, 2025.

September 29th was the date slated for the first Jazz Jam of the year, and my good friend and I went, as we always do. We were excited for a return to one of our favourite events on campus. The typical show follows an opening performance by the assembled house musicians, then a couple of musicians from the audience come and perform, and then the house musicians play a final awe-inspiring piece to end off the evening.

Following the excitement of the Jazz Jam, I had a chance to talk to one of twelve of the executive members of the Music Club here on campus, VP Francisco Rubio. Francisco has been a member of the Music Club for 3 years, and manages most of the jazz related events the club hosts, including the Jazz Jam.

Wendell Zylstra: The Music club is obviously a very broad club, how does that work logistically?

Francisco Rubio: We've grown a lot in the past years to better serve the music community on campus. In previous years when we've had a smaller team, where we've really only been able to focus on certain events that fit with each exec member's capacity, I focus on jazz mainly. We merged with another music club, Echo, this year to try and encompass more variety.

WZ: What is your goal with the Music club this year?

FR: There's a lot of people who want to play on campus, but they're not connected so they don't have that community. As well as that, they don't have the space, so we're hoping to invite people to a space where they can come

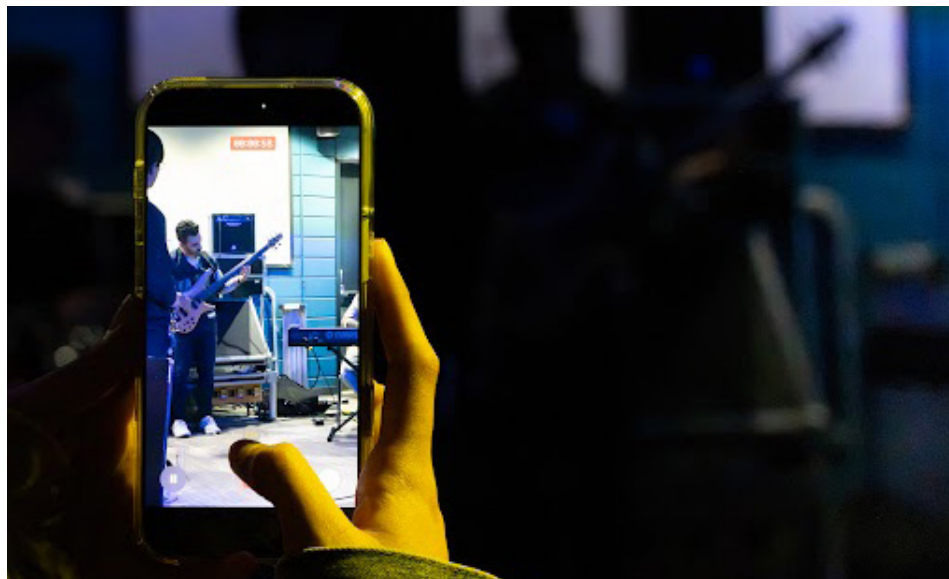


Photo by Sabhya Arora

together and play music.

WZ: So you are kind of the head jazz person, what inspired you to bring jazz to UBCO?

FR: I would play at the different jazz events in high school and throughout Kelowna, like the one at the Rotary Centre. These events had very welcoming environments with nice communities. Those environments were something I loved and really wanted to bring to university.

WZ: Is the group that you regularly see at the Jazz Jam all part of the Music club?

FR: As the scene is growing on campus, I find it really helpful to do a house band so that we'll have musicians no matter what. So the people that typically play the opening set are really the same people, great guys. I play

with them a lot off campus and we do gigs downtown, they're just people I met while on the scene in Kelowna. Myself and some of the musicians like Noah [the piano player] and Graeme [the drummer], all play for the Kelowna Big Band, a big band jazz orchestra that includes a lot of musicians all over the Okanagan.

WZ: For the part of the evening where you open up the floor, do you tend to reach out to certain people?

FR: I've gotten to know some of the musicians on campus who tend to come every time so I'll usually make sure to reach out to them as well. It's always great to have musicians to change out every once and a while.

WZ: Are there typically many practice sessions for the initial set or is it pure improvisation?

FR: This is a good topic because people tend to have this conception that we practice the set beforehand, but I will literally text the guys like 30 minutes before the set and ask 'what do you guys wanna play?' So there's absolutely no rehearsal.

WZ: Are you interested in the teaching aspect of music at all?

FR: Something we've done in the past are jazz workshops, one teaching the beginning of improvisation and one focused specifically on how to play at a Jazz Jam. Something I realized last year was that some people know their instruments but it's kind of hard to learn how to actually play at a jam. I definitely want to do more workshops with people to bridge that gap.

WZ: Any upcoming events you would like to plug?

FR: On the 5th of November we have a live band karaoke with the karaoke club, then, on the 19th we were going to have an open mic night with Beats, the acapella club. On November 25th we're gonna have another Jazz Jam in the well. We're also really excited about our big end-of-year concert on November 30th!

With that I thanked him and we went our separate ways. I would highly recommend attending one of the events Francisco mentioned if you are at all interested in anything music adjacent. For more information and other club events, regularly check on the Music Club's instagram: @music.club.suo.

Academic Barriers: Jargon, Jargon, Jargon

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

A large majority of any kind of class comes with memorizing terms. These terms often pertain to the topic studied in the course: for example, in a women and gender studies class, you may need to define what intersectionality is, or for a biology class, define a eukaryote. These terms are often quite well-known among members of a discipline, and serve to describe concepts and knowledge which often simplifies readings of larger texts and furthers understanding of broader topics.

These terms, as they relate to specific topics and typically specific professions, are hard to understand from a person not in such a profession. These terms, from an outside perspective, are called 'jargon'.

Jargon is not a problem on its own. There will always be terms and concepts that you cannot understand for one reason or another. The sheer quantity of terms and concepts covered in one or two courses — let alone a lifetime of learning — are impossible for every individual to understand. However, there is a point where jargon is employed simply for the reason of exclusion and to make academia confusing and obstructed from public view. To use complex terminology in place of

existing simple terms puts papers, essays, and any other kind of writing you can think of behind a wall.

There is a desperation in the fog of infinite lies that come from biased news channels and internet maniacs for truth. Some semblance of a reality that appears logical is formed by the opinion of well-educated, well-meaning people. However, for the average person, reading a paper or academic essay will feel like climbing a pane of glass. The unreachable concepts and needlessly complicated word choices bar any kind of useful information from coming through.

You may have heard a friend quote a ri-

diculous fact or news article that seemed bizarre, only to find it was a short-form video or simply a headline they found. Short blips of information trickle down from sound bites and catchy one-liners. Fact checking to many people seems like a task full of reading long papers and articles with words and topics they do not understand, so they simply do not check. This has far larger implications for the spreading of misinformation. There is an ever-growing population of people who do not trust or believe any scholar, outright refusing to believe proven information and spreading misinformation to those around them.

This is not the only downside of jargon,



Photo provided by Pexels

as it can cause problems even within a discipline. Taking multiple first year culture or English courses allows you to see a large range of knowledge, filtered through the lens of professors who decide what is important for a first-year class. This knowledge includes terminology, which varies intensely from course to course, even if the courses are very similar in topic. Hearing one professor decry a concept — or even just a name for a concept — that another loves makes it confusing for students, who are hoping that professors can provide them with the information they will need going into their career.

Students learning from these professors will quickly pick up on the terminology idea and begin trying to use their own understood terminology to put their answers more in line with what they now perceive as signs of intelligence.

Many of us have had experiences with classmates who raise their hands constantly only to comment something that completely takes away from the discussion. Hearing a classmate start going on in their answer with big words that do not relate at all to the discussion may seem like a flaw on the part of the student, but it is natural in our education

Déjà Vu

That One Eerie Feeling

BY NISHA CHOUDHARY

While travelling on the bus recently and quietly observing from the back seat, I turned to face the front when suddenly a very bizarre feeling occurred to me. Everything felt eerily familiar: the people, the setting, the time of day, even the way I was sitting. It wasn't just a passing resemblance to something I'd seen before — it was a powerful, almost surreal feeling that I had lived that exact moment once already. Not in a dream, not in a memory, but in some unexplainable space between past and present. Then I realized I am having a classic case of déjà vu — a feeling of having already experienced the present moment while knowing it's not true.

According to researchers,¹ around 97% of the total population have experienced déjà vu at least once in their lifetime, and around 67% experience it regularly. I am sure you might have experienced it sometime during your life journey as well, or maybe while reading this you are having your déjà vu moment. But what causes this common yet very random experience? Is it a false memory, something strange happening in our brains, instances from our dreams, or perhaps a parallel universe?

Déjà vu comes from a French word meaning 'already seen.' It was coined by philosophy professor M. Boirac,² who wrote a letter published in *Revue Philosophique* describing his own experiences of déjà vu — which, according to him, were a kind of illusionary memory. But the experience of déjà vu has been recorded dating as far back as 1st century A.D. by the ancient Roman poet Ovid, who wrote of Pythagoras claiming he remembered a past life from the Trojan War.² He said he recognized his old shield in a temple, linking the phenomenon to the

idea of reincarnation. Later, St. Augustine rejected this, saying such memories were false and possibly caused by dreams or evil spirits. Because of his influence, people avoided studying déjà vu for a long time. In recent years, it has been a source of great interest among psychologists and neuroscientists.



Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

One study suggests that déjà vu in healthy individuals is a short memory-processing glitch that reveals how our memory system works. Some researchers propose that it occurs when new sensory information accidentally bypasses short-term memory and is incorrectly processed as long-term memory. This creates the illusion that the moment has happened before, producing a mismatch between what we perceive and what the brain recalls. Because no real memory trace exists, the experience feels familiar but lacks the detail of a true memory.³

Brain imaging studies using fMRI support this idea, showing that déjà vu may arise when the brain becomes confused between familiarity and novelty. During déjà vu, a region called the anterior cingulate cortex, which helps detect conflicts in information, shows increased activity. This suggests that the brain is sending mixed

signals: one indicating, "I've seen this before," and another insisting, "this is new." The resulting confusion gives rise to the uncanny sense of reliving a moment.⁴

Déjà vu can also occur in temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE), a condition in which seizures originate in the temporal lobes — areas responsible for processing memory. These seizures involve abnormal electrical activity that affects both conscious thought and automatic responses, often accompanied by an intense feeling of déjà vu. In TLE,

this sensation is believed to result from abnormal discharges in the hippocampus, amygdala, and especially the rhinal cortices, regions where stimulation can strongly evoke familiarity. The experience is usually more vivid and prolonged for individuals with TLE than healthy individuals.⁵

Apart from scientific explanations, there are also several metaphysical beliefs about déjà vu. Some people think it's a memory from a past life or something they dreamed about before it actually happened. Others believe it could be a brief crossover with a parallel universe, where another version of you has already lived that moment. Spiritual perspectives often see it as a sign from the universe or your higher self, showing that you're on the right path. Maybe it is a "glitch in the matrix," showing that reality is a simulation, like in *The Matrix* when Neo experiences déjà vu — moments that hint his mind exists separately from his physical body.

These are just a few of the many theories and studies on déjà vu. While scientists have explored numerous explanations, none fully capture its mystery. Such experiences show that we still have a lot to learn about the human brain and the universe. So next time you have déjà vu, just know that it could be your memory error or a manifestation of your dreams or maybe a sign that your mind might be wandering through another world, like a scene from *The Matrix*.

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Rustad on the Rocks: New Political Party Starts in Okanagan Amidst BC Conservative Crisis

BY QUINLIN OSADCZUK

Over the course of the last two years, British Columbia's political world has been turned upside-down at least once, and the foundations are now being laid for it to happen again.

To give context, in 2024, British Columbia held its local legislative elections, choosing who would govern the province. The sitting BC New Democratic Party's (NDP) government had been performing moderately well in the leadup to that race, slated to receive somewhere around ~45% of the vote;¹ in a first-past-the-post system, where whoever wins the most amount of votes in a riding, that is certainly a good number to receive, especially when your opposition is so divided.

What has been the case for BC politics since the 1990s has been that the Liberal Party of BC would typically win elections, itself being a big-tent coalition of liberals and conservatives, constantly trying to keep its more centrist and conservative wings at peace with each other.² Eventually, that peace was broken when MLA John Rustad joined the BC Conservatives in February 2023, creating a new schism in the anti-NDP alliance.³ Also during this period, Liberal leader Kevin Falcon pushed through a rebrand of the BC Liberals, changing their name to "BC United" as the Trudeau government grew increasingly unpopular.⁴

Flashing forward, BC United sat out the election and endorsed Rustad's Conservatives, with the NDP winning by the slimmest of possible margins, winning 47 (50.5%) of the seats with 45% of the vote.⁵ The Conservatives, meanwhile, found themselves with 44 (47.3%) of the seats and 43% of the vote. One would imagine that in

the aftermath of that result, MLA Rustad's position in his party would be functionally solidified.

Not so, apparently, as Rustad has found out with shocking speed. Beginning on June 9th of this year, Conservative MLAs Dallas Brodie (Vancouver-Quilchena) and Tara Armstrong (Kelowna-Lake Country-Coldstream) formed the new political party "OneBC".⁶ Both MLAs left the Conservative Party earlier this year, after Brodie was removed from the Conservative caucus on March 7th for comments she had made about residential schools on a podcast, discussing survivor testimony in "a mocking voice".⁷ Later that day, MLA Armstrong left the party in solidarity with Brodie. Since then, OneBC has existed as a further right-wing alternative to the BC Conservatives, which stands to gain around 5% of the vote were an election to be held today according to some polls.⁸ However, this party may grow further in popularity depending on how Rustad's other problems shape out.

MLA Rustad's tenure has seen an increasing number of MLAs either leaving or being ejected from his party, though has otherwise maintained some degree of control of his caucus.⁹ This sense of control disappeared on October 22nd as his own appointees to the party management committee recommended that he step down from his position as leader.¹⁰ Since then, he has called for the committee members to step down instead, stating that he would never resign. Later, it was reported that he brought party MLAs into a meeting, instructing them to sign onto a letter demanding the committee resign, threatening their re-nominations to their seats in the next election,¹¹ of course, a key issue with this threat being that the party

leader does not control nominations, but the committee in question does.

Things are not looking better according to the polls: a recent poll indicates that half of voters who supported the BC Conservatives in 2024 want a new party leader, while only 20% support keeping Rustad onboard for the next election.¹²

Naturally, this leaves BC politics in an odd position: there now exists a developing political dynamic which could generously be referred to as the "2-and-3-halves" system: alongside all of this drama, a former Liberal/BC

United MLA, Karin Kirkpatrick, has formed another new party, "Centre BC."¹³ That party purportedly intends to represent the political center in BC, not represented by either the Conservatives or the NDP. Accordingly, one would expect the NDP and Conservatives to remain the two largest parties in the province, with the Centre Party present for fiscally conservative, socially liberal voters, while the Green Party and OneBC serve to exist for political outsiders, looking to overturn BC's status-quo and overtake the position of one of the two major parties.

Of course, all of that remains to be seen. British Columbia sits at an unprecedented political crossroads, and there is truly no telling where the future will take us. The Conservatives could collapse, with OneBC taking its place just as the Conservatives replaced BC United, advocating for a more conservative populism — or the Greens could regain their position as junior partners with the NDP, if not overtake them completely by some freak accident. A British-esque left-right-center system could emerge, were Centre BC to pick up the old Liberal Party's fiscally conservative supporters should they feel they have nowhere to go.

There is truly no way of knowing what may happen next, but what we do know is that BC may yet see its most fascinating political adventures. As a political sciences major, I can only hope.

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Photo provided by OneBC

⁸ Angus Reid Institute. "Rustad's rocky road: Half of the BC Conservative Party's 2024 voters say they want him to go." Angus Reid Institute, 26 October 2025, <https://angusreid.org/bc-politics-john-rustad-bc-conservatives-bendp-david-ebly>

⁹ Lazenby, Alec. "Fifth B.C. Conservative MLA leaves party as John Rustad struggles to maintain hold over caucus." Vancouver Sun, 20 October 2025, <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/bc-conservative-mla-amelia-boulton-leaves-caucus-john-rustad-struggles-maintain-control>. Accessed 29 October 2025.

¹⁰ DeRosa, Katie. "B.C. Conservatives management committee calls on John Rustad to resign as leader." CBC, 22 October 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-conservative-party-management-committee-calls-on-john-rustad-to-resign-9.6948894>. Accessed 29 October 2025.

You Don't Have to Be Loud to Lead

BY JUHI SARVAIYA

When people hear “leadership,” they often picture a formal title or someone speaking at a lectern. They imagine fancy positions, overflowing confidence, and naturally being the most extroverted individual in the room. But leadership roles are so much more than that.

Leadership comes in many forms. It is about building a skillset that allows you to contribute meaningfully, support others, and grow into your own potential.

At UBC Okanagan, leadership opportunities are built right into campus life, and a lot of them are made possible by the Students' Union Okanagan (SUO). Whether you're organizing a movie night for your club, starting a mental health initiative, volunteering at an event, or a first year just looking to get involved, you are building the skills that set you apart far beyond your degree.

So, why should leadership be a part of your skillset?

Two real reasons. One, personal growth. Two, building your profile. It's as simple as that.

Leadership experience speaks volumes. It shows you are willing to take initiative, step out of your comfort zone, and keep improving. These experiences stand out because they show you can take on responsibility, take risks, and learn along

the way. Plus, they give you genuine stories to share in interviews and cover letters, the kind that show who you really are, not just what you have done.

In my first year, I had zero leadership experience. I was shy, unconfident, and unsure of how to even begin. But slowly, over time, I started taking on roles that challenged me. Some big, some small: I became an executive member of a club, then a two-time Orientation Leader for Jump Start, a Peer Leader for Destination UBC, and eventually, an achievement that I had the most fun with — founding and becoming President of the Film Society at UBCO.

Each role taught me something new — public speaking, event planning, problem-solving, and even empathy. I didn't wake up one day feeling like a “leader”, I grew into it, slowly and steadily, one experience at a time.

But it's also not always neat or easy. Sometimes you plan an event that barely anyone shows up to. Sometimes you say the wrong thing in a meeting, or doubt whether you're the right person for the role. Those moments used to scare me, but they later became the most valuable ones. I learnt how to keep showing up, even when things didn't go perfectly.

While we often talk about leadership as

something professional, it is just as much about who you become outside of titles and sharp blue blazers. It teaches patience, empathy, problem-solving, and confidence — the kind of skills that last longer than any line on a resume. You will start to realize that the habits you build here, like staying organized, communicating clearly, and being accountable, shape how you handle every challenge that comes after graduation.

The truth is, you do not have to wait to be in charge of something to be a leader. You can start exactly where you are, in small ways that matter. Help someone else to succeed, take initiative, or become the person who says, “I want to try doing this...”

No matter if you are in first year or fourth, you can always look for leadership experiences. It is never too late, and never too early. If you're wondering where to start, here are a few ways I've seen students (myself included) take those first steps:

- Join a Club or Course Union: don't just show up. Offer to help out at an event, take on a small organizing role, or run for an executive position.
- Volunteer for on-campus events: help at campus-wide events, workshops, initiatives, or anything meaningful to you.

- Use SUO and Campus Student Resources: From skill-building workshops to student advocacy opportunities, these resources can help you grow as a leader in whatever field you're passionate about.

- Start something new: Can't find a club or initiative that matches your interests? Start your own club, pitch a new research project idea, or inquire about an initiative important to you.

Leadership isn't just for the loudest voices or those with the most experience. It is a skill anyone can build with curiosity, care, and the courage to show up. Some of the strongest leaders are the quiet ones. The ones who listen, observe, and keep showing up even when no one is watching. Whether you are running a club, volunteering at a booth, or helping a friend navigate campus, you are leading. You are exploring new corners of the university, tapping into strengths you didn't know you had, and slowly building blocks of confidence and experience that will eventually pay off.

So, all I can say is...step into it. Not to prove anything, but to see what happens when you do.

Shelf Improvement: Inside the ECU's Book Exchange

BY JUHI SARVAIYA

On Thursday, October 9, in between classes and a hectic schedule, I was walking through the library and stopped short at the Sawchuk Theatre.

Books. Stacks and stacks of books sprawled across tables. Poetry, literature, romance, psychological thriller, memoirs, how-to-write, how-to-live, recipes... just so many books. Hosted by the SUO's English Course Union (ECU), the Book Exchange invited students to take or leave any book they liked — no sign-ups, no fees, just a few tables filled with stories waiting for new readers.

As students, most of our reading happens online. PDFs, e-textbooks, and digital articles are squeezed into already busy tabs. They are convenient, cheaper, and always within reach. But it also makes reading feel mechanical: something to skim, highlight, and close. Holding a physical book is different. It asks for your full attention. There is something so comforting about the smell of the pages, the feel of the dust jacket, and the way the words are read. With a book exchange like this, where you get to try out a second-hand book, it turns reading into a shared experience — a folded page, little doodles, an underlined sentence.

The idea behind the ECU's event is simply to give books a second life. Whether it's a novel read for a first-year literature class or a thrift-store find, each one carries a story — not just in its pages, but in the hands that pass it on.

One ECU member at the event said the

turnout this year was strong, with students not just taking books but stopping to talk about them. For many, it was also a chance to pick up free reading material during a time when affordability is a growing concern. The exchange helps keep books out of waste bins and puts them into the hands of new readers, like an act of sustainability in a world of rising costs and fleeting digital consumption. It is small, but it matters. There is also something exciting about knowing that a book you once owned might end up in someone else's backpack, folded pages and annotations, still being read. It's an act of generosity, especially in a semester where textbooks cost hundreds of dollars and most “free” readings live behind paywalls. The Book Exchange reminds students that access to stories does not have to depend on budgets or bookstore receipts.

When I looked through the piles, I found *The Boleyn Inheritance* by Philippa Gregory. Its spine was a little worn, the cover slightly bent (fitting, for a piece of historical fiction). It was not a book I had gone looking for — I did not even know I wanted it — but that is what makes this event special. There is something wonderfully simple about stumbling upon a random book: flipping through its pages, reading the blurb, and deciding whether it is something you want to read, something that feels like yours to keep.

Events like this remind us that reading does not always have to be academic or structured. Between deadlines and screens, we forget that books can still exist outside

of syllabi. There's something restorative about reading for no reason — not for a grade, not for research, but just because a story caught your eye at a table in the library.

The English Course Union has hosted events like book clubs, balls, and movie nights, but the Book Exchange stands out because of how simple and low-pressure it is. There's no expectation to do anything but browse, pick something up, and maybe leave something behind. In a way, it mirrors what English itself teaches: how stories move, connect, and change depending on who holds them.

The ECU represents students in the department of English and Cultural Studies at UBC Okanagan and is known for building a close-knit community of readers and writers. Along with the Book Exchange, they host a range of events throughout the year, from their book club and cozy movie nights to themed gatherings like the Halloween Gala and Fairytale Ball. Each event offers students a space to connect, share ideas, and celebrate their love of stories. Follow @ecu_ok on Instagram for event announce-

ments and updates.

Underneath it all, events like these are about connection. Beyond sustainability and affordability, there's the joy of finding your community and meeting like-minded people. A book exchange or club is just one version of that, but sometimes it's simpler — noticing someone reading a title you love, swapping recommendations, or lending a copy you swear by. It's a small, human thread that ties readers together, even when they've never met.

In a campus filled with laptops and PDFs, the Book Exchange was an incredible reminder that stories are not just things we consume; they are things we share.

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Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Perspective on Knowledge Guided by Wisdom

BY NISHA CHOUDHARY

Over time, as knowledge and societies have evolved, humanity has developed methods and technologies that were once beyond imagination. But as we advance more and more, we have integrated ourselves into knowledge systems so deeply that today we may feel detached from the natural world. Science today provides intellectual explanations for both the simplest and most complex phenomena, while technology applies this knowledge to shape our surroundings. However, in our pursuit of knowledge the question arises: have we nurtured wisdom which tells us how to use that knowledge responsibly and harmoniously with nature? Are science and technology truly modern creations, or are they part of a much older human quest to understand this world more deeply?

Long before our societies showed these advancements in reasoning, different cultures, societies and people have come up with different ways of understanding the workings of the world. While Western educators often claim that scientific theorizing began in the late 19th century, the history of science and technology is far older and richer in non-European countries. In antiquity, several civilizations across the globe made remarkable advances in science, technology, mathematics, and astronomy. Many examples include early Chinese innovations including the abacus, shadow clock, hot air balloon, fireworks, iron casting, and the first flying machines, such as kites. Among their most significant contributions were the “four great inventions”—the compass, gunpowder, papermaking, and printing which reached Europe only by the end of the Middle Ages.¹

Even with these advancements happening, there were many cultural societies which had their own ways of defining their knowledge systems. These ways of knowing were grounded in holistic wisdom and value systems, emerging not solely from analytical or intellectual reasoning but from a deep, lived relationship with both nature and culture. These communities created tools and practices grounded in careful observation and understanding of their natural surroundings. Because many of these communities lived in isolation from the rest of the world, their methods often remained unknown. Today, however, with greater access to information and global communication, we are beginning to learn from and appreciate the traditional knowledge and practices of such Indigenous communities.

But how do we define such Indigenous practice or knowledge? Tewa scholar Cajete (1999)² describes Indigenous Science (IS) as a vast and dynamic field that encompasses metaphysics, philosophy, and the practical technologies developed by Indigenous peoples. Similar to Western science, IS consists of context-specific models grounded in tribal experiences and higher-order understandings of the world. It explores fundamental questions about language, perception, time, human knowledge, interconnectedness, and relationships with the cosmos, giving rise to diverse technologies such as hunting, agriculture, navigation, art, and healing.

However, defining IS is not straightforward. Battiste

and Henderson (2000) caution that there is no short answer to what such knowledge systems are called and warn against imposing Eurocentric categories that limit Indigenous Knowledges. Because knowledge is shaped by culture and language, it cannot be directly translated across worldviews. Eurocentric logic, rooted in noun-centered languages, often fails to align with the verb-centered structure of Indigenous languages, making Western frameworks ill-suited for interpreting Indigenous Knowledges. They suggest that truly grasping Indigenous knowledge requires openness to “different realities”. Reflecting this, Michell (2007) uses the terms Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous science interchangeably. Accordingly, the goal here is not to define or classify Indigenous knowledge, but to engage with it on its own terms.³

To understand Indigenous worldviews, one must first recognize their perception of nature and ecological order. Indigenous perspectives see Nature as inherently relational and harmonious, yet always dynamic and constantly changing. The traditional wisdom component of IS — the values and ways of decision-making relating to knowledge — is rich in time-tested approaches that foster sustainability and environmental integrity. Recently, the importance of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) has increasingly been recognized in conservation and natural resource management. Developed over thousands of years of lived experience, TEK encompasses deep cultural knowledge of navigation, agriculture, medicine, and land stewardship, and has profoundly influenced Canadian culture and economy.⁴

Indigenous peoples across North America developed advanced technologies and sustainable practices long before European contact. They engineered birchbark canoes for efficient travel and crafted snowshoes to navigate harsh winters. Their deep ecological knowledge guided animal tracking, trapping, and hide preparation, while innovations like maple tree tapping, which is now a hallmark of Canadian culture, originated from Indigenous traditions. Indigenous medicinal science included using willow bark as a pain reliever and Eastern white cedar tea to prevent scurvy.⁵

One of the key techniques in Indigenous agricultural system was the “Three Sisters” planting method, which involved growing corn, beans, and squash together. This approach promoted soil health and improved crop yields. When planted side by side, the three crops supported each other’s growth: corn provided a structure for beans to climb, beans enriched the soil with nitrogen, and squash covered the ground to retain moisture and suppress weeds, resulting in more abundant harvests. The Three Sisters system was widely used by many First Nations in the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Lowlands region. At the time of early contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, historian Carlos Sempat Assadourian observed that Europeans practiced extensive agriculture, based on the plough and draught animals, whereas the Indigenous peoples of the Americas engaged in intensive agriculture, based on human labour.⁶

Research⁷ shows that TEK and traditional forestry practices promote biodiversity and ecological resilience. In-

igenous-led land stewardship emphasizes sustainable, respectful use of resources, and when communities actively manage urban forests, these areas are more resilient, biodiverse, and socially beneficial. Incorporating traditional practices such as prescribed burns, selective tree felling, pollinator gardens, and native plant protection into contemporary forestry not only improves sustainability but also supports reconciliation efforts. Future progress will require knowledge sharing, collaboration, and Indigenous-led management in urban forestry.⁸

On the ground, Indigenous-led initiatives such as the Kátl’odeeche First Nation’s⁹ water-monitoring programme in the Hay and Buffalo River basins, draw on Elders and harvesters TEK to develop culturally meaningful ecosystem-health indicators. Fish conditions, ice thickness, and water quantity and quality demonstrate how indigenous knowledge systems are being integrated with scientific data to track environmental change.

Meanwhile, broader research underscores that TEK provides frameworks for understanding plastic and other pollution through relational and place-based lenses, offering potential to re-imagine mitigation of microplastics and anthropogenic debris in freshwater and marine systems.¹⁰

Further north, many Inuit communities living in harsh climatic conditions have found their own systems to keep warm and navigate effectively. In the Arctic’s shifting maze of sea ice, Inuit have long practiced a form of science rooted in observation, experimentation, and adaptation. As described in recent research,¹¹ such practices include reading snowdrifts, the color and sound of ice, wind direction, and animal behavior to map safe routes across frozen seas. This knowledge system mirrors the scientific method as they are tested daily by chiselling the ice, watching for subtle shifts, and updating travel routes based on new conditions.

Researchers found that Inuit knowledge is dynamic, continuously refined through experience and collaboration, and increasingly intertwined with modern tools like GPS and satellite imagery. Yet, Panikkar et al. note that when technology fails, it is often the traditional, empirical wisdom of the Inuit that keeps travelers alive, proving that science comes in many forms—and some are written not in data sheets, but in the snow. While Western science relies on analyzing historical data to predict present conditions, Indigenous knowledge is rooted in observing patterns and understanding how these patterns drive change. This approach of blending traditional knowledge with modern world is reflected at UBC Okanagan through the new building *xəl sic snpaḵnwixw^{tn}*,¹² meaning “for the purpose of innovation; a place where people work together to enlighten and inform each other.” The building symbolizes UBCO’s commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and partnerships with the Syilx Okanagan Nation. It will house the Interior Salishan Studies Centre (ISSC) and language fluency programs, integrating Syilx knowledge and values across research and learning.

The ISSC, formally established in 2024 at UBCO’s Irving K. Barber Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, supports language and cultural revitalization in the Interior Salishan region. The Interior Salish region covers the inland areas of the Columbia and Fraser River basins in British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. It



Illustration by Iso Maaud Rodriguez

includes Salish-speaking peoples living in the Plateau area, distinct from the Coast Salish of the Pacific coast.¹³ It combines teaching and research, developing Salish-specific Indigenous knowledge through Salish-led initiatives. The Centre operates in partnership with local Indigenous communities and institutions, with collaborations spanning over 20 years. Faculty and staff work alongside community partners to document and develop Salish language and cultural materials, ensuring programs are informed by local protocols and practices. Through this place-based vision, the ISSC serves as a hub for Indigenous knowledge, language revitalization, and research grounded in Syilx territory.¹⁴ With all this said, it is not that difficult to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge in our current structured systems. As the world advances technologically and faces increasing climatic challenges, these ancient knowledge systems offer valuable guidance for creating sustainable solutions and protecting the environment from the damage caused by human activities. Walking around campus, one can notice First Nations flags and the road signs in Nsyilxcen, the traditional language spoken by the Okanagan’s original people,¹⁵ which serve as reminders that this land has not only provided us with spaces to gain modern knowledge, but also offers lessons if we engage with it fully.

By seeing the land as part of our learning systems, we can connect Indigenous Knowledge with modern science and technology. There is much to learn from Indigenous communities, and doing so fosters a deeper connection with nature, helping us understand the world through interconnectedness. While this article cannot capture all the dynamics of Indigenous Knowledge, its purpose is to raise awareness of what surrounds us and the lessons we can draw from it. As Kelowna grows, we can look to the Syilx Okanagan people’s sustainable ways of living in harmony with the land as a model for building a resilient and forward-thinking future without harming our environment.

Ancient teachings encourage us to seek wisdom, not merely to collect information. Knowledge helps us understand the past, present, and future, but wisdom guides how we live and create a sustainable world. By learning from the land and embracing Indigenous values of kindness, reciprocity, and respect, we transform knowledge into lived experience. Ultimately, wisdom arises not from seeking it, but from living in balance and harmony with the world around us.¹⁶



Illustration by Iso Maaud Rodriguez

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