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THE PHOENIX NEWS

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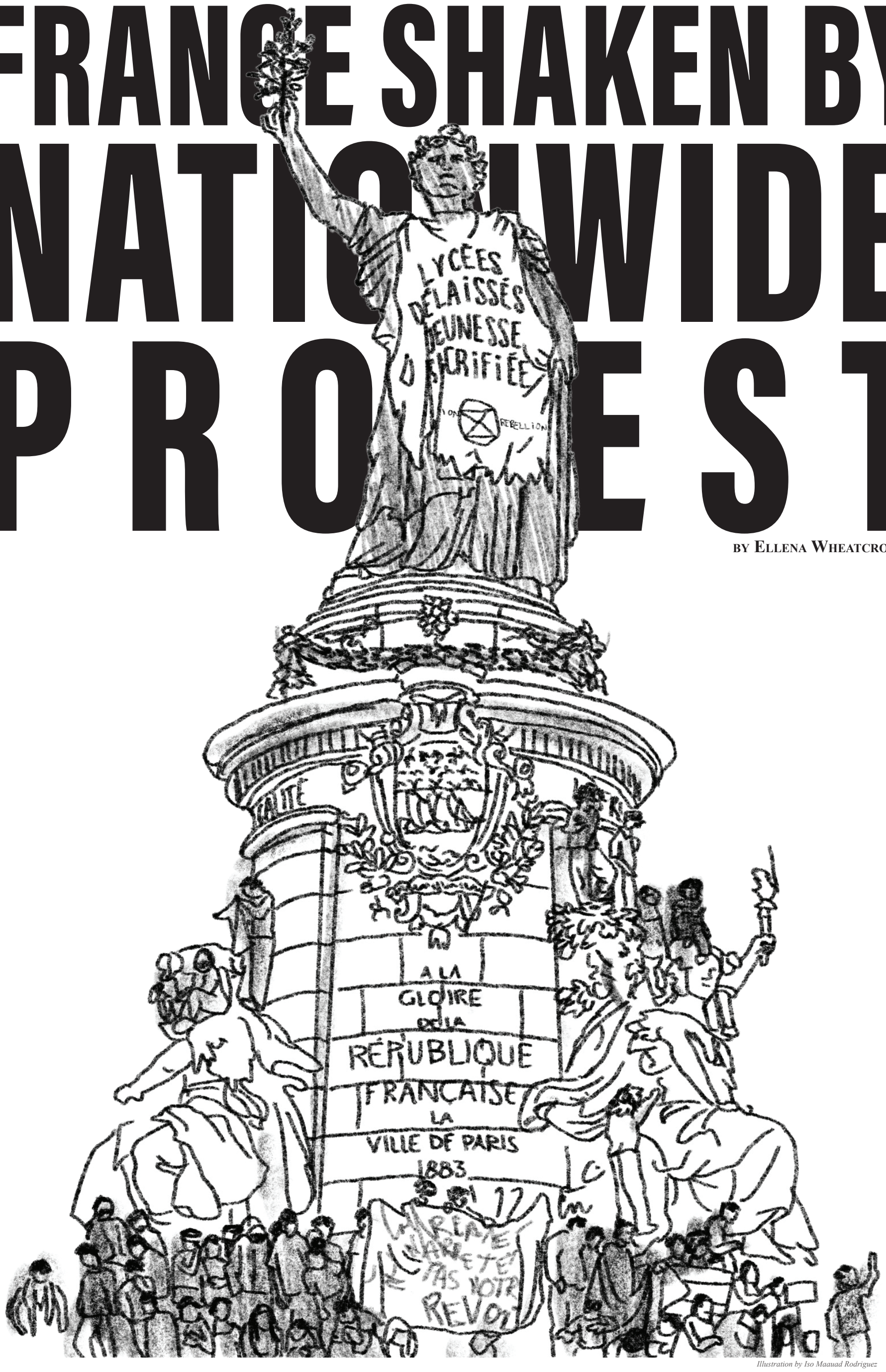


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TENSIONS RISE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

BY ELLENA WHEATCROFT

On Friday, October 9, the United States Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, announced widespread sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC), designed to cripple its ability to operate.

The announcement came just hours after Navi Pillay, a former ICC judge, won the Nobel Peace Prize, an accolade President Trump has tried to claim on several occasions. Pillay chaired the United Nations (UN) Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 2023 to 2025, which found the State of Israel to be responsible for four genocidal acts in Gaza since October 7, 2023.[1]

17 days before Rubio's press release, President Trump called on ICC member states to "officially resign from this rogue institution"[2] at the 81st UN General Assembly in New York.

The United States' antagonism towards the ICC, however, extends far beyond Trump's time in office. The ICC was officially established by the Rome Statute on July 1, 2002. It became the first and only international court with the ability to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression.

While the United States initially signed the Rome Statute in 2000, it was never ratified by the U.S. Senate, meaning the country is not subject to the ICC's jurisdiction. However, the court's mandate allows for investigations into U.S. personnel under certain conditions. Specifically, the court can intervene when the UN Security Council, whose decisions are binding on all UN member states, refers a potential case to the ICC Prosecutor.

The ICC's jurisdiction has created long-lasting tensions with the United States. Under the George W. Bush administration, the U.S. Congress passed the American Servicemembers' Protection Act, which prohibits U.S. cooperation with the ICC.

Similarly, in 2020, Trump signed Executive Order 13928, restricting the ICC's ability to "investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute" any citizen of the United States or its non-member allies. Trump's order labelled the ICC's attempts to intervene in the United States as:

"*[A]n unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.*"[3]

Trump also placed visa restrictions on high-ranking ICC officials and their families, describing the ICC's threat as a "national emergency"[3]. The order was widely interpreted as an attempt to restrict the court's ability to investigate potential crimes committed by the U.S. military in Afghanistan, as well as by Israeli officials in Palestine, as Israel is also not a member of the ICC.

President Biden revoked Executive Order 13928. Yet, on February 6, 2025, Trump signed Executive Order 14203, reviving the initial order's policies. To date, it has enabled sanctions on 17 ICC officials, including former Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan, who issued an ICC arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on November 21, 2024.

The sanctions imposed on October 9 are expected to have a much more significant impact on the ICC's ability to operate than Trump's previous executive orders. All ICC property in U.S. territory or in the control of U.S. persons is now blocked unless specifically authorized by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control.



International_Criminal_Court_at_The_Hague_(ICC)_(54032051190)

Additionally, the Department of the Treasury has issued 180-day general licences (GLs) to allow certain transactions with the ICC, especially relating to cloud and software services. If member states do not "demonstrate meaningful progress"[4] to address U.S. concerns over ICC jurisdiction by the end of the 180 days, the GLs will be adjusted to cripple the ICC's operations.

The ICC responded swiftly to the sanctions, with President Tomoko Akane releasing a video statement defending the ICC's political impartiality. She called Trump's sanctions an attack against the international legal order, the sovereign states who created the court, and victims of mass atrocities.[5] Akane also addressed the court's continued commitment to its mandate:

"*The ICC does not yield to external threats that will only benefit those who commit the most serious crimes of concern to the international community… This is not just about defending a single institution, but about safeguarding the international order founded on the rule of law.*"[5]

The ICC is already moving away from U.S. technology and currency, preparing for the implementation of the sanctions at the end of the 180-day grace period.

Despite Rubio's threats, ICC member states, including Canada, are continuing to defend the court and its jurisdiction. Only time will tell whether the U.S. sanctions will severely impact the court's operations.

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FRANCE SHAKEN BY NATIONWIDE PROTESTS



BY ELLENA WHEATCROFT

Since mid-September, millions of people have protested across France, voicing concerns about poor educational conditions, the rising cost of living, and the government's 2027 budget.

The protests have ranged from non-violent marches to looting, riots, and barricades, leading to thousands of protesters' arrests, many of whom are students.

The demonstrations have taken place in all major cities, including Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, and Nice, as well as smaller cities and towns, forcing the government to deploy riot police and the national gendarmerie, a part of the French Armed Forces responsible for maintaining public order, across the country.

Demonstrations began on September 15 when the Union of French Electricity and other energy sector unions coordinated walkouts by electricity and gas employees to protest pay and rising fuel prices.

On September 21, students and teachers at Saint-Exupéry high school near Paris began protesting a lack of resources, overcrowded classes, understaffing, and poor facilities. While extra staff were soon sent to the school, ending the strike, their protest sparked nationwide demonstrations, which are still ongoing. Within a week, over 400 high schools were impacted, and over 440 individuals, mostly students, were detained by police.[1]

The student protests coincided with French labour and trade unions preparing for the government's 2027 draft budget. On September 29, over 300,000 workers from eight unions[2] took part in a one-day strike in response to the expected public spending cuts in the 2027 budget. Most strikers were public sector employees, ranging from teachers to firefighters and healthcare workers.

The budget, presented on October 1, contains a notable €54m cut to public spending, including the fourth consecutive salary freeze for state employees. The freeze reduces public sector employees' purchasing power as inflation and the cost of living grow. In response, labour unions are demanding a six-percent pay rise.

By mid-October, student and labour union protests had become part of a much wider movement. The Yellow Vest movement, which first emerged in 2018, has revived itself to take part in the protests against the rising cost of living.

From 2015 to 2025, energy prices rose by 60%, electricity by 43%, and fuel by 31% in France.[3] Furthermore, France's poverty rate is at its highest since annual records began in 1996. In 2024, 9.8 million people, or 15.4 percent of the French population, fell below the poverty line.[3]

Since 2017, when President Emmanuel Macron began his first term, prices have risen by 23.4%.[3] In 2025, 28.8% of the French population couldn't afford an unexpected expense without financial assistance, and 41.1% reported at least some difficulty in making ends meet, demonstrating the widespread impact of the cost of living crisis.[3]

Nationwide protests against the cost of living crisis occurred on October 17. The demonstrations turned violent in Paris and several other cities, with looters and rioters joining in. The French Interior Minister estimated that 1500 shops were defaced, burned, or looted, and over 2400 people were arrested. [4]

In preparation for protests on October 24, local and national authorities approved protests on an individual basis and imposed curfews. Over 70,000 officers were on duty as almost half a million people protested, with over 110,000 in Paris alone. [5]

The police response has been controversial, as forces have used tear gas, sound grenades, foam-round launchers, batons, and riot shields. Several students have suffered injuries during protests, with one teenager losing an eye after being struck by a foam bullet, another losing a hand from a stun grenade, and another suffering a smashed jaw from tear gas.

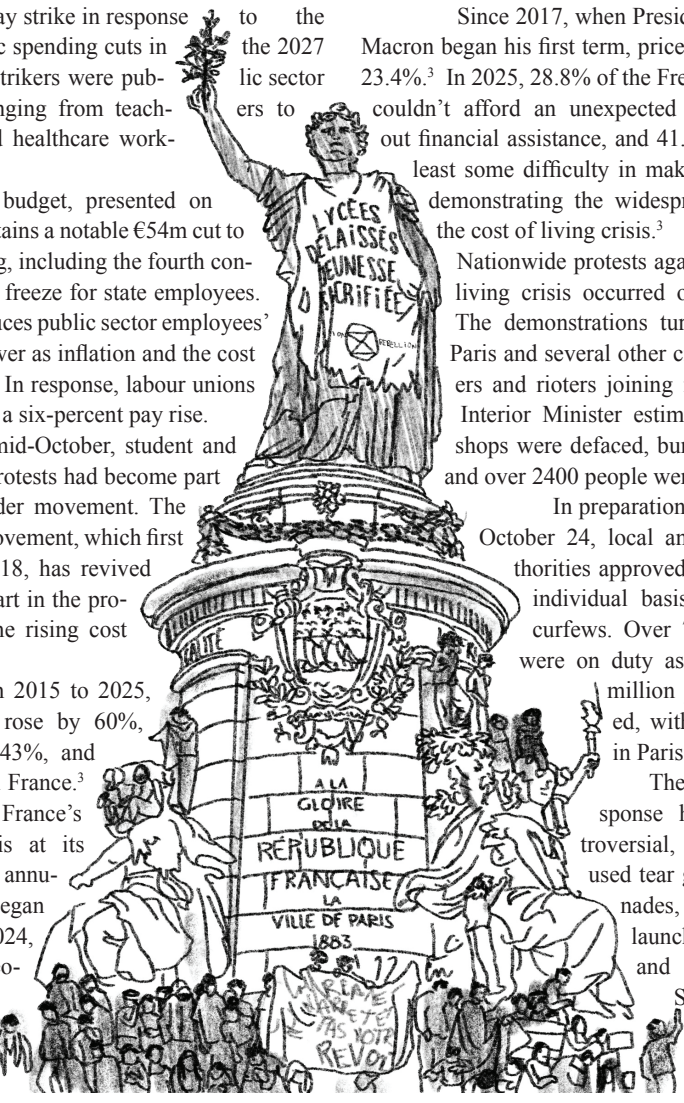


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

The *Inspection Générale de la Police Nationale* has opened 36 investigations into alleged police misconduct in response to the violence used against minors.

Yet, some protesters have also used violent tactics, targeting businesses, public spaces, and police officers. Certain participants have worn hoods or masks to hide their identities while setting fire to objects and buildings. Many students erected barricades, forcing schools to close.

President Macron met with student representatives at Élysée Palace on October 23, hearing their concerns about the lack of concrete action to address problems in the education system. Two days earlier, Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu met with trade union leaders, but the unions were left disappointed and have called for another strike on November 5.

The French population will have a chance to air its economic and political grievances against the current government when it elects a new president on April 18, 2027. The increasingly unpopular Macron is ineligible to run, having served the maximum two consecutive terms.

The new president will have the constitutional right to dissolve the National Assembly and trigger parliamentary elections if they desire a parliament more aligned with their agenda.

The protests will continue until students, workers, and labour unions receive an adequate, concrete response from the government.

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UBCO HEAT BURNS... PINK?



BY AMBER MATLOCK

On Friday October 5, The Phoenix had the privilege of speaking with the Director of HEAT Athletics and Recreation Operations, Layne McDougall. The discussion surrounded the ongoing conversation that is women's sports, to see where the institution stands on the unfair societal system rooted in patriarchal ideas that men's sports are more worthy of viewership than their women counterparts.

Layne refrained from commenting on the social attitudes surrounding sports, but rather focused on the fact that UBCO's most successful programs are the women's programs. She added that UBCO's women's golf and softball have been early standouts this season. Layne also denied any difference in treatment between the men's and women's sports teams, saying that both teams are marketed equitably, and therefore should be celebrated evenly. To close the interview, Layne stated:

"*I would say that there isn't an unfairness in women's sport in HEAT athletics, and we approach all of our men's and women's programs equitably… Equity does not necessarily mean that every single game or even every week will look exactly the same, but [rather] when you look at each opportunity and the resources and decision making framework, over a period of time*".

While Layne provided solid reassurance of our women's internal programming here at UBCO, the fact is that despite the same marketing support, our two gender teams are not in fact celebrated evenly. Women's games draw smaller crowds and the reasons for this are not Layne's, nor the institution's fault, but instead an unfair societal norm that, over time, has been accepted. While it's appreciated that the HEAT makes an effort, it seems that a gender balance has not been reached on all levels.

Coincidentally, on October 1, the University of Calgary launched an initiative to support their own Women's sports programming. They teamed up with Calgary-based clothing company, Local Laundry, to create a promotional T-shirt in which $10 from every shirt sold (more than one quarter of the cost of a shirt) goes directly into the Dinos Women Student-Athlete Award Fund. The fund works to distribute scholarship dollars and awards to female athletes in order to achieve a 50/50 distribution ratio.

Development Coordinator for the faculty of Kinesiology, Sydney Tait, enthusiastically shared details of the initiative and how they are showing women's sports support at the U of C. The T-shirt was designed by a former female Dinos Track Athlete, Sienna Macdonald, who had excelled at the heptathlon. After winning a previous T-shirt design competition, the Dinos media team knew who they needed on this project. The shirt campaign was well received by the current Dinos, having the athletes involved with media days a part of the launch, and having another alumni, Emily Yamaguchi-Kuan, a former women's soccer player, make the launch video for the campaign.

Sydney explained that this initiative was created to help make women's sports a priority at the U of C. In 2022, the University of Calgary had gotten a large gift from Joan Snyder, an Albertan philanthropist who had passed away. Joan had asked that with the $67.5 million she would leave them, that women's sports teams at the U of C be supported however they need to be. The money has been put into extensive research on the athletic impact on women's bodies, scholarship dollars for the Dinos, and establishing the Joan Snyder Fund for Excellence in Kinesiology, which has kickstarted many research campaigns since its inception in 2022.

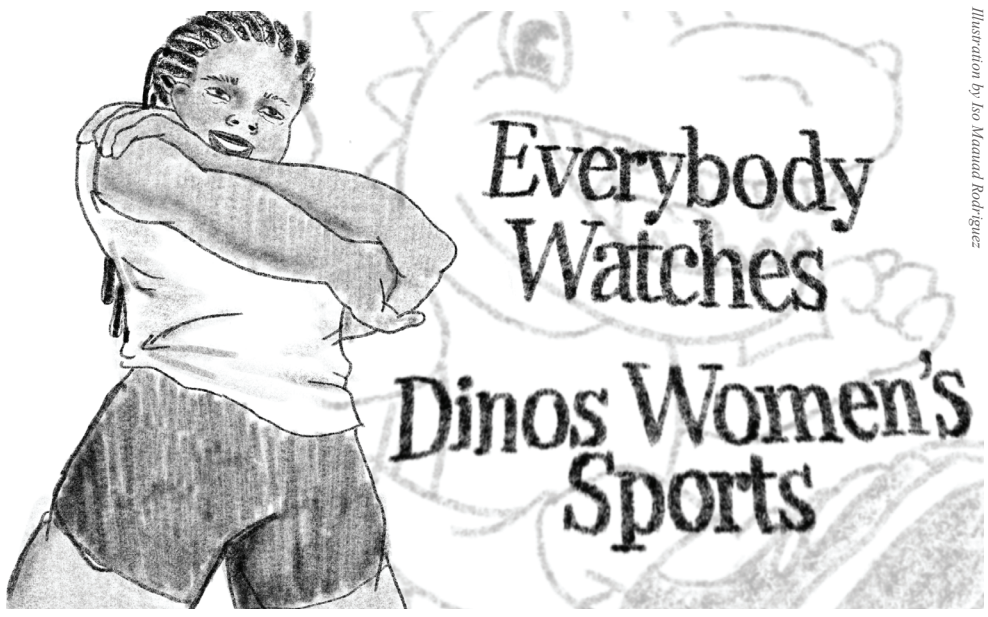


Illustration by Iso Maanad Rodriguez

Sydney says that in order to keep Snyder's gift for as long as possible, the U of C wants to continue these campaigns to raise scholarship dollars, fund research opportunities, and foster the academic growth of their female athletes. Her partner, and the Events Manager at Dino Athletics, Marinya Marcichiw, has been working hard to try to incentivize the U of C community to come to women's games, by having special promotional nights, and days that specifically celebrate women in sports. When asked what we as a community can help our female athletes feel our support, Sydney kept it simple, suggesting:

"*Just showing up is huge. If you cannot afford to buy a T-shirt, it does not cost anything to simply show your support at a game*".

So while it may be that institutions equally support their men's and women's sports teams, it appears that equality cannot mean equal treatment. To Layne's point, not every game will look the same, simply because they cannot if they are supported to the same degree. That said, men's sports have had the spotlight for centuries, so our women's teams need extra visibility to have their moment as well.

So while UBCO does not have the same outreach initiatives as the U of C, you can still make a difference in visibility for women's sports in your own community. It's as simple as supporting your favourite teams, but go to both women's and men's games, if possible. More specifically, make sure to watch your women's basketball team's home opener on Oct 30 at 5PM, and stick around for the men to play at 7pm. Our HEAT needs energy to keep lighting up, so come watch them BURN BLUE!

NOVEMBER IN SPORTS

BY AMBER MATLOCK

October Results

Last month, UBCO's acclaimed Softball team went all the way to Nationals after placing second at the Western Finals. At Nationals, unfortunately, the HEAT flamed out in the Quarter Finals, losing to the Laurier Golden Hawks.

The soccer regular season is officially over, with the Women's team securing two wins and tying three games during the regular season. The men's team has unfortunately not been as lucky, not having won a single game this season. Neither team was able to secure spots in the playoffs.

Cross Country

The Cross Country season has been going strong. On October 31, both men and women's runners competed in the Canada West Championship. Placement in this competition will determine if they compete in the USPORT National Championship, which takes place Saturday, November 14, in Hamilton, Ontario.

Rugby

The HEAT rugby team has been hard at work, securing win after win for UBCO in Calgary, having lost only once the entire season. Following that with two straight wins at the Prairies U Championships in Calgary fast-tracked them to the Canadian University Men's Rugby Championship in Langley, BC. Send them your support as we anxiously wait for them to bring home gold for the HEAT.

Basketball

HEAT women's basketball has represented UBCO incredibly well during preseason, winning seven of the nine preseason matches. The men's team unfortunately has not seen the same results, starting the season without a single preseason win. Luckily, the only way to go is up!

Both teams have now played at home and are ready for the remainder of the season. The women's team will start off November basketball in the Furnace in the classic matchup against the UBC Thunderbirds Friday, November 6, at 5 p.m.. They will continue the weekend against the University of Fraser Valley (UFV) Cascades on home court on Saturday, November 7, at 4 p.m..

Catch the men's team playing in the Furnace, Friday, November 6th, at 7 p.m. as they play against the UBC Thunderbirds. You can also watch them take the court against the UFV Cascades in the Furnace at 6 p.m. on Saturday, November 7. Both teams will spend the rest of the month on the road so be sure to wish them well.

Volleyball

The HEAT has kept the momentum throughout the preseason and their home openers from their respective Homecoming showcases. Volleyball will reign in the Furnace throughout November so be sure to come burn blue and show your support for the teams all month long before their December hiatus.

Men's volleyball will start off November on the court as they face the USASK Huskies on Friday, November 13, at 11 a.m.. They'll be back against the Huskies on Saturday, November 14, at 3 p.m.. You can catch them play the UFV Cascades in the Furnace at 7 p.m. on Friday, November 27, and finish off the month against the Cascades on Saturday, November 28 at 6 p.m..

Women's volleyball will follow the men's teams this season, also playing at home against the USASK Huskies on Friday, November 13, and Saturday, November 14. Both games will start at 5 p.m.. They will play against the UFV Cascades on Friday, November 27, at 5 p.m. and finally, Saturday, November 28, at 4 p.m..

Player to watch

While team victories were few and far between for the HEAT Soccer teams, many players worked hard to improve their own game and meet their own goals. Particularly, the HEAT men's goalkeeper, Ronan Woodroffe, set Canada West's all-time saves record in the team's game against the Victoria Vikes on October 17. A week later, on October 23, Ronan set the single saves record during the game against the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Wolfpack.

Ronan is in his final semester of a 5 year political science degree at UBCO, but his love of soccer has been lifelong, starting at just 5 years old. Ronan plans on continuing his passion beyond the HEAT, as his confidence in his soccer ability allows him to believe that he can give more to the sport and grow his career.

He admits that he has worked hard to improve himself but was pleasantly surprised to see how close he came to eventually setting these records. He loves how this record allows him to look back at his university career and the countless hours he, his coaches, and his teammates have poured into their performance. He emphasizes that he is incredibly grateful for all the HEAT has given to him and is excited to see what the next phase of his soccer career looks like.

You know what to do

With a whole month of court sports in the Furnace to keep us warm with the cooling temperatures, be sure to come watch your favourite teams. The schedule's set out so it's up to you to come burn blue!



Photo provided by Subhya Arora

SPOOKY SCIENCE: ZOMBIE PARASITES



BY MEHAK PARIHAR

When you hear the word "zombie" it is typically in the context of thriller or horror. The original individual is taken over and stripped of their free will, resulting in a mindless body that walks terrifyingly slow and feeds on the brains of the living. The concept makes for excellent folklore, and has inspired the antagonist of many novels and films.

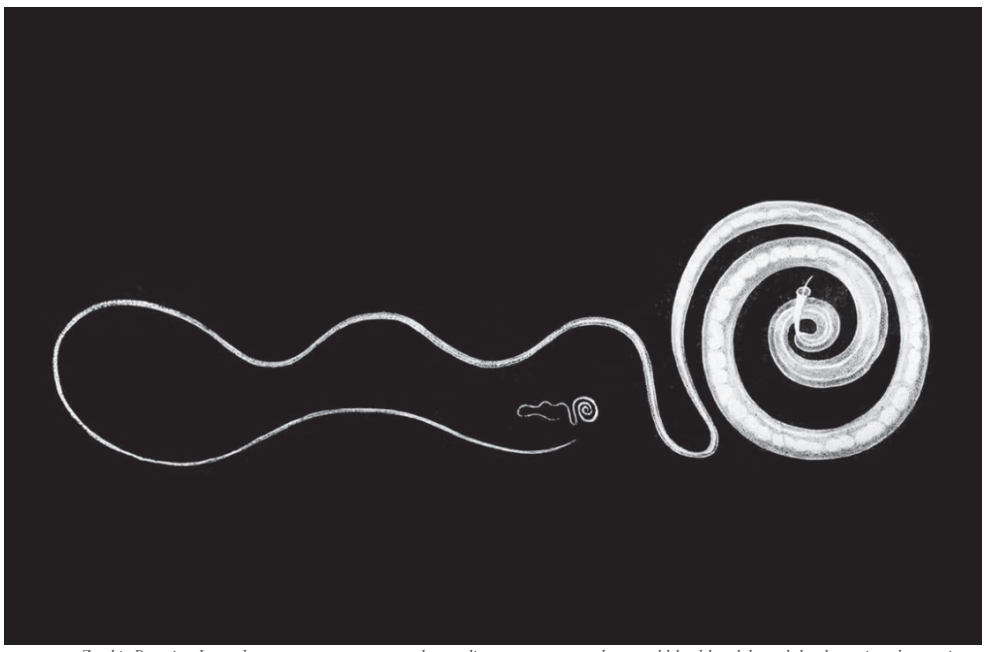
But is this mind controlling behaviour and lack of consciousness such a stretch from fiction? Research shows that zombie-like creatures are closer to reality than expected.

In the game of life, the primary goal is to survive long enough to reproduce. Every organism is alive from a very long line of ancestors that successfully reproduced. The drive to reproduce has been naturally selected for because of this. Reproduction means that the genetics of a creature successfully lives on, and nature finds ways to do this by any means necessary.

Some organisms cannot survive or reproduce on their own. They must rely on a member from another species in hopes of living and reproducing. Organisms that exhibit this behaviour are known as parasites.

A parasitic relationship benefits the parasite and can cause negative side effects on the host. Parasites can vary from microscopic to large enough to see, but their defining feature is that they leech off another organism for survival.

For example, infectious bacteria enter a host to acquire critical nutrients, like sugars and amino acids.[1] Tapeworms do not have a mouth or digestive system, and so they must also rely on absorbing nutrients through their skin from the food their host eats.[2]



Zombie Parasites Image httpswww.utoronto.canewschance-discovery-u-t-researchers-could-lead-breakthrough-battle-against-drug-resistant

That is enough to make skin crawl. Things get spookier when analyzing a subset of parasites that exhibit a trait called host manipulation, also known as zombie parasites. These parasites use clever biological mechanisms to alter the behaviour of the host organism, essentially controlling the mind of the host for their own benefit. This is best described with real world examples.

Nematomorpha – The horsehair worm

These worms require a host to complete their life cycle, which results in driving their host to suicide.[3] The larvae can feebly survive until they are eaten by a host, such as a grasshopper or cricket. The larvae grow into their adult worm forms inside the host, feeding from the organism's well earned nutrients.

After a few weeks, the parasite begins its full attack. It is believed that the horsehair worm activates genes inside the insect that attract it to water with horizontal polarization, much like the reflection off a pond's surface.[4] It has also been observed that the worm changes the circadian rhythm of certain hosts so that they are more active in the middle of the day, when it is easiest to find water.

The final piece in the life cycle is for the misfortunate insect to jump in water and drown themselves, allowing the worm to leave the host and swim to a spot to lay new eggs. The cycle continues, each rendition at the cost of the lives of the host insects.

Dicrocoelium dendriticum

This flatworm has a complex life cycle to find a target mammal host. To achieve this, the parasite's journey involves multiple hosts. First, an egg is eaten by a snail and divides many times within the host snail's body into larvae.[5] The larvae exit the host via the mucus used for the snail's movement.

The larvae are then eaten by ants, which become the second host. All larvae position themselves in the stomach, except one which travels to the ant's brain. Hundreds of larvae could live inside one ant, simply waiting for the time the target host ingests them. The challenge is that ideal hosts like cattle and deer avoid ants on the ground.

This is where the worm positioned in the brain comes in: similar to the horsehair worms, this tapeworm changes the behaviour of host ants such that they climb up and clamp onto blades of grass.[6]

Impressively, the worm had to position itself very carefully in the ant's brain for this mind control to work, targeting areas in the brain responsible for the ant's jaw movements and motion.[7]

These are only a fraction of real world zombie parasites that live among us. Studying them can give insights into neuroscience and evolution. And fortunately, no such parasite has been known to affect humans. But it is important to note that in nature, there is a fine line between fiction and reality.

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ARE WE ALONE IN THE UNIVERSE?

BY MEHAK PARIHAR

Life on Earth is remarkable; us humans are able to solve problems, build machines, write poetry, cure diseases, and love one another. The interactions in our brains translate to intense feelings of wonder, joy, rage, and grief. We live on a planet rich with a diverse range of plants and animals. Even the simplest bacteria cells conduct chemical reactions to convert energy and transmit genetic information.

When I look up at the universe, I am struck by both the beauty and emptiness of its magnitude. Septillions of planets are out there, yet none seem to be blessed with this miracle of life. Is this level of complexity unique to Earth?

Scientists have spent lifetimes searching for an answer, for even a sliver of hope that we are not alone. Probes collect direct samples from Jupiter and Saturn's moons in the chance that other life could exist in our neighbourhood.[1] The Perseverance rover studies the surface of Mars for signs of ancient microbial life.[2]

Looking further away than the solar system makes things trickier. Telescopes analyze different types of light in hopes to find radio or laser signals that could only be artificially made. Certain telescopes can image planets and isolate the types of light that they reflect, known as *spectra*.[3] Scientists understand how many molecules reflect light, and so using these images they can determine what molecules exist in a planet's atmosphere light-years away.

An element or molecule that provides evidence of life is known as a *biosignature*[4]. Think of finding footprints in the snow. Even without seeing who left them, you can infer someone has walked by. In the same way, the existence of certain molecules on a planet indicate life.

UBC Okanagan's Nano Science Laboratory, under the leadership of Dr Robert Szilagyi, aims to use computational chemistry in classifying biosignatures. The project is led by student researcher Nadifa Omar, who specifically researches sulfur as a possible biosignature.

The project was inspired from a discovery of sulfur molecules detected in the atmosphere of K2-18b, a planet located 124 light-years away[5]. On Earth, these molecules are only produced from the biological processes of plant and marine life[6]. Omar considers the possibility that the sulfur molecules could come from a nonbiological origin on K2-18b.

"*I created a model of what the spectra of the planet would look like if the sulfur came from non-biological origins, and compared it with data from the James Webb Space Telescope.*"

There are five main potential non-biological origins of the sulfur molecules detected. Omar's research ruled out one of those pathways, significantly increasing the likelihood that K2-18b's sulfur originated from life.

The discovery of biology on K2-18b would be a monumental feat for all of humanity. It would mean that we are not alone. It would imply that Earth is not a miracle, but instead life is a consequence of planetary physics and time.

It should be noted that if life exists on K2-18b, it is most likely nonintelligent simple organisms like bacteria or algae. However, discovering such life would drastically increase the chances of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. After all, Earth's biodiversity and intelligence would not be possible without the single-celled organisms that ruled the planet for three billion years[7].

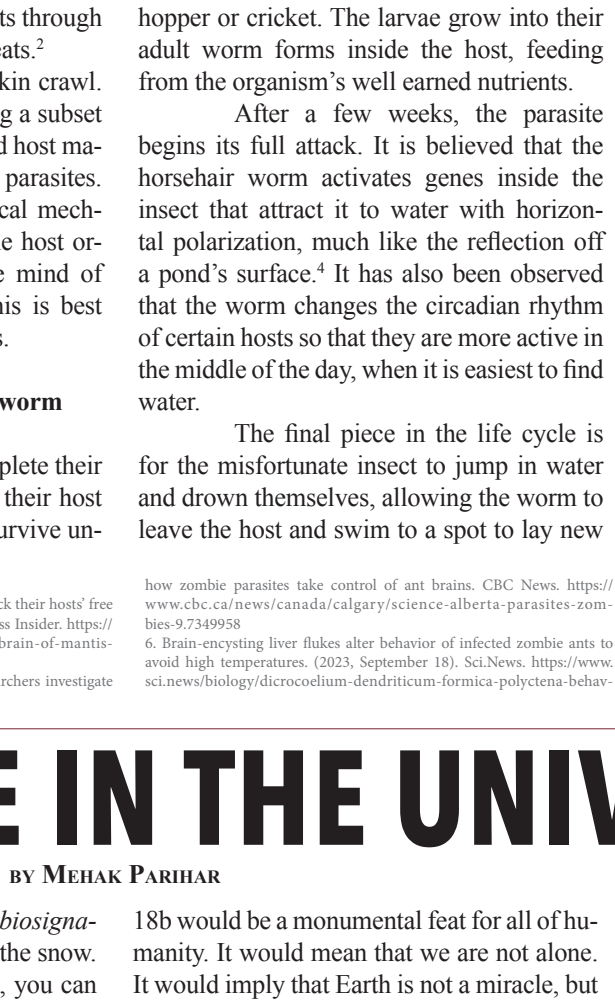


Image taken by Ashley Duggan. Provided by Nadifa Omar

"*I would frame looking at life beyond Earth as one of humanity's biggest questions; Earth is so unique and it's an inherent characteristic in humans to want to find somebody who we could communicate with.*"

Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of Omar's research is that she started it at only sixteen years old. Growing up participating in science fairs and reading NASA articles inspired her to reach out to local UBC Okanagan professors. She was especially intrigued by Dr Szilagyi's computational chemistry work because it was more concrete and experimental than pure theoretical math.

"*Starting research early on gave me the opportunity to make a lot of mistakes and learn from them. I think research is such a beautiful thing.*"

At the 2026 Canada-Wide Science Fair, Omar was awarded the Gold Excellence Award and the CAP Physics Prize from the Canadian Association of Physicists.[8] The project received the third place prize at UBC Okanagan's 2025 Undergraduate Chemistry and Biology Symposium.

Omar began a degree in math and physics at Columbia University in September 2026, and she hopes to continue looking for life beyond Earth.

In what may be humanity's greatest search, we hope to one day find conclusive evidence of life somewhere in the universe. Doing so may ultimately help us better understand our place in the universe.

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THE PEOPLE YEARN FOR SOCIAL BONDING AND GOOD FOOD



BY ENYA DANGE

On October 15th, the eighth Community Cooking Class of 2026 was held at the Picnic as part of the Weeks of Welcome at UBCO, where attendees learned how to make a Lentil Bolognese pasta. Held on Wednesdays and Thursdays each week, the classes help students learn to cook beginner-friendly, budget-friendly, and primarily vegetarian dishes. They are supervised by UBCO-student co-facilitators who develop the recipes, and each takes a turn as the instructor for a particular session. However, its broader mission of community-building sets it apart from a traditional cooking class.

What we now know as Picnic was founded by a research group called Voice and the Campus Wellness and Education Unit, which aims to assess campus well-being and take action on common student concerns through surveys and community forums, where students are encouraged to share their perspectives on key issues. Their data collection and analysis occur in phases, and they are currently in their sixth phase, or Voice 6. This research, alongside help from campus partners, has helped create campus initiatives and resources, such as the weekly Community Cooking Classes, in an effort to resolve those issues.1

Casey Hamilton, a registered dietitian and Wellbeing Strategist at UBCO, is part of the Voice research team and a co-founder of the Community Cooking Classes. When asked about the inspiration behind the program, Hamilton mentioned the results of Voice 5, stating: "Students wanted more ways to cook together; food is not only something you eat for survival, it's something you do because that's how community is built. They also wanted a place for building food skills and access to a dietitian." She continued: "Voice participants talked about the food environment and how most of their food experience on campus felt transactional, which is not supportive of mental and social wellness." Hamilton emphasized the link between comfort in cooking meals and mental and social wellbeing, and this became the foundation for the Picnic, which would eventually host the Community Cooking Classes.

The format of the classes is also beneficial for beginners, as they're assured that the classes are a low-pressure environment. Hamilton mentioned that to get newcomers to ease into cooking, they begin with a mini-orientation and a skim of the recipe before getting into the kitchen. It gave students a chance to ask questions and bond with each other.



Illustration by Sabhya Arora

When asked about the importance of pairing practical cooking lessons with discussion portions before and after the cooking lesson, Hamilton said: "When you're in the moment cooking, it's hard to learn something other than the task at hand". She added: "People share tips and tricks with each other; depending on the student/living circumstances, everybody's got different access [to food and cooking equipment]. [So it's] a chance for people to share their perspective." So those moments before and after the cooking were essential for knowledge sharing as well. Adriano Gomes da Silva Tam, one of the co-facilitators of the October 15th session, highlighted that the one-on-one aspect of the cooking lessons makes the job very rewarding, stating that: "The teaching is secondary," also mentioning that it was a chance for him to: "Build relationships and engage with the community."

The co-facilitators are the ones mainly responsible for finding and developing recipes. Thien-Nhi Vu, one of the co-facilitators, shared that: "We try to stay vegetarian and stick to a theme and budget every week." This was to accommodate as many students as possible, but she also described that the actual cooking sessions end up being low-stakes. Kenzie Yurkoski, another co-facilitator and the lead of the October 15th session, also shared that they scale the recipes they find and also keep an archive of past recipes. She also mentioned the importance of keeping lessons casual for beginner cooks, stating: "You think the information you have is universal; I've learned a lot from other participants; you're not only teaching but learning about others."

When asked about the recurring challenges of maintaining a program like this, Hamilton shared that the kitchen is not equipped with enough appliances (they have an oven, but it is only for baked goods), which limits the types of recipes they can make; however, they manage well without the extra equipment. She also added that capacity has become an issue and that they do not have enough space to meet the high demand or run more frequently. When registration opens every Monday at 8 AM, the tickets are typically gone within two hours.

Hamilton and the co-facilitators shared that the program wants students to take away more than just building confidence in the kitchen. On the night of October 15th, students left the Picnic not only with a hearty and nutritious Lentil Bolognese dish but also with new friendships.

1. How We Do It. (2023). University of British Columbia Okanagan. https://campuswellness.ok.ubc.ca/how-we-do-it/

DEMENTIA AWARENESS: THE REAL BRAIN FOOD

BY ENYA DANGE

The 2024 Lancet Commission report on dementia prevention, intervention, and care lists 14 common risk factors and action items associated with dementia. It advocates for more awareness of dementia and cognitive impairment, discusses current treatments, and major warning signs and symptoms. It also suggests coping mechanisms for people at risk of dementia or people diagnosed with dementia. Some of the action items include monitoring LDL levels, limiting alcohol consumption, wearing helmets, and treating depression (Livingston et al., 2024).

The Memory Cafe, a Participatory Action Research pilot organized by UBCO's Age Link Club and Medical Arts Research, aims to address two critical items: promoting age-friendly communities or dementia-friendly communities to limit social isolation, and providing accessible education to stimulate cognitive exercise. The October 18th, 2026 session of the Memory Cafe was held at the Laurel Packinghouse; however, a previous session in March of 2026 was held at the UBCO campus to encourage students to participate in dementia awareness.

Sophia Kong, the president of the Age Link Club, discussed what separated the Memory Cafe from a traditional support group, and highlighted how the event is open to people of all ages, caregivers, and even curious individuals not at risk of dementia, stating: "It is similar; however, this is open to the public. It's interactive, includes improvisational activities, [so it] appeals to more of the public." Barb Stewart, a researcher with Medical Arts Research and organizer of the Memory Cafe, added that the event was possible due to cross-sector collaboration, since it was supported by both scientific/medical research and an arts-based approach.

Stewart added that an open invitation to people outside of the community was essential to the Memory Cafe, mentioning: "Because we are addressing the fear, denial and stigma of dementia, a community conversation is necessary."

Students and faculty play an active role in dementia awareness, especially in neuroscience research. Stewart expressed that the research is evolving, and that the Memory Cafe was an important opportunity for researchers, and student researchers especially, to meet with caregivers, patients, physicians and nurses, who all attended the event and answered questions from people to tackle the fear and stigma, but also to touch on current treatments and prevention in a way that doesn't intimidate people with complicated science. Kong also mentioned the value of bringing in different age groups to connect: "[It's for] spreading awareness, knowing what to look for, what other people are going through, being aware of what other people in your community are going through."

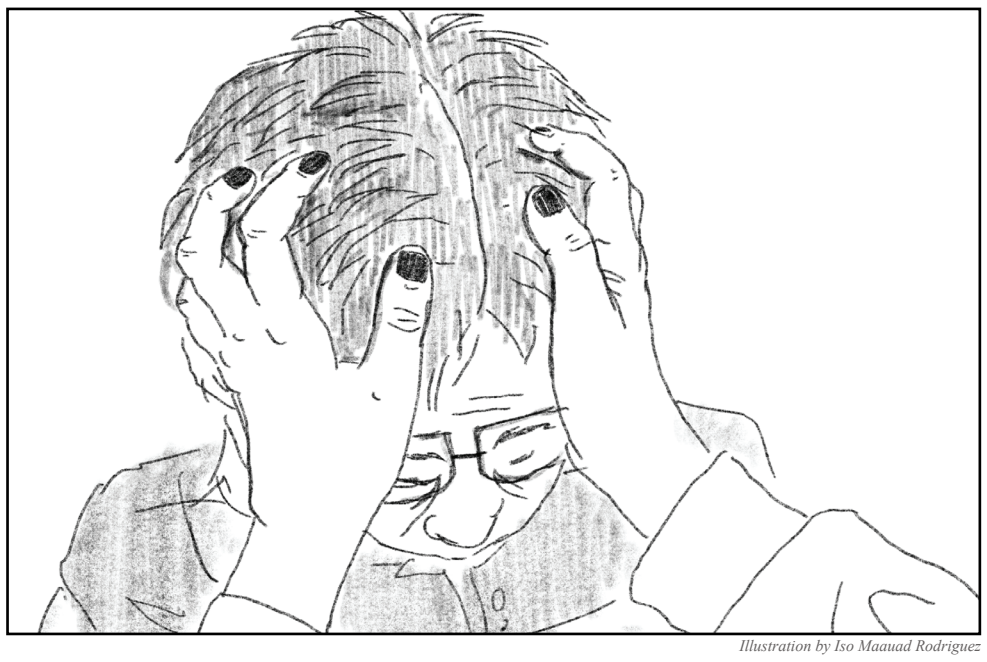


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

One of the arts-based interactive activities was improv, to help individuals, caregivers and people with cognitive impairment practice communication skills. The exercise included playing out a conversation but with certain restrictions like saying "Yes…and" in every response, to practice active listening/patience and avoid arguing with someone with cognitive impairment.

Hosting and managing the Memory Cafe sessions also came with some challenges, which the team works to improve with every new session. Kong described how a big part of their promotion was "word-of-mouth", which limited their attendance numbers. She also brought up the logistics behind the Memory Cafe and what the students found difficult about organizing the event, stating: "Finding the timing, midterm season for students, finding venues, and trying to think of getting people here." Since the event is open to people of all age groups, they also had to take accessibility into account, to which Kong said that they consider transportation, parking, individuals with mobility issues, and food intolerances.

There was also music, spoken word, and insight from professionals and people with lived experience, activities scientifically proven to help slow cognitive regression. Stewart noted that many people who might benefit from attending the Memory Cafe might not due to their personal worries or judgments on the matter. Dementia is a scary disorder because many types of it do not have a definitive cure, and it is hard for diagnosed individuals and caregivers with family members with dementia to deal with or accept it, which is why the Memory Cafe's guest speakers and panel stressed that dementia or cognitive impairment should not define or limit someone from living.

Dementia-friendly communities are one part of dementia awareness. When there is more of it, it can help people get diagnosed or tested and further promote current research to develop better treatments. Awareness can help caregivers and individuals with dementia better understand their condition and find ways to live with it, rather than suffer, but it all begins with collective support.

Livingston, G., Huntley, J., Liu, K. Y., Costafreda, S. G., Selbæk, G., Alladi, S., Ames, D.,Banerjee, S., Burns, A., Brayne, C., Fox, N. C., Ferri, C. P., Gitlin, L. N., Howard, R., Kales, H. C., Kivimäki, M., Larson, E. B., Nakasujja, N., Rockwood, K., … Mukadam, N. (2024). Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet Standing Commission. The Lancet, 404(10452), 572–628. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(24)01296-0

BELIEVABLE SYMPTOMS: THE SOCIAL PENDULUM AND DISABILITY



BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

Social politics are described by many as having the effect of a 'pendulum swing'. While previous years have seen the rise of far more socially left politics, we are now quickly seeing the pendulum swing back into socially right politics here in Canada (and the larger west).

What remains in the wake of this swing is people who still need equality and social assistance, but are not getting any. The ideals of socially right politics are to halt and conserve an ideal society, while socially left politics seek to progress forward numerous different causes. While conservation is important in some regards, progress can seldom be halted entirely, and those in the shadows will always fight to be known.

One of the many ways we can see this pendulum swing is through the treatment of disability and accessibility in society.

There has been a rise in disabled people speaking out about different issues which affect disabled people on a large-scale level, which most often relate to systemic injustice and historical dismissal of symptoms. There are many different kinds of accessibility accommodations which exist for a myriad of different disabilities. As the pendulum swings, many question the need for such accommodation and push back against the implementation of them into general social life.

Kathleen Stock's controversial article, "Why are young women using walking sticks?", brings to light the growing sentiment some have around accommodation, drawing on an especially harmful stereotype about teenage girls and their supposed bids for attention. [1]

Stock's article centers on young women who use canes for their disabilities, disabilities which she claims are 'vague' and based on pain which seems 'unclear'. The article goes on to describe how girls are prone to 'social contagion', the idea that the society around us can condition us to believe we are one way or another. Stock mentions in the article an anecdote about seeing a young woman online force staff to lift her wheelchair onto a subway platform, only for her to later stand and walk up a set of stairs.

There absolutely has been a number of cases of individuals using the status of disabled people (such as in the many cases of people lying about service animals to gain access to places with their pets) to gain some sort of accommodation. However, specifically in the mention of canes, there is very little consequence to allowing someone who believes they need a cane to use it.



Photo provided by India Williams

While symptoms such as joint pain and dizziness seem vague, there is no way of knowing the way someone experiences these symptoms and how debilitating they are to someone's life. Stock speaks on supposed social privileges and 'doting' which others give to disabled people but very often these privileges are conditional to how much the other person's disability affects others. She talks about how social media glamorizes the use of assistive devices like canes but as with anything posting on social media, there is very little you truly know about the person behind the screen.

The term 'social contagion' has been so often used to specifically undermine women and the pain they experience, which in itself has a long history of being ignored and denied. Beyond that, symptoms by themselves are so rarely taken seriously in a world that primarily respects those with bureaucratic diagnosis that can only be obtained through expensive and rigorous testing. What are women with symptoms that deeply affect their lives, who are barely listened to in the first place, meant to do? The answer, of course, is to try and better fit into perceived 'normative' society.

It is no surprise that Stock also identifies along the lines of 'gender critical feminist', a term used to define someone who is wary of gender being paramount to sex, an identity she received major backlash for.

As our world leaders and society on the whole begin taking on stances that promote images of the world as 'normative' and attempt to eradicate anything 'weird', we must remember the long histories which precede present injustice and the reasons we perceive certain attributes as 'normal'.

Most of us will or currently suffer from a disability which requires some form of physical or mental accommodation. It is not shameful to require these things, as they simply help us live the lives we want to.

I want to thank India Williams for bringing this article to my attention as well as providing the excellent cover image.

THE CULT WE CAN ALL JOIN: DEFINING 'CULT CLASSICS'

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

'Cult' as a genre has a long and complicated history in the film industry, with many overlapping and hyper-specific terms wrapped in its long, weird arms. Films defined as cult or cult classics have redefined what film and media as a whole means to filmmakers. These odd tales with experimental undertones and often taboo themes expand our understanding of the world as we know it and often challenge us to embrace the strange and bizarre without question.

Much in the vein of magical realism, it is entirely up to the viewer to decide their opinions on the strange happenings of these movies. Some of the original cult classics came out of the 'midnight movie' craze, where cinemas would show odd and possibly risquè films late in the night. Films like *Eraserhead* (1977) and *El Topo* (1970) were shown late in the night to attract audiences who appreciated the more bizarre. The mythology around these films began, as you simply had to be 'in the know' about their existence in order to view them. Midnight movies spread across many local cinemas who previously had no use for late night showings.

The midnight movie was able to handle taboo themes like sex and violence, which, while attracting a crowd appreciative of the candid use of taboo in an artistic sense, also attracted a crowd who simply desired to view these things for their shock value. Many directors who wanted their fifteen minutes of fame capitalized on this shock to create films now often dubbed 'exploitation' films. Exploitation films have been around since the early days of cinema, with movies like *Freaks* (1932) quite literally exploiting disabled actors for the purpose of shock. However, exploitation films are not often as simple to label. While *Freaks* undoubtedly used shady legal practices with its actors, it also was one of the first semi-positive film portrayals of visually disabled people. This is the contradiction which exploitation films live in.

Blaxplotation films, a subcategory of exploitation film, focus on the portrayal of highly exaggerated caricatures of Black people. This exploitation draws on minstrelsy, which is the practice of white people pretending to be Black and acting ridiculous for the comedic and sexual enjoyment of other white people, but the genre has long since taken on a life of its own. Blaxplotation films such as *Foxy Brown* (1974) and *Coffy* (1973), both starring actress Pam Grier and directed by Jack Hill (a white man), use stereotypes that still harm Black people (and Black women in specific), conversely, they are also iconic films starring Black main characters that were portrayed as noble and heroic, not to mention chock full of camp and pageantry. Many films in this genre are directed by Black people as well, which allowed Black directors to gain acclaim and community in a medium which often mocked and belittled them. While taboo themes can draw in a certain kind of unsavoury, violence obsessed audience, they also often explore the identities and issues of marginalized people.

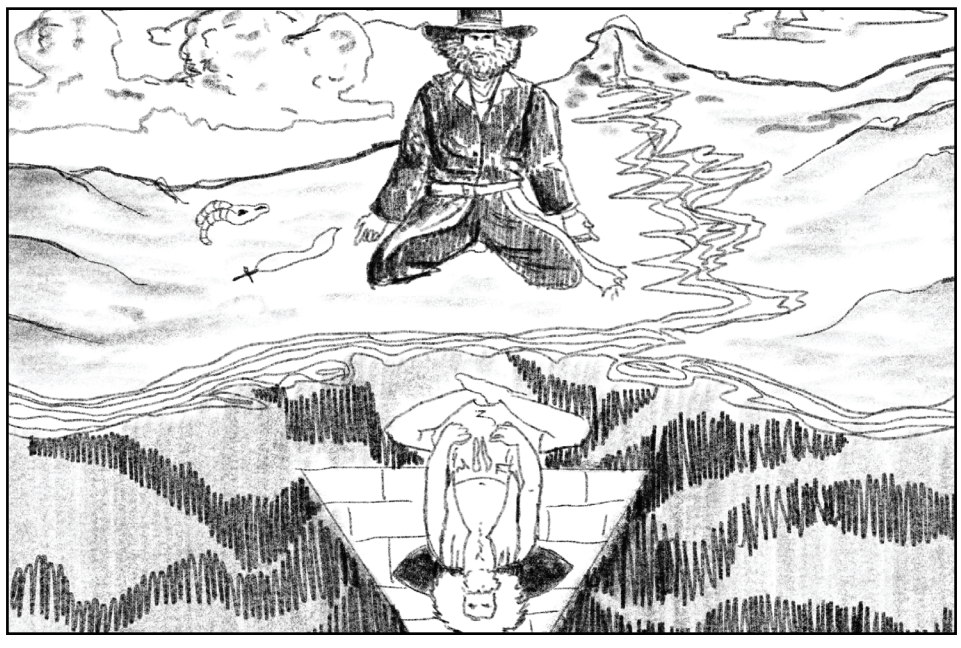


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

Exploitation films typically being associated with midnight and cult films allowed for people with little outside community to come together around a piece of art. This is where the 'cult' aspect in specific enters in. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) is possibly one of the most famous examples of a cult film. Modern fans may not be aware of the addiction that was watching *Rocky Horror* over and over in cinemas upon its release, which many film goers saw hundreds of times in the film's peak popularity. The obsession for the film turned into the famous 'add-ons' which turned movie theaters into places more like sports arenas, with fans dressing up in intricate costumes (which, in the age of no internet, were designed using only memory) and acting out in audiences by shouting and throwing props at specific scenes.

If we go strictly off of popularity, you could say any movie has a cult following (and people do), and while cult as a term has very far reaching implications and is now used for just about every film under the sun, an obsessive following is not the only thing that makes a cult movie. As the term implies, cult films often have a draw which feels unexplainable. Like some primordial force, the cult film captures something deep within ourselves which is a little weird and a little nuts. A good cult film will typically be strange in some capacity.

The strange can be a vehicle for many things, it allows us the space to see other perspectives and possibly realize those perspectives are closer to ours than we think. Watch a few as we wrap up this spooky season!

GORD DOWNIE'S LEGACY NINE YEARS ON

BY OWEN MCINTYRE

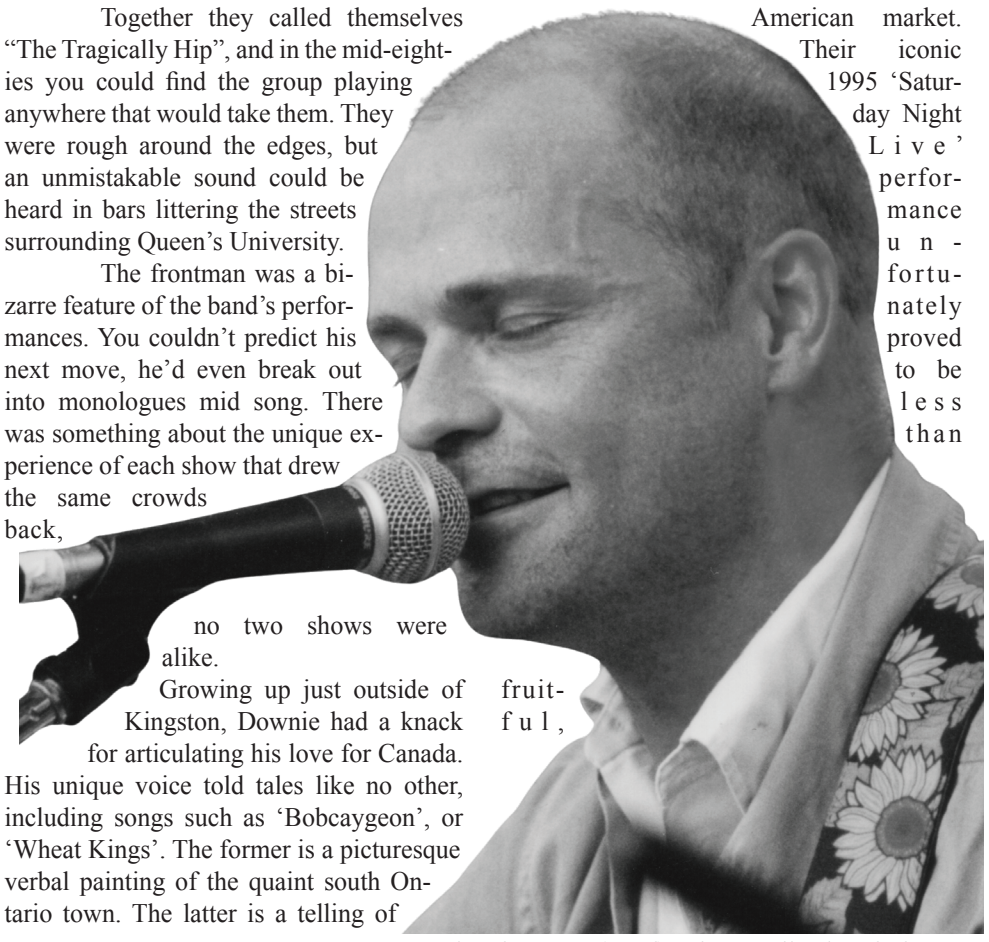
In 1983 the town of Kingston, Ontario, produced one of the greatest bands in Canadian history. Five high school friends got together and played to crowds no greater than a baker's dozen. The lead singer, Gord Downie, would go on to be a defining figure in Canadiana[1].

Together they called themselves "The Tragically Hip", and in the mid-eighties you could find the group playing anywhere that would take them. They were rough around the edges, but an unmistakable sound could be heard in bars littering the streets surrounding Queen's University.

The frontman was a bizarre feature of the band's performances. You couldn't predict his next move, he'd even break out into monologues mid song. There was something about the unique experience of each show that drew the same crowds back, no two shows were alike.

Growing up just outside of Kingston, Downie had a knack for articulating his love for Canada. His unique voice told tales like no other, including songs such as 'Bobcaygeon', or 'Wheat Kings'. The former is a picturesque verbal painting of the quaint south Ontario town. The latter is a telling of a man who was wrongfully imprisoned for two decades. The lyrics usually required some sort of adept knowledge of Canada, making the audience feel a sense of ownership and community surrounding the music.

That hallmark of the Hip happened to cramp efforts to make a push into the American market. Their iconic 1995 'Saturday Night Live' performance unfortunately proved to be less than fruitful,



File:Gord Downie 2001 (cropped).jpg" by Ryan Merkley is licensed under CC BY 2.0

and aside from the excitement back home the band did not make much of a splash in the south.

No harm in missing that market, three years prior on Canada Day in 1992 The Tragically Hip would play three shows across Canada, starting in St. Johns with ~25,000 attendees followed by 35,000 in Barrie, and lastly 30,000 in Vancouver. A historic feat for a phenom of a band.

The band would continue to be a mainstay in Canadiana for two decades, with numerous appearances and similarly massive shows. Unfortunately, their biggest show would be their last. In May of 2016 The Tragically Hip revealed that Gord Downie had been diagnosed with stage four brain cancer. That summer would be their last show.

The final show took place on August 20th, 2016, in their hometown in Kingston. The K-Rock centre was the venue for the occasion. The building was at capacity, and attendees would later recall the show was a sweaty, teary eyed, beautiful 30 track set tribute. ~7,000 people were in attendance, with 25,000 more in the surrounding streets, rooftops and patios, all there for the shows broadcast on massive screens outdoors.[2] The performance garnered 11.7 million viewers, one of the biggest Canadian media events of all time.[2] To put that into perspective, one in three Canadians watched that show live.[2]

Fourteen months later, Gord Downie died. In the time between that last Hip show and his passing Downie would cement himself even further into a Canadian legend, using the last moments of his spotlight on one of Canada's most pressing issues. His last work would be a solo album release that followed the story of Chanie Wenjack, a young indigenous boy who died from exposure in his cold escape from a residential school in an attempt to return to his family in 1966. The album titled "Secret Path" has some of Gord's best work, "Seven Matches" and "Stranger" being stand outs.

During their final show, Downie would emphasize the importance of shining a light on the dark shadow of our country. He would later say: "Canada is not Canada. We are not the country we think we are." Downie was appointed to the Order of Canada for his work on indigenous issues

I mentioned that he was a defining figure of Canadiana, but Gord worked hard to prove that Canada was not just an idyllic place we call home but a troubled nation that has much work to do in building up those who we have mistreated in the past. He truly redefined Canada on a broader scale. With the nine year anniversary of his death this past week it serves as a reminder of not only the great music but the work done since, and what needs to be done next.

1. Canadian Music Hall of Fame. (n.d.). The Tragically Hip. Retrieved October 17, 2026, from https://canadianmusichalloffame.ca/inductee/the-tragically-hip/
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CANADA IS PAVING ITS OWN WAY TO THE EU

BY OWEN MCINTYRE

Mark Carney is seeking new suitors for trade and partnership opportunities. This September he delivered a speech to the European parliament in Strasbourg, France.[1] The main theme of the speech was how the roots of Canada and Europe have long since been intertwined. A poignant analogy utilized is that of the Canadian soldier who came back to Canada from the battle of Vimy ridge with a bundle of acorns, which produced an oak forest in Ontario. Those oaks, fully grown, were repatriated back to France where they sit at their origin, their roots once twisting their way through Canadian soil now 109 years later in Vimy ridge.

The best meat on the bone, however, was Carney's stress on focusing forward. After all, what is more important than what is next for this relationship? While Canada has had a trade agreement, CETA, with the EU since 2017, both parties are looking for a little bit more. What was proposed by both Carney during his speech and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that same day, was an "associate membership" for Canada, a first of its kind. The specifics are unclear, but an upcoming summit in Montreal between Carney and EU leaders will hopefully bring some definition to the table.

Nevertheless, it is apparent what everyone's goals are for this next step in the relationship. Most eye catching for a student like myself was potential opportunities in study, and work. The ambitions for that element are found in a joint statement draft from both parties:

"*Canada will launch negotiations toward participation in Erasmus+, the European Union's flagship education and mobility programme. This will expand opportunities for students,researchers, educators and young people to gain international experience and build lasting institutional partnerships*."[2]

Erasmus+ is a program that's run for over 30 years and runs on seven year cycles, the current being 2021-2027. The program's aim is to allow people to study, work and train at institutions across Europe for up to a year. This latest cycle included investment of CAD 45 billion and includes all 27 EU member states, as well as Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Serbia, Turkey, North Macedonia and the U.K.

Canada's participation in this program sounds great for Canadian students and institutions. Universities can have brand new cohorts of international students, which can help boost funding that dwindled in the past few years. But more importantly, I want to know what I can get out of this. I reached out to various UBC staff, and received a comment from Damara Klaassen, Executive Director, International Student Initiative.

Unfortunately, her response did not include any plans for expanding the university's reach with this news. Klaassen merely highlighted the already existing ties the university has with EU countries and active Erasmus+ institutions.

While it does seem like a valuable initiative for Canada to take part in, there are valid concerns pertaining to an excess of domestic labour flight. If the barriers for most young people are lifted and a large portion of them seek to take advantage of the program, what will that result in back in Canada? Optimistically, it would diversify the applicant pool, as we would expect plenty of people to leave, it could also mean that an equal or greater number of potential workers will arrive.

However, Canada has a population that is less than 10% of the population of all EU countries combined.[3] If just half a percent of the population of the EU came to Canada for work or study, that would be 2.26 million people.

A more pressing problem that is illustrated with those numbers is what it could mean for those who are not able to take advantage of the program and look for work in the EU. There could be wild additions to competition for entry level roles, which could really overwhelm the unemployed pool of the population.

This limited glance at the potential of this program proves to be a great addition to Canada's future, it might also mean that successful implementation of it is many years away. Indicators of how long till it is implemented will hopefully come out of the EU Summit in Montreal on October 29th. Lets hope it does not take as long as those oaks arriving at Vimy Ridge.

1. Carney, M. (2026, September 17) Prime Minister Carney delivers an address to the European Parliment. Prime Minister of Canada. https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2026/09/17/prime-minister-carney-delivers-address-european-parliament
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3. European Union. (2026, January 1). Facts and Figures on the European Union. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/

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