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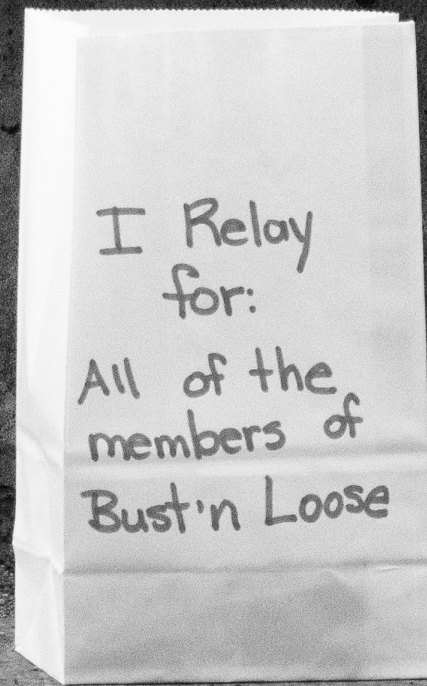
# THE PHOENIX NEWS

OPERATING WITH GRATITUDE ON THE TRADITIONAL, ANCESTRAL, UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE SYILX/OKANAGAN PEOPLE

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for:  
All of the  
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# Provinces, Trade Barriers, and Separatism: The Trials of PM Carney

BY QUINLIN OSADCZUK

As Carney's premiership continues, it has become clear that no prime minister can govern and attain any degree of popularity without first announcing an agenda, fulfilling that agenda, and doing so in a manner popular with voters. For Carney, that should be a particularly easy task; most of his voters backed him in the name of simply opposing the United States and preventing any undue influence from seeping into Canada. The sole task to keep those voters happy is to at least seem as though he is opposing the influence of President Trump, and Carney's speech at Davos seems to have irreparably done so. Now, with his anti-Americanist credentials solidified and poll numbers soaring, Carney has turned to one of his own personal policy priorities: the removal of trade barriers between provinces and, fittingly, between America and Canada.

To that end, the Premiers of Canada assembled on January 29, 2026 in Ottawa with PM Carney for a First Ministers' conference, and began formally discussing opportunities for international trade through the establishment of the "Team Canada Trade Hub", a means of coordinating trade between provinces. That meeting created three opportunities for political gain for Carney beyond interprovincial trade coordination: the first, a *Heated Rivalry* refer-

ence on the relationship between Premiers Wab Kinew of Manitoba and Doug Ford of Ontario; the second, an opportunity for Carney to appear as a decisive leader before the premiers of the country, speaking with authority on an issue he is well-versed in; and the third, a new crisis generated without his own public intervention to bring it to the limelight.

B.C. Premier David Eby, speaking at the conference, brought up a report featured in the *Financial Times* explaining that Albertan separatists had met with members of the Trump administration, describing it as "treason." The report was already a bombshell, and Premier Eby's denunciation brought further attention to the matter. What followed was an explosion of discourse surrounding the incident referenced, and the presence of Albertan separatists in the contemporary political climate of Canada. At present, much of Albertan separatism's support is based out of the Republican Party of Alberta (RPA), which is exactly what it sounds like: a political party which supports a referendum on Albertan independence. Presently polling at 1-2% of the vote, the RPA is broadly ridiculed, though representative of a well-funded selection of interest groups in the state.

Chief among those groups is the "Alberta Prosperity Project," whose leaders were the ones known to have met with U.S. State Department officials at least three times. While the topic of discussion is officially unknown, most people feel confident enough to guess that these discussions had to do with the separatists taking cues or cash from Washington (which, coincidentally, is where the meetings were all held).

Little would come in terms of consequences for those responsible for meeting members of the State Department, despite Premier Eby's description of the acts as being treasonous. What has had considerable staying power, however, has been the consequences of one of the myriad topics also raised in the Premiers meeting: the Canada-United States-Mexico Trade Agreement (CUSMA).

CUSMA is up for renegotiation between all constituent members, a particularly tense topic for Canada and the U.S. given Canada's recent pivot to trading with China. Accordingly, the U.S. is provided with the choice of either attempting to revive their relationship with Canada or commit entirely to kissing it goodbye. On the one hand, this deal entails lowering trade deals and tariffs with each other — not a total likelihood with Trump.

On the other hand, however, Trump has been known to still treat Canada with some degree of exclusive respect which he has not afforded to others. Consider that in recent developments of the CUSMA negotiations, despite Trump's recent announcement of a global 10% tariff on all goods against all countries, he is keeping a carveout for CUSMA to maintain high trade, demonstrating at least some degree of interest in maintaining preferential treatment.

In the aftermath of the First Ministers' conference in Ottawa, however, it seems as though all participants of the meeting profited in some way politically. Eby was able to seem like a fighter against divisive forces in Canada, Carney was able to seem like a coherent leader among the provinces, working with them to lower trade barriers and building up the groundwork for further negotiations concerning CUSMA and beyond. Without much political cost, then, both figures have been able to seem as though they're standing taller than otherwise able, as well as standing as "Anti-American figures" without having to lift a finger.

# War in the Middle East: Third Gulf War Underway between U.S. and Israel, Iran

BY QUINLIN OSADCZUK

Following a series of false starts and hints at a regional war between Iran, Israel, and their respective allies since October 7th of 2023, it would seem that a formal war has broken out with American involvement. The war in its current state began on February 28th with joint military airstrikes launched by the U.S. and Israel on various targets in Iran, including the capital Tehran where Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's leader, was killed.

Since the initiation of formal hostilities, Iran has responded with missile launches against the myriad U.S. military bases across the gulf in Saudi Arabia and various other allies of either the Saudis or Americans. As Iran launches further missile strikes into Israel through its allies such as paramilitary group Hezbollah, Israel has responded with incursions of its own into Lebanon, where the group is situated. The situation is complicated, messy, and at times contradictory, as is oftentimes the case with regional conflicts in the Middle East.

This rivalry between America and Iran has existed since the Islamic Revolution of 1979,<sup>1</sup> and Iran has been trying to acquire nuclear weapons in some capacity ever since. In an effort to curb Iran's intent to develop nuclear weapons, the Obama administration made a deal with the Iranian government in 2015, wherein the Iranians would refrain from further development of a nuclear device and allow international observers into their nuclear programs in exchange for a coordinated drawdown of international sanctions.<sup>2</sup>

Trump decided to end that deal during his first presidency, and his current administration has undertaken an entirely different course of action to prevent Iran's gaining a nuke: direct military intervention. Following an initial military airstrike of Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025, the White House's formal reasoning behind this "war" is that it is in the name of preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon,



Photo provided by Saifee Art on Unsplash

which they claim it was on the brink of attaining.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the necessary measures that enable fighting with ground troops require congressional approval, and thus far, very little deference to Congress has been made. The administration argues that Congress is unnecessary to declare and wage war,<sup>4</sup> though the U.S. Constitution requires a majority vote in the House and the Senate to do so.

So far as goals are concerned for the United States and its ally in the war, Israel, specifics are scarce. In broad terms, the alleged

intent is to reduce Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons and reduce Iran's regional influence.<sup>5</sup> It remains unclear how these goals will be satisfactorily attained.

"Limiting Iran's influence" is a broad enough descriptor that could mean destroying Iran's regional allies, or simply demonstrating that America is willing to go to war with Iran to deter them from further militarism. There is no way of knowing which is a hypothetical and which is closer to actually happening, as the President, his foreign policy team, and Israel's government are all similarly silent on where they

see this war going.

The President has specified that the war could take years to finish, or has already basically been won, with the implicit statement that the United States is prepared to fight for such a length of time and/or no longer needs to fight, alternating between those positions on a regular basis.<sup>6</sup> Part and parcel of the time pressure on the American side of this conflict (and, in particular, on President Trump) is the closure of the Hormuz strait. With ~20% of the world's oil consumption passing through the strait, Iran has been able to massively inflate world oil prices by stopping oil from going to the market. This has put the pressure on the United States to find an exit for the war, and Trump has accordingly issued threats to Iran to reopen the strait for commercial use, though the odds of Iran acquiescing seems low.

As the war drags on, however, the attainment of these goals seems outrageously unlikely, and it becomes clear that the win conditions for America and Iran have consecrated this divide: the win condition for America is to force the Iranian government to step down and exchange itself for a pro-American regime, as well as to voluntarily destroy its decades-long missile program. In contrast, the win condition for Iran is simply to survive.

The prospect of American troops on the ground in Iran is a political red line for many, and the Trump administration making moves towards exactly that<sup>7</sup> has been discouraging to many of his political allies, as it seems to contradict Trump's messaging that this war will end in short order. As the conflict drags on, and Trump's approvals continue to sink to new lows,<sup>8</sup> it becomes increasingly clear that regardless of how this war ends, it will need to end soon if the President wants to see his approval rating above 40% by the time he's out of office.

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# Hunger for Home: Access to Asian Ingredients in Kelowna

BY GABRIELA CHAN



Photo provided by Sabhya Arora

markets back home play music.” Arriving in Kelowna to shop under sterile white lights in an overwhelmingly large space, Mak misses the vibrant and homely atmosphere of her neighborhood supermarket.

As for Bill Nickson from Indonesia, the supermarkets back home have noticeably more options regarding raw meats and fresh spice mixes. Additionally, Nickson appreciates how Indonesian supermarkets organise their products according to dietary restrictions.

“Well, because Indonesia is a majority Muslim country, supermarkets there sell almost everything that is halal. I think the difference is that Canadian supermarkets do not really have any sections for specific [dietary] restrictions. In Indonesia, foods with specific restrictions usually have their own shelves or aisles.”

Grocery shopping is an integral part of many people’s childhoods. As a kid, your mom picks you up from school and takes you with her to buy ingredients for dinner. Maybe she lets you smell the lychee at the fruit stand and choose a bunch. Subconsciously, you associate grocery shopping with ideas of family and warmth. After growing up and leaving home, international students tend to link local food items with feelings of joy and nostalgia.

Those feelings are place-based and can only be evoked so much by the “international” section at Walmart. Most wholesale supermarkets make do with stacking bottles of Pad Thai sauce right above the Korean Gochujang. Their goal is not to emulate every Asian student’s childhood shopping experience, but simply to satisfy their physical hunger for flavours from home.

On a search for stores that cater specifically to your ethnic culture, a Korean in Kelowna might find solace at Seoulful Convenience which sells a good variety of snacks, ramen, and frozen foods from Korea; a Filipino resident might be most satisfied with their groceries at Sampaguita and Lotus Mart. At such stores, you can recognise more brand labels from home or even get the chance to converse using your native language.

“The Asian supermarket that resembles home the most for me is Ubox,” says Nickson, “Ubox has a smell of spices reminding me of home. When I go to supermarkets in Indonesia, I would even be able to tell that I am inside them if I was blindfolded. Other Asian supermarkets in Kelowna usually do not have that scent.”

When you smell a familiar aroma as you walk into the store, home seems to not be so far away after all. However, the current Asian supermarket scene in Kelowna looks more like the empty shelves at Ellis St. and Oriental.

It is not easy to maintain these kinds

of businesses in a predominantly white city, but perhaps it takes more than a supermarket to bridge cultures. Access to Asian food products is not just about satisfying a physical hunger but also about nourishing an emotional hunger for community.

At the same time that Asian grocery businesses have been struggling to stock their shelves, Kelowna has seen a proliferation of specialty stores which veer away from the pan-Asian supermarket format. In fact, this February, the Japanese bakery that had disappeared from Ellis St. Market re-opened under the name Cake Otaku in Gateway Plaza on Burch Road, serving specialty Japanese breads and cakes.

Another pointed example is Natsukashi Neighborhood Store and Eatery. In January, 2026, Natsukashi opened right next door to Komorebi Cafe and Healing Art Studio, a Japanese cafe specializing in matcha and hojicha lattes.

“I’m not just trying to provide food and beverage services. Both spaces serve as small cultural bridges,” says Luna Taniguchi, owner of both Natsukashi and Komorebi.

When asked to explain the concept behind her new store, Taniguchi told me that Natsukashi and Komorebi complement each other by fusing mindfulness with a warm nostalgia.

“The word ‘komorebi’ means sunlight filtering through the leaves. You know, I grew up in the countryside of Japan and I felt really close to nature. Standing under a tree or in a forest — that was my calm place. I wanted to provide this warm cozy space, filled with plants, all year round. So, Komorebi was focused on finding peace and comfort in the present moment.”

On the other hand, Natsukashi focuses on the past. “The word means nostalgia,” says Taniguchi. “Though it’s not so much a sadness about the past but more about remembrance and cherishing.”

Taniguchi was very deliberate in naming her store: “I don’t call Natsukashi a convenience store because that feels very commercialized. I’m trying to simulate the corner stores that I used to see growing up in Japan, where you just bring a few coins to buy sugar, or soy sauce, or snacks. Corner stores are more welcoming. The staff remembers you by your name. You feel cared for and seen. It’s a neighbourhood store.”

Wooden tables, linen curtains, a little fridge and shelves filled with Japanese sauces, curry packs, and nostalgic candies, this store and eatery emits a pleasant energy that could transport Japanese residents in Kelowna back to their past. Propped on the cashier is a photo of Taniguchi’s grandmother

when she was young.

“It’s almost like stopping at your granny’s home. You’re hungry, and you want to grab something quick, but your nana tells you to sit down and cooks you something proper. You eat fast and you go, right? Natsukashi is something like that... ready to kind of catch you when you’re busy and on the run but still need that comfort.”

The eatery has a simple menu consisting of Taniguchi’s childhood comfort meals like udon and onigiri, which are everyday staples and favourites of many Japanese people. Contrary to sushi which is usually eaten on special occasions in Japan, Natsukashi’s menu allows the Kelowna community to get a taste of what is enjoyed on a daily basis in Taniguchi’s home culture.

Tucked in a quiet neighborhood downtown, Natsukashi does not have the most discoverable location, yet Taniguchi’s stores are always packed and brimming with chatter. I wondered about the demographic of her customers. “This particular neighbour has a great number of non-Asian residents. I get a lot of people who moved here from Vancouver. They’re eager for authenticity and more specialty shops,” she answered.

Specialty stores such as Komorebi and Natsukashi create a community based on Asian culture but bring a variety of demographics together. Regardless of race or ethnicity, people grow curious about authentic ingredients and dishes served in a catered atmosphere.

“I have a lot of people looking for ingredients that they cannot find elsewhere, like bonito flakes and natto,” adds Taniguchi, “and they are sometimes non-Asians who love cooking Asian food.” That is what Taniguchi means by creating a cultural bridge, which she views as increasingly important in the post-COVID era.

“After COVID, things got convenient with all the delivery services. People are more and more disconnected. They are connected with technology, but not connected in a ‘human’ or organic sense, but that organic connection is so important.” Taniguchi cherishes the face-to-face interactions she has with her customers, which is why she can often be seen inside one of her stores, behind the bar or kitchen or chatting with regulars.

Through good food, genuine conversations, and heartfelt interior design, Asian specialty stores like Natsukashi do more than the typical supermarket. They provide a space that comforts the homesick and gives the locals a chance to understand cultures beyond their own.

That said, such spaces should be available not only for Asian communities but also for those belonging to other minority cultures such as the African and Arab population in Kelowna. Food is not just a commercial product but also a symbol of home and a way to bring people together.

Each corner of Kelowna that offers access to Asian food and ingredients plays a part in fostering intercultural communication in this city, and that applies to the “international” section at Walmart, to Asian supermarkets like U-Box, and to Asian specialty stores like Natsukashi.

One Friday in December, 2025, my friend, Vivian, and I bussed downtown to Ellis St. Market for groceries. We were excited to scour the fridges for enoki mushrooms, whole sticks of lemongrass, and a sweet treat from the Japanese bakery which was humbly tucked in a corner of the market. Just two weeks prior, Vivian had gotten a red bean mochi from that bakery.

That Friday at 1 p.m., we entered to see half of the shelves empty, the fluorescent lights above barely lit. We asked the cashier if they were still open and he nodded. “Why are the shelves empty,” we followed up, “and what happened to the Japanese bakery?” The cashier said he did not know.

A mysterious wipe-out had occurred at Ellis St. Market, which used to house a galore of Asian food products. Around the same time, complaints surfaced on Reddit and Facebook regarding the same phenomena at other Asian grocery stores in Kelowna.<sup>1,2</sup> On March 17, 2026, I visited Oriental Supermarket and the scene looked eerily similar to what Vivian and I had seen at Ellis St. Market.

In 2025, Kelowna saw a decline in population growth which has continued into the new year.<sup>3</sup> UBC Okanagan currently hosts fewer international students compared to the 2021/22 school year. In 2025/26, the number of domestic students at UBCO went up by 3.8% compared to five years prior. Conversely, the international student population saw a 21% decline in the same time frame, according to Castanet Kelowna News writer, Colin Dacre.<sup>4</sup>

The decrease in the international student population may have negatively impacted Asian grocery businesses. However, there remains a large number of Asian students and immigrants in Kelowna, and access to meals and ingredients from home is invaluable to their livelihoods.

In most Asian cultures, food plays a significant role in forming familial ties and expressing love. Cooking Korean food was a way to navigate the loss of a loved one for Michelle Zauner, the lead singer of the U.S. indie band, Japanese Breakfast, and a second-generation Korean immigrant.

In her memoir, *Crying in H Mart*, Zauner writes that despite not having cooked much before, she earnestly looked up Korean recipes after her mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Through recreating her mother’s childhood dishes for her, Zauner was able to reconcile past grievances between the two. She continued to learn new Korean recipes after her mother’s death. It helped her feel in touch with her mother and strengthened her ethnic identity.

Food creates a cultural connection that is valuable to immigrants and those who left home to pursue their studies, such as Teresa Mak and Bill Nickson, two fourth-year undergraduate students at UBC Okanagan.

In Hong Kong, where Mak is from, locals do not always go to wholesale supermarkets for groceries. There are fruit and vegetable stands, wet markets selling fresh seafood, and corner stores specifically for spices and sauces. Even when it comes to wholesale supermarkets, they differ from those in Canada.

“Wellcome in Hong Kong, for example, has a more colourful interior design, while Canadian supermarkets resemble warehouses,” explains Mak. “The food portions are much smaller compared to the bulk products you will see at Costco. Also, super-

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# Inside the 2026 Relay for Life

WORDS BY SAMAIRA TALWAR

PHOTOS BY SABHYA ARORA



Kelowna, BC – At 2:00 PM on a Sunday, the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) campus is usually a quiet study place with darkened windows. But on March 22, 2026, the lights of the Courtyard burned with a different kind of energy when the annual Relay for Life event returned to the Okanagan.

With a daunting \$50,000 fundraising target hanging in the air, the campus was transformed into a high stakes arena of philanthropy. Students didn't just walk, they rallied. They raised a collective voice against a disease that touches nearly every household in the valley.

People walked their laps, in celebration and remembrance, a direct testament to the research and support systems that the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) provides. In support of the CCS, the Okanagan Relay for Life event has created a space where everyone, from a five-year old to a veteran survivor, had a story to tell. A space where grief and grit glowed in the gathering gloom.

For the student organisers, this is more than just an extracurricular activity. It is a mission. Participants said, "It

The evening began with activities like caricatures, friendship bracelets, and games. The event seemed to be in full swing, with people playing hopscotch, frisbee, and engrossed in conversations as they completed laps around the Courtyard.

The youngest member of this walkathon, Keaton, who was "relaying for his Mommy and Granpie Stephen," said his favourite part of the event were the balloons.

As the clock ticked closer to the ending, the event transitioned into closing speeches by contributors and the Luminary Ceremony. The frisbees were tucked away and games halted, and a sombre silence settled in the air. The track saw one last lap, illuminated solely by the glow of hundreds of white paper bags.

*"Each bag was a hand-drawn monument, to a name, a memory, and a life touched by cancer."*

ported through the Canadian Cancer Society. These funds help with actual costs of living, treatment, and medication. Events like the Relay for Life help fundraise and garner support for affected families."

The 2026 Relay set the bar very high. At the end of the day, Okanagan Relay for Life had raised a proud total of \$54,131. The top individual contributor was Angela Paolicelli at \$11,008.80 with 'Cey's Team!' raising a total of \$17,756.90. A record-breaking year of the UBCO chapter.

The event's success, however, went way beyond just the currency. It was measured in community cohesion. Colleen, the President Co-Chair of the Okanagan Relay for Life, reflected on the event as a whole. "Our aim is to connect the student body here. Team efforts really do go a long way. Seeing survivors dealing with these battles makes you realise that you are actually a part of something greater," she said with a voice full of emotion, "Thank you for showing up. Thank you for your costumes, your energy, your kindness."



feels impactful to be a part of something much bigger than yourself."

Relay for Life Co-Chair, Maryn, commented on the year-long efforts that went into making their event come to life, "Myself, with my co-chair, and 14 other committee members, we fundraise all year online with the Canadian Cancer Society. So far, we have raised around \$50,000, which was our target for this year."

The Relay's tonal shifts were perhaps the most riveting part of the day.

In the light hum of music in the background, there was a gentle melancholy, mixed with pride. In remembrance of not only survivors, but also those who lost their battle. The soft glow of light emanating from the bags wasn't static; it was a pulsing resistance against a disease that has taken too much from too many.

It served as a beautiful reminder of the stakes: every single dollar raised by this group contributes to national research and local support programs. Julian, a survivor chair committee member, said, "I was a part of this clinical trial, sup-

As the sun set over the campus, exhaustion was palpable in the air, as was the chill of the wind. Loudest amongst all those emotions, remained the sense of fulfillment and gratitude.

The funds raised will now move to the Canadian Cancer Society to support clinical trials and patient advocacy. If you are impacted by cancer in any form, the Canadian Cancer Society can help.

(<https://cancer.ca/en/>)



# Notwithstanding Clause in the Limelight in Ottawa as Controversial Quebec Law Reaches Supreme Court

BY AVERY CUMMINS



Image provided by Dig deeper on Wikimedia Commons

In 2019, the National Assembly of Quebec passed a highly contentious law titled Bill 21, which prohibits public sector workers from wearing religious symbols while on the job. The rule applies to anyone deemed to be in a position of authority, most notably judges, government lawyers, teachers, and police officers. The law was passed through invoking the notwithstanding clause, or section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which effectively allowed the National Assembly to override the section of the Charter that protects religious freedom in Canada.

The notwithstanding clause was introduced to the Charter in 1982 as a way for provinces to resist federal judicial overreach in their interpretation of its contents, and was backed in large part by provincial leaders during Charter negotiations (save Ontario and New Brunswick). Many premiers were apprehensive that the Charter would put too much power into the hands of the unelected courts, and thus the Charter likely would not exist without the clause. In spite of this compromise, however, Quebec was notably the only province that did not consent to any of the changes to the Constitution in 1982 and still has not agreed to the changes 44 years later.

Section 33 is unique across countries with constitutional democracies. Conceived of and proposed by former Alberta premier Peter Lougheed, it allows provincial legislatures to override certain rights and freedoms for up to five years at a time, at which point the legislation requires review once again before it can be reimplemented. The total number of successful uses is up for debate among scholars, but some sources claim it has been invoked a total of 27 times since its inception.

After Saskatchewan invoked the clause in 2018 for the first time in 13 years, it has seen a boost in popularity in provincial legislation from coast to coast.<sup>1</sup> The most recent uses of the notwithstanding clause came in October and December 2025, when Alberta passed the “Back to School Act”, ending a three week long teacher’s strike and prohibiting further strikes until 2028; and Bill 9, which polices chosen names for transgender youth in schools, prevents transgender girls from playing on sports teams, and prohibits doctors from prescribing hormone therapy for children under 16.<sup>2</sup>

Monday, March 23 was day one of a four-day appeals hearing regarding Bill 21 at the Supreme Court of Canada. The Fédération autonome de l’enseignement, English Montréal School Board, the World Sikh Organization of Canada, and the Lord Reading Law Society, as well as a handful of individuals, are all appellants in the case. Seven of nine justices will hear their arguments, but judgement renderings may take a few months to a year to be finalized and released.<sup>3</sup>

Bill 21, or An Act respecting the laicity of the State, restricts public sector workers from wearing “clothing, a symbol, jewellery, an adornment, an accessory, or headwear” that is reasonably representative of a religious affiliation.<sup>4</sup> This means that hijabs, turbans, visible crucifixes, and yarmulkes are all disallowed under the law. Employees affected are required to remove their religious items while working or face consequences, including termination.

Some argue that the law unfairly targets Muslim women who work as teachers in Quebec, and in a 2020 court challenge, plaintiffs presented evidence that the law prevented some from being promoted or getting a job at all. Those who were employed prior to the law coming into force are exempt from the ban, but if an affected employee seeks to change posi-

tions as of 2025, they will be required to secularize their on-the-job identity first.<sup>5</sup>

Bill 21 has been challenged multiple times since it was rolled out and more than 50 interveners have been involved in the case so far, yet the Quebec Court of Appeal upheld the law both in 2021 and 2024.<sup>6</sup> These decisions have motivated appellants to bring the case to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The hearing happening today is not a matter of whether or not the contents of Bill 21 are legal. The notwithstanding clause allows provincial governments to override fundamental freedoms such as those of religion, expression, and assembly; legal rights such as the right to life, liberty, and security; and equality rights regarding gender, race, and age.<sup>7</sup> There are some parts of the Charter that are protected no matter what, however: they include voting rights, mobility rights, and language rights.

Arguments in favour of the notwithstanding clause claim that the clause puts decisions regarding provincial issues into the hands of democratically elected legislatures, not appointed federal judges. In doing this, provinces have more control over their own jurisdictions and the unelected judiciary has less power to control legislation passed within provincial borders.

Those against the clause contest that it unfairly allows lawmakers to ignore fundamental rights and freedoms without repercussions. It is seen as a total override of the Charter, voiding its influence and importance to protecting Canadians. Arguments have been made that section 33 was never meant to be used as a one-size solution to human rights issues in Canada, but its intended purpose was to protect provincial laws when there was a real possibility that the Supreme Court would exercise its judicial powers to overturn those laws as they deem necessary.<sup>8</sup>

The groups challenging Bill 21 in the Supreme Court argue that section 33 was, in this case, utilized improperly. They hold that it was never meant to be used as a precautionary measure to prevent the courts from striking down a law, which it was in this instance. Instead, they say, section 33 should only be used in response to a court voiding a piece of legislation only after it has been passed first in a provincial legislature, in accordance with traditional uses.<sup>9</sup> This way, courts have the chance to examine which Charter rights are actually being violated before the province takes action.

As the notwithstanding clause has grown more popular in recent years, this method of inserting the clause into the first text of passed bills is becoming commonplace. Alberta and Saskatchewan used the clause in the same way in 2025 and 2023 to pass laws that

affect the rights of transgender youth, limiting gender affirming care and banning students under 16 from using preferred names and pronouns at school without parental permission, among other restrictions.<sup>10</sup> Baking section 33 directly into the text of a piece of legislation is strategic for these provinces because it allows them to implement the law immediately, rather than deal with a long and arduous court case.

On the side of the defense, lawyers representing Quebec argue that there is nothing in the Charter that states that the notwithstanding clause cannot be enacted ahead of time. Lower courts that have heard the case agree with this interpretation, allowing the law to remain.



Image provided by A Disappearing Act on Flickr

Why was Bill 21 implemented in the first place? Quebec has a unique history with secularism, or *laïcité*, and religion in the public sphere. Prior to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, the Catholic Church held a very powerful role in Québécois society, and was tasked with managing the education and healthcare systems in the province. Through a decade of social and political change, however, the provincial government took control of the systems from the financially strained Church, and in doing so, moved towards a more progressive and secular identity.

*Laïcité* is also integral to French society in Europe. In 1905, France passed a law officially separating the Church from state institutions. The law represents a core value of modern French politics, and has only been built upon over the years. France has passed laws since then that are quite similar in substance to Bill 21 in Quebec: for example, in 2004 a law was passed prohibiting face coverings in public, and in 2016 nativity scene displays were banned from town halls.<sup>11</sup>

As for the consequences this ruling will have, whatever the results may be, the notwithstanding clause is stepping into the sociopolitical and legal limelight across Canada alongside questions of who should have the power (or if the power should even exist) to override the

Charter. On March 23, Coalition Inclusion Quebec lawyer Molly Krishtalka made the argument that the notwithstanding clause is not to be used for laws with the sole purpose of infringing Charter rights. “That is something that cannot be upheld,” she argued before the Supreme Court justices.<sup>12</sup>

Every province in Canada except for British Columbia has stated that the courts should not be allowed to comment on laws protected by section 33. On March 25, Ontario Attorney General Doug Downey stated that “... courts should not provide opinions on whether the law would have been constitutional if that invocation had not been made.”<sup>13</sup>

UBC Okanagan assistant professor of political science and Director of the UBC Research Group for Constitutional Law, Geoffrey Sigalet, wrote in a March 2026 article for *Civitas Outlook* that the spectacle around section 33 today is a “constitutional crisis.” This chaos comes in part from the fact that the clause was written to allow provinces to *bypass* the prying eyes of judicial review, and in part from the fact that Mark Carney’s federal government has chosen to interpret the clause as being non-renewable if it “irreparably impair[s]” Charter rights.<sup>14</sup>

Now that the hearing has ended, it is only a matter of time before the Supreme Court releases its final judgement on the case. If they deem this use of the notwithstanding clause unconstitutional, it will have implications for other recent uses in Alberta and Saskatchewan. If they rule the other way, it will change how provinces approach the use of the notwithstanding clause in future controversial decisions about Charter rights and who can alter them.



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**MARKUS GILL**

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PHOENIX FILES PODCAST HOST

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VIDEOGRAPHER & PHOTOGRAPHER

**ISO MAUAD RODRÍGUEZ**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

**DAKSHIL PATEL**

SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

**CHIRAYU AHUJA**

WEB DEVELOPER & LAYOUT DESIGNER

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# Rabbit Holes and Tinfoil Hats: The Conspiracy Theories Following the Release of the Epstein Files

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN

Since the release of the Epstein files by the U.S. Department of Justice, tinfoil hats have come back in style. Conspiracy theories are certainly not new, but it is interesting to see what can come crawling from the darkest parts of the internet at any given time. These theories typically target topics that people are paranoid about — usually because they are abrupt, shocking, or introducing something new — all while relying on a lack of evidence the conspirator finds satisfying to purport the idea.

While a lot of conspiracy theories can feel ridiculous and even silly at times, there are still a significant number of them that let harmful ideologies spread like wildfire across the internet. Anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, Q-Anon, and different groups set on harmful action can prove to be very dangerous.

The release of the Epstein files brought to light endless email chains, photos, and documents revealing the pedophilic sex-trafficking ring that has embedded itself into some of the highest institutional points of society. The Department of Justice has currently only released 3.5 million of the 6 million documents in the files, and there is an ongoing battle to have more released to the public.<sup>1</sup>

Conspiracy posts being made about the release of the Epstein files often contain dark content which makes them difficult to track down on the internet as they often don't stay up for long. Some conspirators believe that these posts are being taken down by the CEO of Meta, Mark Zuckerberg, due to the handful of connections he has with Epstein. A more likely reason for the censorship is that Meta's guidelines specifically say they do not



Graphic provided by Iso Maatad Rodriguez

allow violent content, which a lot of these posts contained.

A shocking number of conspiracy theories I have seen promote varying degrees of antisemitic rhetoric. Individuals have pointed fingers at Jewish people for supposedly perpetrating this sex-trafficking ring because of connections that Epstein held with various Israeli institutions.<sup>2</sup> Although there is strong evidence to show that Epstein worked with some Israeli groups, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has come out to denounce the relationship Epstein held with the former Prime Minister, Ehud Barak.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, if the ethnicity of those involved in the sex-trafficking ring is a tell-tale sign of who is running the world, we should be pointing fingers at the endless list of white men who have been complicit in Epstein's crimes. Claims like these

reiterate tired Nazi ideology from when efforts were made to drive Jewish people from the German economy in 1933.<sup>4</sup>

Another conspiracy theory has claimed that the photography company, Lifetouch, was some massive scheme to funnel photos of children to pedophiles. This is because an associate of Epstein's, Leon Black, was a major investor in the company which owned Lifetouch.

Public outrage caused some schools in the U.S. to cancel their school picture days with Lifetouch because of this theory.<sup>5</sup> In response to this, Lifetouch clarified that they take the privacy of their clients very seriously, and further clarified that none of their executives were involved with Epstein in any way.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Lifetouch is never mentioned in the Epstein files that are available to the public.

In another crazy theory, some have

come up with the idea that Epstein purposely caused the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because of an email that was found in the files with the subject line "preparing for pandemics," which was in preparation for a meeting in Geneva about pandemics as seen in the files.

CBS has stated that their reporters have uncovered posts which claim the COVID-19 vaccine had Epstein's DNA in it, and that there was some elaborate plan to inject the world with his DNA.<sup>7</sup> This makes no logistical sense and the motivation for orchestrating a pandemic and injecting the world with your DNA seems unclear.

These files have made one thing clear: there is a massive criminal conspiracy theory being perpetrated by social elites as they face no repercussions for their actions. While some are resigning from their positions of power, very little legal action is being taken against those with close ties to Epstein. One major arrest made after the release of the files was of the former Prince Andrew, who was put into custody by the Thames Valley Police on February 19th, 2026 on suspicion of misconduct in office for allegedly sharing confidential information with Epstein. Other arrests have included UK ambassador, Peter Mandelson, for suspicion of misconduct, and former Prime Minister of Norway, Thorbjorn Jagland, for concerns of corruption.

Discerning truth from the files that have been released can be difficult. Some of the conspiracy theories related to the files may feel compelling, but in an age of misinformation it is important to approach such important issues without jumping to conclusions that might promote further harm.

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## We Were Built for Sunlight

BY CONNOR BRAKE

At the core of our relationship with the sun lies an internal clock known as the circadian rhythm. This biological clock is governed by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN)<sup>1</sup> in the hypothalamus of the brain, which responds to light hitting the retina. For instance, when sunlight enters the eye, serotonin is released. High levels of serotonin are associated with boosted mood, calm, and focus.

Conversely, as the sun sets, the brain transitions to producing melatonin, the hormone responsible for sleep. Without enough exposure to natural light, the delicate balance of serotonin and melatonin can tilt, leading to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).<sup>2</sup>

Despite our biological reliance on the sun, modern life takes place mainly indoors. We spend a significant amount of our time under artificial lighting, which lacks the intensity and full-spectrum quality of natural sunlight.

Sunlight also plays an important role in our physical chemistry through the synthesis of Vitamin D. When sunlight strikes our skin, it triggers a process that converts cholesterol into Vitamin D. Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to negative side effects such as increased infection risk and cognitive decline.<sup>3</sup>

To realign our internal clocks and protect our health we do not need to live outdoors, we simply need to expose ourselves to the sun more often. Architects and engineers are now attempting to implement daylighting into building design.

A light well is essentially a vertical shaft that pierces through the center of a building.<sup>4</sup> These structures allow sunlight to reach the lower floors of buildings that would other-



Photo Provided by Sabhya Arora

wise be entirely dependent on artificial light.

In modern designs, light wells are often capped with specialized glass that change transparency with the sun's intensity.<sup>5</sup> By lining the interior of the well with these materials, architects can "bounce" the sunlight all the way to the bottom of the well.

Another way sunlight is used in modern society is in Japan, where railway stations are high-risk areas for suicide attempts. To combat this, several major railway companies have installed blue LED lighting at the ends of station platforms.<sup>6</sup> While the white sunlight of the afternoon triggers alertness via serotonin, researchers have also found that specific wavelengths of blue light can actually lower the heart rate, reducing impulsivity.<sup>7</sup> In a high-

stress environment such as a subway station, the blue light can serve as a calmer in an otherwise stressful situation.

The results of a study conducted over a one year period on the stations equipped with these blue lights found a remarkable 84% decline in suicide attempts.<sup>8</sup> It is an amazing example of how the light in our environment can directly influence our thoughts and decisions.

On a larger scale, some cities are making use of Heliostats to bring light to areas that naturally get less of it.<sup>9</sup> In towns such as Rjukan, Norway, the town stays in the shadows for 6 months a year because of its geographical location. To aid in bringing light to the small town nestled in a valley, engineers installed massive mirrors to redirect sunlight into the

town.<sup>10</sup>

These mirrors are computer-controlled to track the sun's movement as it passes through the sky, reflecting its light down into the town square. Furthermore, by concentrating the sun into the town square, a sort of communal place is created which may help bring people closer and foster a greater sense of community.

Moreover, for those who cannot always access the sun and do not have many other alternative methods, new "tunable" LEDs were created — coined "Circadian Lighting."<sup>11</sup> Traditionally, indoor bulbs emit a static white or yellow light. Since a static light does not allow our brains to easily differentiate between night and day, new LEDs that shift color throughout the day have been. These bulbs are designed to follow the sun's natural progression throughout the day. This new technology is being rapidly adopted in places such as hospitals and nursing homes.<sup>12</sup> In these settings, stable circadian rhythms are important for patient recovery and physical health.

The diverse ways in which we reclaim sunlight is important, whether it be through architectural design, sun-tracking mirrors, or LED lights. Regardless of the method, sunlight is critical to a productive life. For decades lighting has been designed for visibility alone, ignoring the physiological demands from our bodies. As we move further into the future, architecture and product designs will shift towards being palatable for humans, where our environments are engineered to support our biology.

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# The 35th Annual Women's Memorial March and The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

This article contains mention of topics surrounding the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement. Hotline numbers and abuse resources can be found at [safesociety.ca/indigenous-people/](https://safesociety.ca/indigenous-people/).



Graphic provided by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

On February 14th, 2026, the 35th annual Women's Memorial March took place in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. The event serves to remember those stolen by gender-based violence as well as to remind Vancouver officials of the systemic issues which allow these crimes to occur at staggering rates. The Women's Memorial March is very closely tied with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' (MMIWG) movement, having been started and supported in large part by Indigenous Peoples.<sup>1</sup>

In honour of the walk, I would like to look back at some of the recent history of the MMIWG movement in the hopes of restating its importance and relevance. I am a white person researching these histories with the help of Indigenous resource centres like the X̱wi7x̱wa Library and the official website for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and I want to thank those who work hard to provide this information to the public.

On September 1st, 2016, the National Inquiry of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls officially began following an initial pre-inquiry process which set terms

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and costs. The aim of the project was to raise awareness of the disproportionate rate of crimes against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLB-GTQ+ Peoples as well as provide material support systems for Indigenous Peoples who have experienced or are close to someone who has experienced sexual or physical assault. Through 15 community hearings and nine knowledge keeper, expert and institutional hearings, which heard testimonies from 2836 individuals across multiple nations encompassed in the colonial borders of Canada, the final report was created.<sup>2</sup>

The report was published on June 3rd, 2019, and described the efforts taken to provide more support systems for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ Peoples alongside their family and inner circles. It also focused on youth education and promoted broader knowledge about the inherent value of all Indigenous women and girls.

Though the national inquiry brought widespread awareness to shocking statistics like the significant amount of First Nations (64%) and Métis (65%) women who have experienced

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physical or sexual violence (appalling even when compared to non-Indigenous women's 45%). Almost two-thirds of Indigenous women had reported experiencing physical or sexual violence in 2018, yet statistics were no surprise for many Indigenous communities already affected by these disproportionate rates of violence.<sup>4</sup>

The project was launched in part due to promises made by then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during his 2015 election campaign, but it had been a long time coming.<sup>5</sup> The outcry from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples at the losses experienced by their communities and the lack of a government response is evident in the persistence of the Women's Memorial March itself.

The initial stages of the national inquiry came long after the inception of the Women's Memorial March, which began in 1992 following the discovery of the mutilated and sexually assaulted body of Cheryl Ann Joe, a shishálh woman and mother of three children. The brutal murder devastated and outraged her

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community, who took to the streets of Vancouver to remember her and the many other Indigenous women whose lives were taken in similar ways.<sup>6</sup> The March serves not only to condemn their murders but memorialize their lives, their importance to their communities, and simply their place as Peoples in the world.

One of the critical findings of the report is that systemic change is necessary in order to provide support to the individuals, families, and communities affected by such violence. Though memory is incredibly important and the past will always fuel the future, the present is what needs to change in order to lower the number of people stolen from their communities. Getting involved with marches, community events, and government hearings is incredibly important to enacting systemic and material change. I would highly recommend doing your own research on the history of the movement and memorial march, as it expands far beyond what is discussed here.

Anishinaabe and Cree journalist Crystal Greene wrote an excellent article titled "With 'grief and a desire for change,' community gathers to remember MMIWG2S+ in 'Winnipeg'", covering a march inspired by the one covered here. The final report for the inquiry is also published on the official website and contains pertinent information and statistics. Literature suggestions from the X̱wi7x̱wa Library on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls include *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out* by Janet Silman, *Kamloopa: An Indigenous Matriarch Story* by Kim Senklip Harvey, and *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* edited by Joyce Green. I personally recommend *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson and *Split Tooth* written by Tanya Tagaq and illustrated by Jamie Hernandez.

6. Sterritt, A. (2017, February 13). Relatives of woman whose death sparked MMIW's memorial march want changes in the justice system. CBC News. Accessed March 10th 2026. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cheryl-ann-joe-memorial-march-1.3979645>



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NEXT ISSUE COMES OUT

artists, doodlers,  
stick-figure enthusiasts  
ALL WELCOME :)

how to:  
EXQUISITE CORPSE

- ① Fold a paper in 3
- ② First person draws the head
- ③ Second person draws the body (without looking at the head)
- ④ Third person draws the feet (without looking at the head or the body)

exquisite corpse

Drawn by UBCO Students, Digitalized by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

# Upcoming Events

April 1 at 3:10 - 4:10 pm  
**Yoga for Mental Wellness**  
Nechako Gathering Room (221)

April 7 at 10:30 am - 2:30 pm  
**UBCO Community Market**  
Courtyard

April 7 at 11:30 am - 2:30 pm  
**Recess Revival**  
Courtyard

April 8 at 10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
**Exam Jam: Finals Countdown**  
Student Learning Hub (LIB 237)

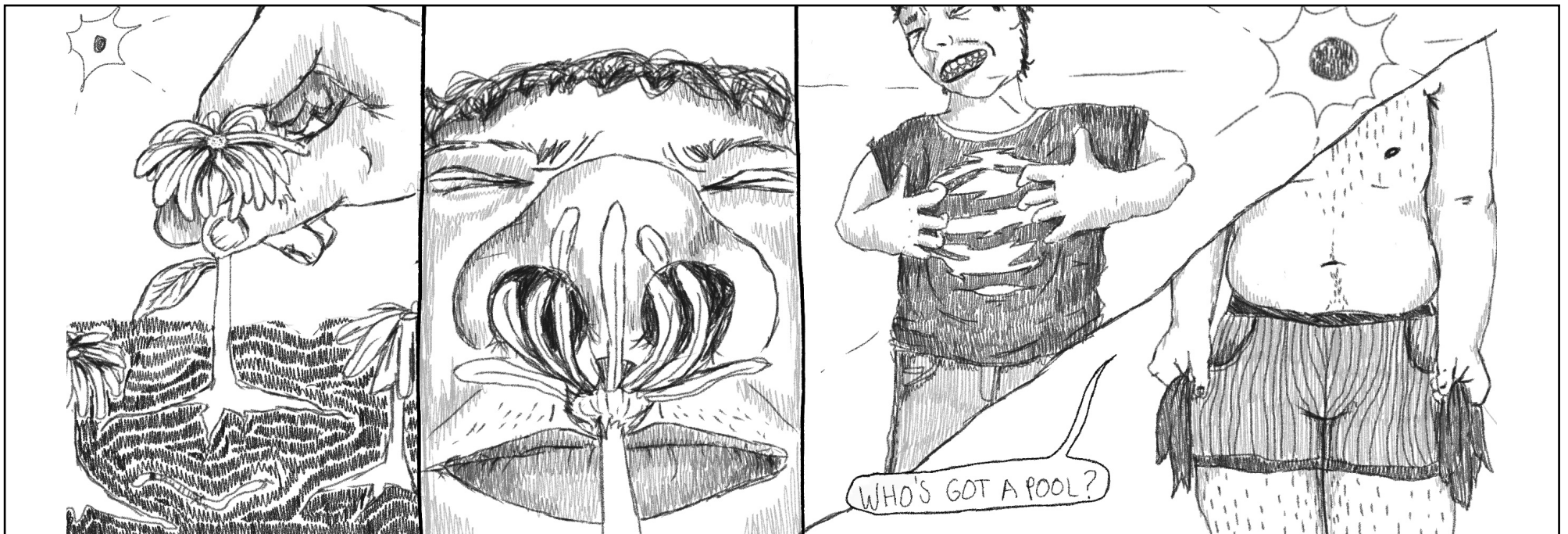
April 8 at 11:00 am - 2:00 pm  
**UBC Giving Day**  
Courtyard

April 8 at 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
**That's What [We] Said Launch Event**  
UNC 200

April 9 at 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
**Naloxone Training**  
Nechako Residence (NCH 251)

April 10/11 at 7:00 pm, April 11/12 at 1:30 pm  
**Palimpsest Year-End Theatre Performance**  
University Theatre (ADM 026)

April 13 at 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm  
**Queer Zine Workshop**  
Laurel Packinghouse



Graphic provided by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

## A Scanner Darkly

BY AIDEN MALCOLM

Richard Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly* is divisive by any means. Filmed and then drawn over, using a technique known as rotoscoping, the visuals are the first test to the viewer. Lines crawl and ooze like oh so many cockroaches across the screen, warbling beneath your concentration. This is no arbitrary choice for sommelier Linklater, though: the injectable visuals pair with the liquidated plot like a fine wine to an expensive dinner. The "dinner" quickly transforms from simple crime intrigue into samsaran-narco-corporatism, something I can best describe as "spinning out". This is not to say the narrative is meandering: it keeps an energetic piece, pushed forward by its impassioned monologues, bleak nihilism and moments of hysteria. The casting brings this into the mainstream for many people: a post-*Matrix* Keanu Reeves, pre-*Iron Man* Robert Downey Jr., Woody Harrelson, and a pre-*Black Swan* Winona Ryder. All in all, I recommend this movie to anyone looking for a night of strung-out liquidity. Read our next issue for a post-viewing analysis.

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## TRELLIS

by Brendan James

Estimated Difficulty: 5/5

2	3					4
			1	2		5
		9			8	
7		1		9		6
3			5			7
	4		1		9	3
		2		1		
5			8	9		
	6					7 8