



THE PHOENIX NEWS

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IS CAMPUS A SAFE SPACE FOR EVERYONE?

A Conversation with Anti-Abortion Protesters

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

FROM CYANOBACTERIA TO PARIS

A Deep Dive Into UBCO iGEM's Story of Success
by Aleyna Kirilmis

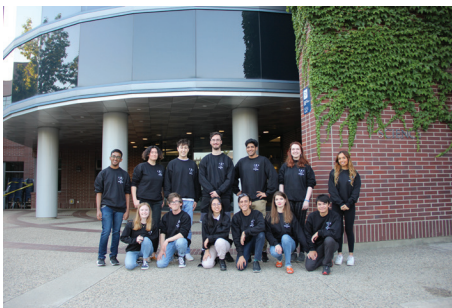


Photo provided by UBCO iGEM, 2022.

If you've been following campus news, you'll likely know that they came back with a Golden Medal for Excellence, which made us all extremely proud. But how did it come about that a club established barely two years ago could be recognised internationally for its rigorous research?

If you're a fan of romantic comedies, you may know a famous phrase from Sleepless in Seattle: "You make a million decisions that mean nothing, and then one day you order take-out and it changes your life." Well, this isn't an article about love stories, except maybe a group of students' love for synthetic biology, but this quote shows how one simple idea can lead to astounding success in as little as a year. Let's dive into the story behind the iGEM club at UBCO.

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LEVEL OF CONCERN How the Pandemic Continues to Reshape the World Economy

by Aleyna Kirilmis

The world is still reeling from the effects of the pandemic two years later, but it's worth it to look back on those two years to see how history is being remade as we speak.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Social Media and the Death of the Fashion Industry

by Aisha Rishi



Graphic by Derian Guadarrama, 2022.

With the rise of social media and apps such as TikTok, we have started to see fashion trends come and go in the blink of an eye.

FASHION CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

by Ana Salgado

"I just find that the left are all about tolerance, acceptance, and diversity. But when it comes to somebody thinking or believing differently than them, there's no tolerance at all. There's no tolerance for us. We surely didn't feel accepted or tolerated on campus."

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NEWS

Smashed Car Windows:

A Vehicle-Owning Student's Current Worst Nightmare

By Lois Chan

This is an issue that is affecting academic productivity, student finances, and schedules. Authorities and property managers have the power, resources, and responsibility to ensure student safety and the protection of their possessions. And while it undoubtedly takes hard work and money to follow through on crime prevention strategies, it remains concerning that these cases have been occurring since the summer of 2022 – according to an anonymous source – and installation of security cameras on campus parking lots will only begin in early 2023.

WINDOWS CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Photo provided by Madison Sweeney, 2022.

CAMPUS LIFE

Q&A With the Academic Advising Department at UBCO

by Mashal Narsi

I have frequently visited the Academic Advising department at UBCO throughout the course of my degree. The last three years have taught me how to book appointments timely, meet with advisors, and ask questions

in a rushed manner. Failure to do so leads to delays in proper course registration and a whole lot of confusion. I decided to investigate the issue further by interviewing the Academic Advising Department at UBCO.

ADVISING CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Professor Profile: DR. JON VICKERY: The Tolkien Expert at UBCO

by Noah Davis



Photo provided by Dr. Jon Vickery, 2022.

Dr. Jon Vickery is a lecturer here at UBCO in the English and Cultural Studies department. He teaches various English classes, two of which introduce "The Hobbit" for the first half of the course. He invited me to chat with him in his office and we talked about literature, lecturing, and his personal experiences.

VICKERY CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

How can Political Science, IR, and PPE majors make the most of their time at UBCO?

An interview with Connor Sutton.

by Mashal Narsi

As a PPE major, I strongly feel that there is a lack of resources and opportunities available for students to further enhance their university experience. With the help of Connor Sutton, a Political Science student and the President of the Dissecting Liberty club at UBCO, I created a general guide for all Political Science, IR (International Relations), and PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) majors which includes extracurricular, research, and other experiences that are not heavily advertised on campus.

SUTTON CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

OPINIONS

There's no space to study at UBCO

by Ronnie Cheng

A university is not complete without proper study spaces. How are students expected to thrive when the necessary space isn't available for them to fulfill their duties as students?

As a commuting student, I rely heavily on UBCO's study spaces to work on schoolwork in between classes. Every single day, I sigh in disappointment as I walk into a jam-packed Commons, or a library with zero available seating.

SPACE CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SPORTS

Let It Snow: Winter Sports and Activities to Try

by Carlos J. Real Lopez



Graphic by Derian Guadarrama, 2022.

While it is comfy to stay inside sipping hot cocoa covered in blankets and catching up on a tv series, there is more to do in the winter!

Even though the days are noticeably shorter and the slushy snow becomes a fixture of life for the next couple of months, that does not mean that sporting activities are over; far from it!

SNOW CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



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STUDENT SUBMISSION on PAGE 8

Professor Profile: DR. JON VICKERY: The Tolkien Expert at UBCO

WORDS BY NOAH DAVIS

Many students on campus – myself included – have developed an interest in J.R.R. Tolkien's work, especially *"The Hobbit,"* because of Dr. Jon Vickery.

Dr. Vickery is a lecturer here at UBCO in the English and Cultural Studies department. He teaches various English classes, two of which introduce *"The Hobbit"* for the first half of the class. He invited me to chat with him in his office and we talked about literature, lecturing, and his personal experiences. Dr. Vickery spoke in metaphors, offered in-depth answers, and spoke as if he was from another world... much like Tolkien himself.



Photo 1. Provided by Dr. Jon Vickery, 2022.

Noah Davis: Why teach the works of Tolkien?

Dr. Jon Vickery: I've been reading Tolkien for over 35 years. I came across Tolkien when I was very young and it was an accidental discovery. I was in the library in Elementary School and I came across something like a graphic novel – before graphic novels were a 'thing' – of *"The Lord of The Rings"* in some form and I was immediately fascinated by it; just drawn to it, like an iron to a magnet. I was captivated, and when I started reading *"The Lord of The Rings"* (I read *"The Lord of The Rings"* before *"The Hobbit"*), I was swept into this wonderful, imaginative world that took me by surprise. I felt like I was a part of this world; it swept me into its universe. I've never stopped reading it and he's never stopped captivating me.

His powers of imagination are so strong that if you give him the opportunity, they can transform you, just like when I teach in this course [English 150]. Walking in the woods of fairy land has the capacity to make the soul bigger. This is what Tolkien's friend, C. S. Lewis, says about literature in general: that literature rightly understood has an ontological dimension where there's an expansion of being. My personal being becomes expanded as I live a thousand different lives through other people. That's always really fascinated me and been important to me in respect to why I teach literature in general. There's more than just didactic teaching going on; more than just theory.

Tolkien allows us as human individuals to enter into a state of wonder and enchantment, which he thinks is essential to who we are. We begin to shed light on others around us as we engage in these stories. We become luminous to others. For me, that's a very romantic idea but also a very wonderful idea. There are a lot of individuals walking around the university brimming with light. I hope that my teaching of Tolkien will become more profound and not static and stunted in any way.

ND: Why did you choose to teach at UBCO?

Dr. V: UBCO was my "alma mater." It was the place where I did my English degree; my undergrad. So, in many ways, it's home for me and I have a vested interest in seeing this university flourish because it was important to me as an undergrad. And, it really kind of 'set my course in motion' here. When I came back, or while I was doing my PHD in Toronto, UBC was transitioning Okanagan University College into UBC. It was an exciting time.

ND: What's your favourite university memory?

Dr. V: C. S. Lewis talks about friendship in terms of two [people] coming together and discovering that they like similar things. He describes friendship with the question, "You

like that too?" and there's a bond. I had one of those moments with a professor where I had quoted in an essay a writer from the classical period. There was a moment between me and my professor of shared appreciation for this writer, which developed into a growing and lasting friendship that is still very meaningful for me today. That experience of shared delight with a professor and the ensuing friendship that developed was really one of the most meaningful things to ever happen to me in university. He was a huge mentor to me and I think mentorship is so important in the university. I think it is the model of the ancient university, it's really important.



Photo 2. Provided by Dr. Jon Vickery, 2022.

ND: What's your favourite part about teaching at UBCO?

Dr. V: It's the students, it's the people. I love to meet my students – I have great delight in getting to know them as individuals. I've had the privilege of developing a number of lasting friendships with students, which I think is such a treasure. That's for me the most important thing. But the sheer delight of having a job that allows me to teach literature. The treasure is in the text. Literature is a powerful living thing, and it's a treasure trove. I get to do that every week and that's huge.

ND: If you were not a professor, what would you be?

Dr. V: I would be a bookstore owner or a bartender. A bartender in a pub that serves real craft beer, where I can talk to people and relate to people and give them something they can enjoy. That to me is basically what I'm doing as a professor, but instead of beer, it's literature. Or I'd be a bookstore owner, where I can just be lost in narrow alleys of books all day long and bathe myself in a sea of old books. I love antiquarian books and I collect antiquarian books, so that would be a delight.

ND: What advice would you give to university students who are pursuing the arts and/or a career in writing?

Dr. V: For people who have a natural aptitude for writing, it's easier for us; for others, it's more of a challenge. But, with respect to both, there needs to be a recognition that writing is difficult.

There's a school of 'hardknocks' we

have to go through to hone our craft. The other thing is that writing is better caught than taught. When I was learning to ski, I had these painful memories of my father teaching me how to ski, what to do with my arms and legs and whatnot, and just being very frustrated. But it was when I began to ski in the company of some really gifted skiers that I just kind of naturally absorbed the skills that they exemplified. I watched them and skied with them and it became a part of my experience as well.

It's as we situate ourselves within the company of gifted writers and we read and expose ourselves to their rhetorical craft and stylistic craft...we learn to become good writers in that way by imitation. I think theory is important and so is didactic teaching, but if you want to be a good writer, read the best writing, expose yourself to as much of it as you can. Imitate what the good writers do.

As for pursuing the arts in general: there's an old Latin phrase which means "there is nothing without labor." It does take a lot of work, especially in reading. Read as much as you can and expose yourself to the stuff that you don't agree with. Don't get into an echo chamber, but expose yourself to all different sides of the argument and it will help you speak your mind more clearly.

Dr. Vickery wants English and Arts students to keep exploring literature; it will benefit you in the long run. If you ever get the chance to take his English courses, you won't regret it. I looked forward to every lecture with Dr. Vickery, and, because of him, I have found a new love for the fantasy genre. Maybe you will too.

There's no space to study at UBCO

WORDS BY RONNIE CHENG

As a commuting student, I rely heavily on UBCO's study spaces to work on schoolwork in between classes. Every single day, I sigh in disappointment as I walk into a jam-packed Commons, or a library with zero available seating. Precious time is spent searching for a seat, any seat, to finally be able to pull out my laptop and work on my assignments. With the changing seasons, students can no longer make use of outdoor space, which adds to the problem as people crowd into already packed buildings.

To learn more about what the UBCO community's thoughts are on existing study spaces, the Phoenix News asked about what students like and what they want improved for these areas on campus. The overwhelming majority of responses pointed out the need for more study spaces at UBCO. One comment exclaimed,

"JUST ONE FUCKING COUCH OMG ONE COUCH just a regular couch anywhere."

It is clear that, like myself, many UBCO students are frustrated with the inability to find a spot on campus. With the stress of school, and often work, being able to find a reliably vacant space can make our lives much easier.

A university is not complete without proper study spaces. How are students expected to thrive when the necessary space isn't available for them to fulfill their duties as students?

One response emphasized the need for more bookable study spaces. Bookable rooms are important to the student population as they provide a private space for people to work on group projects, to engage with other students in a quieter environment, and to participate in online classes. However, these rooms get reserved quickly, and even if students check the room booking system days in advance, it is often difficult to make a booking.

And, even though most of UBCO's classes have returned to in-person, certain courses remain online. While a group of students in the same class can attempt to reserve a study room, it is challenging for individual students to find appropriate spaces to participate in their online classes. One student said,

"There needs to be more of them [study spaces]! Especially the soundproof booths."

As of right now, individual students joining their Zoom classes have 3 options:

- 1) Reserve a room meant for four or more people, while groups that need the space struggle to find a room;
- 2) Miraculously find one of the two soundproof pods in the Arts building vacant; or
- 3) Join the online class in a loud public space where they may not feel comfortable enough to participate in class.

As we can see, neither options 1 nor 3 are desirable, and students cannot reliably count on option 2 as there are only two private pods available for the entire UBCO population of around 12,000 students.

Not only are there insufficient study spaces on campus, but students have also expressed disappointment with the lack of proper maintenance for existing facilities. For example, a 3rd year Human Kinetics student talked about the often malfunctioning treadmill and exercise bike desks on the 3rd floor of the Commons.

"It's frustrating because I don't feel like I walk enough during the day so I go to the treadmills to get my steps in, but when I get there, they're never working and I just end up sitting all day. You're wanting to make a behavior change, they have the equipment for you to make the change, but the equipment doesn't work, so you're stuck in the same place."

Another student said:

"They [the study spaces] are so dirty! Once COVID was gone(ish) the cleanliness standard plummeted so hard."

When there is insufficient space on campus AND existing spaces are not being maintained properly, it's not surprising that students are dissatisfied. It is clear that our current infrastructure is unable to properly support UBCO's rapidly rising student population. With the increase in students on campus this year compared to last year – because of the return to in-person classes – we already see an inability to comfortably use campus space, which leads to a subpar campus experience. Students spend the majority of their days on campus, and they need to be able to spend that time in spaces that properly suit their needs. UBCO should direct more of its resources towards improving and increasing study spaces on campus.

Q&A With the Academic Advising Department at UBCO

WORDS BY MASHAL NARSI

I have frequently visited the Academic Advising department at UBCO throughout the course of my degree. The last three years have taught me how to book appointments in a timely manner, meet with advisors, and ask questions in a rushed manner. Failure to do so often leads to delays in proper course registration and a whole lot of confusion.

I wanted to investigate the issue further by interviewing the Academic Advising Department at UBCO. However, the head of the department directed me to the UBCO Media Team.

Nathan Solski, the Associate Director of Public Affairs at UBCO, became the spokesperson and answered my questions on behalf of the Academic Advising department.

Mashal Narsi: Compared to the Vancouver campus, the system at the Okanagan campus is very different. Students are not assigned a specific advisor they can regularly contact without waiting in queues. Is this something the students at the Okanagan campus expect to happen in the future?

Nathan Skolski: UBCO and UBCV have different models of service. In this case, you are referring to UBCV's use of ESPs—Enrolment Services Professionals. ESPs are accessed for topics like making a budget, applying for loans, and understanding UBC regulations and processes. At UBCO, students can connect with Student Records and Financial Services (SRFS).

For Academic Advising in Vancouver, students go to advisors within their home faculty (Arts Advisors, Science Advisors, Land and Food Systems Advisors). UBCV students access a separate department for career advising (Centre for Student Involvement and Careers). At UBCO, we've connected academic and career advising under one umbrella. Our goal is to assist students seamlessly, connecting their academic and career aspirations.

Despite their goal of accommodating students "seamlessly," many students have raised concerns over not being able to contact an advisor immediately. And, students are often left even more confused after speaking with an advisor.

MN: Has the Academic Advising Department advocated for an increase in funding to hire more advisors?

NS: UBCO has a budget process and each year the directorates report to the Associate Vice-President of Students and put budget asks forward to support the many student programs that the university has committed to, including Academic Advising. With several priority areas identified and only limited funds available to be distributed each year, only some budget asks are approved.

That said, Academic Advising has gone through a restructuring over the past two years that has seen it adopt a new and improved business model which has led to additional

staff. As we've eased into this new model, requests for funding increases have been modest, as it will take time to build out the team and identify where the most efficient investments can be made.

MN: How does the Academic Advising department plan on solving the software issues that students face when trying to book an appointment?

NS: We have invested in a new booking software solution recently and we recognize the learning curve for both advising staff and students using the service. We expect increased efficiency to improve the overall experience. We are also seeing high volume and demand for appointments, resulting in the perception that the system isn't working properly, but we are confident that these issues will be addressed in due course.

MN: There is a separate link for Engineering students when trying to book an appointment. Is this something the department plans to expand for other faculties?

NS: The School of Engineering has advising and support systems that are unique to the needs of that program, and mirrors the advising structure for the Applied Science & Engineering Faculty across both campuses. That said, UBCO Academic Advising is a centralized service and we expect our offerings to further develop to meet the demands of a growing campus.

MN: Currently, there are nine academic advisors for over 10,000 undergraduate students. Does the Academic Advising Department think that is sufficient to accommodate students' needs?

NS: Firstly, those numbers aren't quite correct. In total, we have 15 academic advisors servicing 10,800 undergraduate students. Although, some of those advisors are specialized for specific student groups, like Indigenous Students.

Our academic advisors offer a range of services to help meet the unique and varied needs of our campus community. Feedback from students that use the services is very positive. That said, as the campus grows and the academic programs we offer develop in complexity, we expect academic advising to expand with it.

We are also focused on creating new and innovative services, many of which will require changes to how we work and allocate resources, rather than simply increasing the number of advisors. We are and will remain committed to constantly improving Academic Advising and offering essential services to our students.

MN: What steps have you been taking to solve these issues faced on a daily basis? Should students be looking toward a change for the better? A better service provided by the advisors where students do not feel "rushed"?

NS: Students feeling 'rushed' is not the experience we strive for and we take these concerns very seriously. Our approach across the entire advising team is to work with each student on a case-by-case basis to address their unique needs. Sometimes it takes five minutes and sometimes it takes an hour or longer.

The majority of feedback is that students are happy with the service they receive, but we are cognizant that access to services is an area for improvement. We are absolutely committed to constantly enhancing the student experience and finding new ways to better our service.

Some of the steps we have taken as of September 2022 to address student access issues include:

- Moving to a model that ensures students can speak with an advisor every day. We have appointments in the morning and drop-ins in the afternoons. We also added a group advising function during the peak period in September, where students who walked into the Advising and Involvement Center could sit down with an advisor in a group setting and ask their questions on the spot.
- Extended advising hours on Wednesday evenings for students seeking evening appointments.
- Every Tuesday, an academic and career advisor hosts an 'Advising in residence' series in Nechako 215.
- Hosted a focus group with students and our partners in the SUO to understand how to improve the website from the user's perspective.

Some of the steps we have taken to address student access issues in the past year include:

- Hired a student to work as an Academic Advising Assistant to serve first-year students.
- Added FAQs to our website to address common questions to save students time and increase access to those seeking answers outside of regular office hours.
- Moved from an in-person booking system to a virtual system by implementing QLess software - this allows students to book anytime, anywhere.

Despite the long waiting queues and the rushed experiences of meeting the advisors, there is still hope for change in the near future. Meanwhile, it is best to utilize the focus group sessions if one feels comfortable, as well as the residence advising sessions for those living on campus. Lastly, do not forget to give your feedback to the advisors and let them know what changes they can make to the system.

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IS CAMPUS A SAFE SPACE FOR EVERYONE?

A Conversation with Anti-Abortion Protesters

WORDS BY ANA SALGADO

CW: Graphic content. Anti-abortion.

UBC calls itself “A place of mind.” Our campus is a space for conversations and ideas. It’s a place where students can actively engage in critical thinking and open each other’s minds to new ways of knowing. The campus, then, should reflect the University’s values. But is it a safe space for everyone to discuss ideas when uncomfortable and controversial topics come to play on campus grounds?

Well, our campus has become a battleground for anti-abortion protesters and students, both of whom deem campus unsafe when they come face to face with each other. While protesters argue that their safety is at risk, students assert that the protester’s presence is uncomfortable and triggering.

The Phoenix News conducted an Instagram poll to learn more about students’ opinions on anti-abortion protesters’ presence on campus. When asked if they felt safe walking past the protesters on campus, 67% of students said ‘yes’ and the other 33% said ‘no.’ While 55% of the students who answered the poll questions agreed that campus should be a safe space for everyone, which includes both students and protesters, the other 45% disagreed, placing student’s safety over everyone else.

A student said:

“I feel that everyone deserves to be safe, even groups protesting. However, when the protesters start to make others unsafe, it becomes a problem.”

Many students expressed similar concerns. Another student wrote:

“They [the anti-abortion protesters] are actively shaming choices that students may have made. While there is no physical threat, the photos they are displaying are emotionally traumatizing.”

It seems that one of the main concerns for student safety on campus is the protesters’ use of graphic images, which not only makes many students uncomfortable, but can be triggering and traumatizing.

After an interview with Shilo St. Cyr, UBC Okanagan’s Director of the Sexual Violence and Prevention Response Office (SVPRO), I found out more about why students have grave concerns about anti-abortion protesters on campus. When asked why they thought students felt their safety was at risk in the presence of protestors, this is what Shilo had to say:

“I do worry about the images that they present, which often can be very triggering for people. [...] I always think that it can be difficult for students to witness, especially in spaces where they’re coming to learn and study.”

Campus is not only supposed to be a place for students to feel safe while they are studying, but also a place where they can fully express themselves and their beliefs. University campuses have become places where we

can actively engage in discussions and express ourselves. It’s a place for students to grow. So should their safety be prioritized?

Well, not everyone seems to agree that students’ safety is being threatened. A Kelowna Right to Life representative and active protester on campus, Marlon Bartram, claims that the protesters’ safety was at risk after last year’s protest on campus. This is what he had to say:

“Well, the protesters were the ones being yelled at and given the finger; chanted and told to get off campus. You know, they [students] physically surrounded us, and one or two kicked a couple of the signs over. One threw our pamphlets and threw our materials all over the floor. And you saw the one guy coming up to within like two inches of me and taking selfies and trying to ridicule me on camera. Very threatening. So yeah, there’s absolutely nothing that we did to intimidate students or be aggressive towards students...”

Students used to be informed about the protesters’ presence on campus ahead of time, as they announced it to school officials beforehand. However, Marlon commented as to why this is not happening anymore:

“I don’t want to put our people in that circumstance again, because it was getting dangerous. It was deeply traumatizing to some of our people. Very troubling, you know, they were very shaken up about it. And I’m not going to put them in that unsafe position again.”

Thus, they now show up on campus at a moment’s notice, without informing UBCO of their presence before they’re here. While Marlon claims that the protesters felt unsafe because of an “aggressive” student response, is it right to say that “absolutely” nothing was done to intimidate students?

Is actively showing a student population disturbing images and making commentaries about their choices not aggressive at all? Is showing up unannounced not intimidating for students who do not wish to be in their presence and cannot avoid it?

This is what one student had to say:

“They approach you, try to engage with you and show you graphic imagery.”

Marlon seems to agree that the use of images are disturbing:

“And these pictures, which are not pleasant to look at, we fully acknowledge, and we wish we didn’t have to use them. But we believe they’re effective in breaking through this blindness...”

Students and the SVPRO are concerned about how the protesters represent abortion. UBCO’s Director of SVPRO, Shilo noted that:

“I think, you know, the University really welcomes conversations about different beliefs. But the images they have are bloody, gory. It misrepresents what actually happens in the healthcare system.”

While Shilo says that the University campus welcomes “conversations about different beliefs,” Marlon claims that:

“I just find that the left are all about tolerance, acceptance, and diversity. But when it comes to somebody thinking or believing differently than them, there’s no tolerance at all. There’s no tolerance for us. We surely didn’t feel accepted or tolerated on campus.”

Maybe it’s not about not tolerating different opinions, maybe it is. But the case might also be that the approach anti-abortion protesters take can be disturbing and unwelcome, which may facilitate a more aggressive reaction from students.

However Marlon agrees that university campuses should welcome conversations about different beliefs:

“I think especially on campus, the people are there to learn, not only learn math and things like that, but to learn about controversial issues. Campuses have always been that way, always. They are places to have open and free discussions.”

But his final statement appears to be contradictory:

“Thus, public open-air demonstrations like ours are the only way we can impose the truth of abortion onto the public conscience.”

Wasn’t campus a place to have free and open discussions, not “impose” one’s views “onto” other people? Demonstrations should not be about talking at people, but rather about having discussions that allow for critical thinking to take place. Shilo adds that:

“I think when people tell you that you shouldn’t have that right to choose, it can be threatening, and it is threatening to people. [...] We support people to have conversations about different beliefs, and everyone has a different belief about their right to choose whether to have an abortion or not.”

So what do you think? Is UBCO a safe space to hold free and open discussions about controversial topics? Should UBCO prioritize students’ safety and concerns, or be a space for all to express themselves, even if it may be harmful to many of us?

Let’s all have this conversation. Reach out to [@ubcophoenix](https://www.instagram.com/ubcophoenix) on Instagram if you have something to say!



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How can Political Science, IR, and PPE majors make the most of their time at UBCO? An interview with Connor Sutton.

WORDS BY MASHAL NARSI

As a PPE major, I strongly feel that there is a lack of resources and opportunities available for students to further enhance their university experience. With the help of Connor Sutton, a Political Science student and the President of the Dissecting Liberty club at UBCO, I created a general guide for all Political Science, IR (International Relations), and PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) majors which includes extracurricular, research, and other experiences that are not heavily advertised on campus.

Mashal Narsi: What led to the creation of Dissecting Liberty?

Connor Sutton: I'm studying political science at UBCO and I wasn't sure if I wanted to major in PPE. Coming from COVID-19 with online classes and then finally being on campus, I was ready to engage with the community and get involved in extracurricular activities like clubs for a proper university experience.

With the PPE program, we have so many great politically minded students and so many great courses with professors dedicated to Philosophy, Politics, and Economics as well as International Relations. I believe that partially due to COVID-19, the community was not there outside of courses, and there was no engagement. I knew I wanted to start a club dedicated to those subjects [classes]. In my third year, now that we are fully open and operating, I decided it was time to start the club.

MN: What is the purpose of the club and what should students expect?

CS: The club is called Dissecting Liberty. It is a political philosophy club. It is meant to take the concept of liberty and freedom and understand it as fully and deeply as possible. We take conceptions of it and engage with them. Whether you're a libertarian or a conservative, there is always a desire for liberty of freedom. Each mindset will criticize

the other for not fighting for liberty. It is about understanding what those different versions of liberty are, which helps you understand your perspective on liberty.

By having these disagreements, you're better able to advocate for what you believe in. From these different conceptions come different utilities, and different policies one pursues. Engaging with different political ideologies is important right now. There are so many important movements.

In October, we had a series of special events and an active membership. One of our events was based on Objectivism, the political philosophy of Iran. We also had an event on UBC's Freed Speech Referendum to make sure people are aware of it and can give their feedback. We also watched a political documentary and students made a series of arguments.

Moving forward, we will begin our weekly meetings. We will also have a weekly book club where students are free to read any book they like and present a summary to the group. This gives you the incentive to read via this casual commitment. Bi-weekly meetings will include discussions and in-depth debates on topics that are presented. The prompts for the discussions are created by the leadership team, with suggestions from club members. You get to work on your presentation skills, articulation, and argument. Guest speakers also suggest prompts.

MN: Do you believe there is a lack of resources for Political Science, PPE, and IR majors to be more involved on campus?

CS: Yes. I was longing for a community to engage with. The students, myself included, do not just engage with these subjects to get a degree, we engage with the subjects because we are passionate about them. We do not just want to engage with them in our courses; we want to do it outside of the classroom

too. This is something that I want to work on in professor-student relationships. Especially after online courses, so many students lack those connections with their professors, which are integral for academic development and references for jobs post-graduation.

Other ways to engage in extracurricular activities include: joining or starting your own club, working as a research assistant, and taking part in policy competitions and seminars. If you're passionate about something and wish to start your own club, you can contact the Students Union Okanagan. The deadline to submit club forms is in January for Winter Term 2.

MN: How does Dissecting Liberty aim to enhance student-professor relationships?

CS: I've been working very closely with my professors and promoting the club in my classes. I want to extend these relationships I have been building to the students. We plan on inviting professors to our events to engage with the students and their discussions.

MN: Do you have any advice for incoming and prospective students that are majoring in PPE, Political Science, and IR? How should they navigate their way through university? What opportunities should they look out for?

CS: Number one: join my club! Recently, the Philosophy, Politics and Economics department has started hosting speakers, so keep an eye out for posters and make sure to check out their website for information. It is a great way to meet professors. It is usually a small gathering so you can engage by asking questions and conversing with people one-on-one. Go to office hours. And do not be afraid to change your plan. I recently switched from PPE to Political Science as my major. Things

change, but you'll still be in the same realm of subjects.

Applying for the Undergraduate Research Award and International Undergraduate Research Award is also a great way to work under a professor and explore a specific topic in-depth while getting paid! The deadline to apply is January 2023!

Students who are passionate about creating an impact both on campus and in the external community can apply for the Sharon Simpson Family Community Impact Award worth \$1000-2600 to fund a cause and pay it forward to the community.

MN: Could you elaborate on the recent Public Policy Seminar you attended which was hosted by The Fraser Institute?

CS: We aim to develop student leaders at Dissecting Liberty by engaging in critical thinking. A part of that development is through career and networking opportunities. I have worked with the Fraser Institute in the past; they reached out to me to promote the Public Policy Issue Seminar that took place in October. They also offered a travel bursary program for UBCO students. Students living in Kelowna were flown to Vancouver where all expenses were paid for by the institute to engage in policy seminars and discussions. Last month, 30 students from UBCO took part in this. Students made important connections as well as friendships.

Students can also engage in voluntary services to build their resumes. Check out the QR code for links to resources and information!



Social Media and the Death of the Fashion Industry

WORDS BY AIIISHA RISHI

Picture this: you are walking around the mall, finding something nice to buy. First, you go to H&M and see a polyester lavender blazer. Cute. Next, you go to Forever 21 and see a similar-looking blazer, just a few shades darker—same material. Then, you walk past the Garage. You see a lavender blazer in the window with a slightly different cut, also made of low-quality polyester. *Why are there so many lavender blazers? And why are the clothes of such low quality? you wonder. Should I buy it? Is my black blazer not good enough anymore?*

This is what fashion has become—seeing similar-looking, low-quality items in every store designed to stick out more than the others. When I walk around the mall, I see the same item everywhere. Before, I would know what I was getting every time I walked into a store. Zara would be great for basics, and Garage was fun and artsy. Though they were all trying to get you to buy into a fashion trend, they all had something unique about them. Plus, they were made to last for years. So, why have stores become like this? The short answer: micro-trends.

Micro-trends are short-lived trends that rise and fall in popularity faster than traditional fashion trends. With the rise of social media and apps such as TikTok, we have seen fashion trends come and go in the blink of an eye. Think about the rise of cottagecore, Y2K, and even the short-lived trend of cow print pants. This can be a positive thing. With more people and voices, the fashion industry is

growing. However, this causes a problem.

“Traditional brands, which would commonly plan new collections and develop products for more than a year in advance, couldn't keep up with competitors that digested trend and sales data and regurgitated new designs in a matter of weeks,” says Amanda Mull, a writer for The Atlantic.

According to CBC, competitors like Shein put out more than 6,000 new designs per day. This has forced older fashion companies to prioritize quantity over quality, use cheaper fabrics, and lose the uniqueness their brand offers.

In addition, the rise in micro-trends has caused environmental problems. With the fashion industry and social media convincing you that you always need the next new thing, people tend to overconsume the products and throw away out-of-style but perfectly fine clothes in order to make room for new clothes.

According to Earth.org, landfills have up to 92 million tonnes of garment waste every year. That is the same as a garbage truck full of clothes ending up in landfills every second.

But is there any good to come from this? Yes. People have become aware of these issues. With the start of larger conversations around fast fashion's environmental and ethical impact, people have put more emphasis on personal style. Thrifting has also increased in the last few years, which is a sustainable alternative to shopping and provides more unique pieces that aren't based on what is 'in' at the time. In addition, with micro-trends coming

and going, consumers are overwhelmed by the sheer number of choices. As a result, people have begun to look inwards and choose clothes they love, rather than what is trending.

However, this process is slow since micro-trends are still coming and going every day. The fashion industry thrives on telling people they need to buy the next new thing and that what they are currently wearing is out of style. Even people on TikTok like to diss certain items as soon as they go out of style. For example, recently, I saw someone saying that anyone who owns high-waisted jeans is basic, with everyone in the comments agreeing.

I'll be honest. I have also fallen victim to dismissing certain fashion styles because I thought they were too 'basic,' but I realize that this mentality feeds into the need for overconsumption and doesn't encourage personal style. Personal style isn't always standing out as much as possible, but is about what makes you feel comfortable and happy.

A few weeks ago, I did a video for the Phoenix where I asked people about their fashion tips for the fall. Though everyone had different opinions, I realized that's what made it special. They all had different ideas about how to look good. And, though they had unique



Graphic by Derian Guadarrama, 2022.

fashion styles, everyone looked amazing. I realized that though the fashion industry is failing to appeal to its audience, the future looks bright as its consumers have slowly started to ignore the trends and embrace personal style.

Smashed Car Windows: A Vehicle-Owning Student's Current Worst Nightmare

WORDS BY LOIS CHAN

The first time I heard about car windows being smashed on campus was from my friend Dhar. As one of many students living in student residence, Dhar had often heard the chorus of car alarms echoing in parking lots throughout the night. More often than not, during September, she would walk past cars with smashed windows in the evening and phone campus security.

They probably recognized her voice at that point.

The epidemic of window smashing has been referenced online on UBCO's student-run Reddit page, in which users have reported at least five cars being broken into in the Academy Hill neighbourhood around the apartment complex U2, and at least three cars in the R Lot on campus. In fact, Reddit user Glad_Nebula3757 shared that their car was broken into twice, and when they complained to the property managers that run the "U" buildings, there was little to no response to find solutions.

Beyond these instances, word of mouth has traveled quickly. When we asked our followers on our Instagram page, @ubcophoenix, "Have you had your car window smashed while parked on campus or know someone who did?" there was a 57% to 43% yes to no ratio.

Objectively, what has been occurring on campus and in nearby neighbourhoods is a crime. So why are the statistics so high?

When I reached out to Campus Security for a comment, I was redirected to Nathan Skolski, the Associate Director of UBCO's Public Affairs, who gave me a rundown of the window-smashing situation:

"UBC Okanagan takes the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff and their property very seriously. In September of

this year, we saw a total of seven incidents of property damage to vehicles in UBCO parking lots. This is a higher number than we have seen historically during this period. The vast majority of incidents were reported as property damage rather than theft and UBCO Campus Security assisted all victims in reporting these to the RCMP.

"UBCO is, of course, part of a larger community and subject to the same trends that impact our region as a whole.

"The campus has since enhanced its security measures, including the use of dedicated guards and increased frequency of security patrols. New cameras are also on backorder and will provide further visibility of parking lots on campus. These are expected to be installed in early 2023.

"Since these measures were introduced, campus security has received no additional reports of property damage or theft in UBCO parking lots."

Though only seven incidents of property damage have been recorded by Campus Security, I wonder how many car-owners with UBCO parking passes have forgone reporting to the university. In combination with the possible numbers of cars broken into on Academy Hill, it feels impossible to guess at



Photo provided by Madison Sweeney, 2022.

the total amount of window-smashing in the past months, with the lack of effective camera footage.

My classmate Madi is one of the many who unfortunately had her car window smashed in off-campus:

"So basically, I went to the Haunted Corn Maze on October 21st, which was a Friday night. I came home decently late and parked my car underground like I do everyday; the only difference was that I reversed into my parking spot.

"I woke up the next morning to go to the store like any other day, only to find my passenger window smashed to pieces. As somebody who loves her car, this was very hard to see. The broken window was a big hit to my bank account, but besides that, the first thing I did was call my father, back at home. He calmed me down and went online to conduct a report.

"While he was doing that, I took photos for record-keeping and later went to an ICBC auto glass repair place to get it fixed the following week.

"I tried to look and figure out what gave the criminal the idea to hit my car compared to everyone else, but when looking for my valuables, all they took was a makeup bag full of old mascara and concealer. They left all my change, spare money, and expensive sunglasses. I'm still not sure what they were looking for, but all they did was break a window and take a mini makeup bag..."

After her window was smashed,

Madi wasn't able to attend class or have enough time as we had hoped to work on our group project that week, because of complications in getting her car fixed. And that's just one instance that doesn't even account for how many other students might've struggled to cover repair fees, or find accommodations for travel while their car was being fixed.

This is an issue that is affecting academic productivity, student finances, and schedules. Authorities and property managers have the power, resources, and responsibility to ensure student safety and the protection of their possessions. And while it undoubtedly takes hard work and money to follow through on crime prevention strategies, it remains concerning that these cases have been occurring since the summer of 2022 – according to an anonymous source – and installation of security cameras on campus parking lots will only begin in early 2023.

It may be easy to take a number like seven cases on campus as only a few, but the truth remains that there are more cases on Academy Hill, possibly more unreported across the Okanagan region – and the most damning fact of all: window-smashing should not be happening at all.

If you can, I highly recommend investing in dashcams, car insurance, and other protective measures to prevent damage costs in case your car happens to be the next unlucky victim.

Stay safe, UBCO!

Let It Snow: Winter Sports and Activities to Try

WORDS BY CARLOS J. REAL LOPEZ

Even though the days are noticeably shorter and the slushy snow becomes a fixture of life for the next couple of months, that does not mean that sporting activities are over; far from it! While it is comfy to stay inside sipping hot cocoa covered in blankets and catching up on a tv series, there is more to do in the winter.

As anyone that has been at the University for more than a year would testify, there is still a great selection of events and ventures at your disposal in the Okanagan valley. In fact, one of the activities is the sole reason many choose to study here; I bet you can guess which one it is.

Without further ado, let's take a brief look at some of the sporting activities you can participate in throughout the winter.

Skiing and snowboarding

Arguably the most popular winter expedition among our demographic, though not necessarily exclusive to ours, skiing and snowboarding are the tandem that takes the crown with regard to winter activities.

Fortunately for us, the Okanagan area is privy to great resorts at a relative arm's length. While having a car or truck certainly eases your travel time and freedom to do so, there are also shuttle services from the airport,

downtown, or even organized by UBCO Recreation from time to time.

Resorts nearby include Big White and Silver Star, with Revelstoke, Apex, and Sun Peaks also in the wider Okanagan. If you want to ski all day, it is possible to do so, and if you don't know how to ski, there are always classes you can sign up for at these resorts. Some of them are even free!

But that's not all. The resorts also have mountain villages that offer souvenirs (and yes, that includes a new laptop sticker for you) and the necessary chow for the downhill journeys. A personal favorite of mine is the poutine at Big White's Ridge Rocket cafe. It really does the job after the many hours of skiing. Point is, there is an array of resorts around us; if you've been here for a while, you could try a new resort, or if you haven't gone skiing or snowboarding yet, it is a great time.

Ice-Skating

Another outdoor activity available in this icy town involves traversal through friction on a thin layer of frozen water, otherwise known as skating. Bear in mind that while not officially part of the citizenship test here, knowing how to skate is of crucial importance in Canada; if there was a ranking of "Canadian-ness," ice skating would be right below Hockey (of course), but above saying "eh" after most sentences.

Honestly, if you picture Canada (or every frosty county above the 37th parallel), it might be one of the first outdoor activities to come to mind – after thinking of the icy cold, of course. Hence, you can get a pretty good skating session in downtown Kelowna on the ice rink near the bear statue. The scenic scenario is perfect for anyone looking to have a great outdoor experience in this cold weather. Plus, the fact that it is downtown means that there are a lot of places to chow down after or before.

What about Indoors?

Of course, not all sports can or should be an icy affair or an outdoor exhibition. If anything, for some, the blistering chill outside is all the more reason to engage in indoor activities. Fortunately, there are plenty of indoor options in Kelowna and there truly is something for everyone.

For instance, the UBCO gymnasium is constantly hosting Yoga classes, badminton skirmishes, and eventually they will host intramural leagues again; this time focusing on indoor sports like basketball, dodgeball, volleyball, and futsal.

Apart from the folks at UBCO Recreation and the Hangar, there are likely to be events hosted by clubs – such as the outdoors



Graphic by Derian Guadarrama, 2022.

club – so keep your eyes open on campus for updates. As for off-campus, Parkinson Rec is always a good option. Plus, if you don't like those activities, you could always just continue to hit the gym. As they say, the pumping iron season is year round.

FROM CYANOBACTERIA TO PARIS

A Deep Dive Into UBCO iGEM's Story of Success

WORDS BY ALEyna KIRILMIS

If you're a fan of romantic comedies, you may know a famous phrase from *Sleepless in Seattle*: "You make a million decisions that mean nothing, and then one day you order take-out and it changes your life." Well, this isn't an article about love stories, except maybe a group of students' love for synthetic biology, but this quote shows how one simple idea can lead to astounding success in as little as a year. Let's dive into the story behind the iGEM club at UBCO.

Established in 2020, the iGEM club has brought their love of synthetic biology and all things science to the campus with an inspiring passion. The club describes itself as a multidisciplinary group of students interested in biotechnology, bioengineering, and synthetic biology who help others interested in these fields and provide social and academic opportunities for students at UBCO.

Having directed various workshops aimed at sparking a passion for science in both youth and college students, the club took an exciting step this March and applied to the iGEM Grand Jamboree, hosted in Paris, with a promising team. If you've been following campus news, you'll likely know that they came back with a Gold Medal for Excellence, which made us all extremely proud. But how did it come about that a club established barely two years ago could be recognised internationally for its rigorous research?

After interviewing some members of the team, it became clear to me that this success certainly did not happen without hard work and dedication, which makes their feat even more impressive and worth talking about.

From the beginning of the interview, the team members made it clear that iGEM brought knowledge not only to the University but also to its own club and team members. Robin, a Zoology student who works in the wet lab, mentioned that they learned all the processes to conduct experiments through the iGEM club and they actually ended up assisting the TA in their lab session to teach their classmates how to extract DNA.

For reference, the wet lab team works in the laboratory on biological matter and chemical reactants, while the dry lab team works on the computation, modeling, and engineering aspect of a project.

"iGEM, as both a team and a club, is first and foremost a learning experience."

Ryan, a biochemistry and molecular biology student who also works in the wet lab, emphasised how multidisciplinary the iGEM club is.

"We are a club for anyone."

It was evident from the get-go that it was more than just brains that guaranteed this club's success; it was the dedication for knowledge, along with a wide range of perspectives, that helped the club members when they faced issues along the journey to Paris.

Before we carry on, it's important to understand what iGEM is. According to the website, iGEM is an independent non-government organization that has been dedicated to advancing the field of synthetic biology through the medium of competition for 19 years. Every year, the iGEM Grand Jamboree brings together teams from all around the world to present their projects to judges who are experts in the field of synthetic biology.

There are various prizes to be won, but the iGEM team at UBCO emphasised how the gold medal they received was less about winning and more about the recognition that their research was up to a golden international standard.

The iGEM team from UBCO won a prize for their Life Bulb project, which sought to use biological sources as a source of clean light. This project was inspired by local Indigenous cultures in and around the Okanagan.

The team also pointed out that the Jamboree was an educational experience that allowed them to learn more about the current research in the field of synthetic biology and network with professionals who could open doors for them in their academic future.

So, clearly, it's a big deal. It's such a big deal, in fact, that some universities have professors dedicated to guiding iGEM teams. As much support as there is for research at our University, it was, unfortunately, not the case that the iGEM team at UBCO had the same opportunities.

Synthetic biology is a field that had not been researched much at UBCO prior to iGEM, even at the graduate level.

It may not come as a surprise then that the team faced difficulties in establishing this new research topic in the limited available spaces at UBCO.

"We didn't really have any credibility because we were building it from the ground up. So trying to get what we needed to do this research, whether that was lab space or equipment or funding or just like recognition from the university [was a challenge]"

The team mentioned that their research was much easier to complete in the summer when the laboratories weren't being used. However, as soon as classes started, they had very limited access to those spaces and the wet lab team suggested that they may have had more success in getting their Life Bulb to work consistently if they had a little more time in the lab.

Apart from limitations with lab spaces, the team also had to grapple with financial concerns. If you've tried to travel anywhere recently, you will likely be aware that a trip to Europe is most certainly not among the cheapest things to do. Robin pointed out how hard the finance team, led by Anastasia, who is also a biochemistry and molecular biology student, worked to get funding for both the trip and the project. Though they managed to gather an impressive amount of funding for a newly established club through both grants from the university and sponsors, the team ended up having to cover around half of the trip expenses.

"It kind of sucks that it had to be a personal expense when we were there representing UBCO," pointed out a team member. Though, they also added that despite all the challenges, they felt proud to represent UBCO in an international setting.

Despite not receiving enough support from the administration, the team showed a lot of gratitude for the constant support they got from the Faculty of Science. The Principal Investigator of the project, Dr. Mitra Tabatabaee, helped the team extensively throughout the whole project.



Photo provided by UBCO iGEM, 2022.

Whether it was in the wet lab helping the team to start a growth curve or greeting the team at the airport when they came back, Dr Tabatabaee's support was ever-present for the team.

There were also many other professors and professionals who helped the team, including Dr Isaac Li who got them in touch with the administration of the university when they were struggling to get contacts.

The list of faculty who helped the iGEM club is extensive, and it makes one feel proud to be at UBCO, where a sense of community overrules bureaucratic red tape.

Paris itself seems to have been a great time for the team. "I mean, it was Paris," mentioned Robin as they spoke about the various sightseeing activities they took part in when they weren't at the event. One of the most iconic photographs on their Instagram account features them in front of the Eiffel Tower, where they met up with other teams.

An aspect that their research doesn't show as clearly is the friendships they formed on their journey. The team members grew closer together through all the challenges and remain close friends even after the event.

It was also pointed out how special the trip was for some of their team members as they hadn't had the chance to travel abroad before, and what better reason to travel than for the advancement of science?

We also had the opportunity to talk about the iGEM club's dedication to situating themselves on the land on which they conduct their research and to acknowledge Syilx Okanagan Peoples. Although there is more Indigenous representation in Western Science, it has, unfortunately, been the case that many organisations dedicated to conducting research in the STEM field do not prioritise working with the Indigenous Peoples of the land they work on.

It makes one especially happy to see that the iGEM club placed this as a priority in their club's values and has made significant attempts to bring the Indigenous Peoples of the Okanagan and the Nations surrounding the Okanagan into UBCO, whether that be to learn or to share their knowledge with the students.

Along with workshops they've attended where they speak about STEM with Indigenous youth, they have also collaborated with qGEM, the iGEM club at Queen's University, to organise a social media campaign that brought awareness to the contribution of Indigenous researchers to Western science.

The leader of the dry lab team, Srushiti, who is an electrical engineering student, explained many of the initiatives that iGEM has taken part in on their path to having a successful community outreach, which includes commissioning a sketch of dinoflagellates from the local artist Les Louis to one day be carved into wood, Les Louis' medium of choice. You've seen Les Louis' work on campus before as he is the Syilx artist who installed the story poles on campus! The team hopes to work with him more in the future, especially if they can get more administrative support next year.

By the end of our time together, it became clear to me that the iGEM club at UBCO has received their achievements for good reason. Their passion for science, dedication to their vision, and their bright attitudes have made them one of the most inspiring student-led initiatives on campus. I have no doubt that they will establish a strong presence at UBCO, and that we will see the club members at the forefront of scientific research in the future.

So, if there's something that you want to research too, you really have no excuse. Get involved!

As the article ends, I'd like to mention all the members of the team that represented UBCO in Paris:

Gustavo Muro Marchani - Co-Lead
Alyssa Kong - Co-Lead
Josh Haiworonsky - Human Practices Lead
Trevor Fox - Wetlab Lead
Srushti Parekh - Dry Lab Lead
Anastasia Bernaz - Finance Lead
Ryan Riopel - Wet Lab Member
Robin Blott - Wet Lab Member
Maddie Gebhardt - Human Practices Member
Osho Gnanasivam - Finance Member
Tanner Pereschitz - Dry Lab Member
Ravi Bullock - Dry Lab Member
Stephen Herbert - Wiki Member
Ankkit Prakash - Wiki Member
McKenna Yungling - Dry Lab Member

Congratulations to all the members of both the team and the club!

LEVEL OF CONCERN

How the Pandemic Continues to Reshape the World Economy

WORDS BY ALEyna KIRILMIS

The year is 1352, and you're a simple peasant living in a small village in England. The last five years have been perhaps some of the most traumatic years in human history – riddled with death, poverty, and societal collapse. Alas, you have mouths to feed, so you must work. During the day, your friend William comments that the lord in the next town pays double what you earn because he has no farmers left to take care of his land. That's strange, you think, why shouldn't I work there if I get paid double?

Let me bring you closer to the present. You're waiting in line at a fast-food restaurant, a place you hadn't visited for the better half of a year while you were cooped up inside, and the person behind the till apologizes to you for the delay in getting your food ready. "We're just so understaffed," they say as they rush to get the next person's order. That's strange, you think, people still need to feed their families, so why does no one want to work here?

Pandemics, depending on their severity, can shake up all forms of balance in the world, and the COVID-19 pandemic was no exception.

The globe is still reeling from the effects of the pandemic two years later, but it's worth it to look back on those two years to see how history is being remade as we speak.

You may not vividly remember everything from the last two years, but I can remind you of some things that came to a halt in

the world economy because of the pandemic. Many factories worldwide stopped operations as workplace restrictions were enforced, causing supply shortages of many key items such as microchips, aluminium cans, and lumber.

Some developed countries were able to support low-income families who were more likely to be laid off, by providing subsidies. Many firms also shifted to a work-from-home format.⁶

In the larger picture, we saw fluctuations in the global market of key predictors of economic well-being such as the price of petrol and gold, and global financial markets.

One big issue that arose was one you have likely been affected by yourself: the labour shortage. A common thing to see all around in 2021 and 2022 were "We're Hiring" signs.

According to Statistics Canada, there was a recorded 119.4% increase in job listings posted for food counter attendants and kitchen helpers.¹

Almost all industries saw an increase in job vacancies failing to be filled for long periods, which caused a general slowdown in the economy.

The reason for this shortage in labour was Canada's ageing population, combined with the freeze on immigration during the pandemic.¹ One outcome of this shortage was that

most people saw an increase in their wages in an attempt to keep them loyal to their company, which didn't seem to solve the issue.¹

Both the government and businesses have resolved some of these problems after two years of constant deliberation. However, the aftermath of this chaos has manifested itself in levels of inflation that are now most countries' primary concern.

In a survey conducted by McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm, all regions of the world – except Greater China and Europe – listed inflation as their biggest concern when it came to factors that may limit economic growth.² For Europe, unsurprisingly, the biggest concern was volatile energy prices, and for China, surprisingly, it was still the pandemic.²

Inflation affects everyone but, unfortunately, it affects the poorest the most. In the middle ages, the richest got richer during the Bubonic Plague when the Statute of Laborers was issued in 1351³, forcing people to work whenever there was an available position, even if the worker thought the wage was unfair.

Though governments rarely explicitly take the side of companies anymore, we saw that the pandemic affected lower-income families the most.

A report completed by inequality.org, a website dedicated to news on income inequality, showed that billionaires' wealth in the US rose by 58% during the pandemic.⁴

Due to a lack of regulation, governments have allowed companies to increase their prices by more than what would be necessary to account for inflation, effectively letting citizens be robbed of their money. This situation is especially dire in sectors with monopolies in Canada, such as the telecommunications industry, and the grocery industry.

In Canada, the grocery firm Loblaw made \$1 million dollars every day in excess profits during this year of high inflation.⁵

So, while you reconsider if you should go out on a Friday night because your grocery bill came over your budget, others were wondering which luxury car they should take out. It can be somewhat startling to see that although times change, the inequality between socioeconomic classes seems to stay.

It's hard to accurately measure everything that has shifted in the world economy because of the pandemic, as we are still very much in the midst of it.

Nevertheless, pandemics have historically led to major social and economic changes worldwide, and we can expect to witness even bigger changes to the world as we know it in the upcoming years.

Whether these changes will be good or bad will depend on how much those affected by social inequality can speak up.

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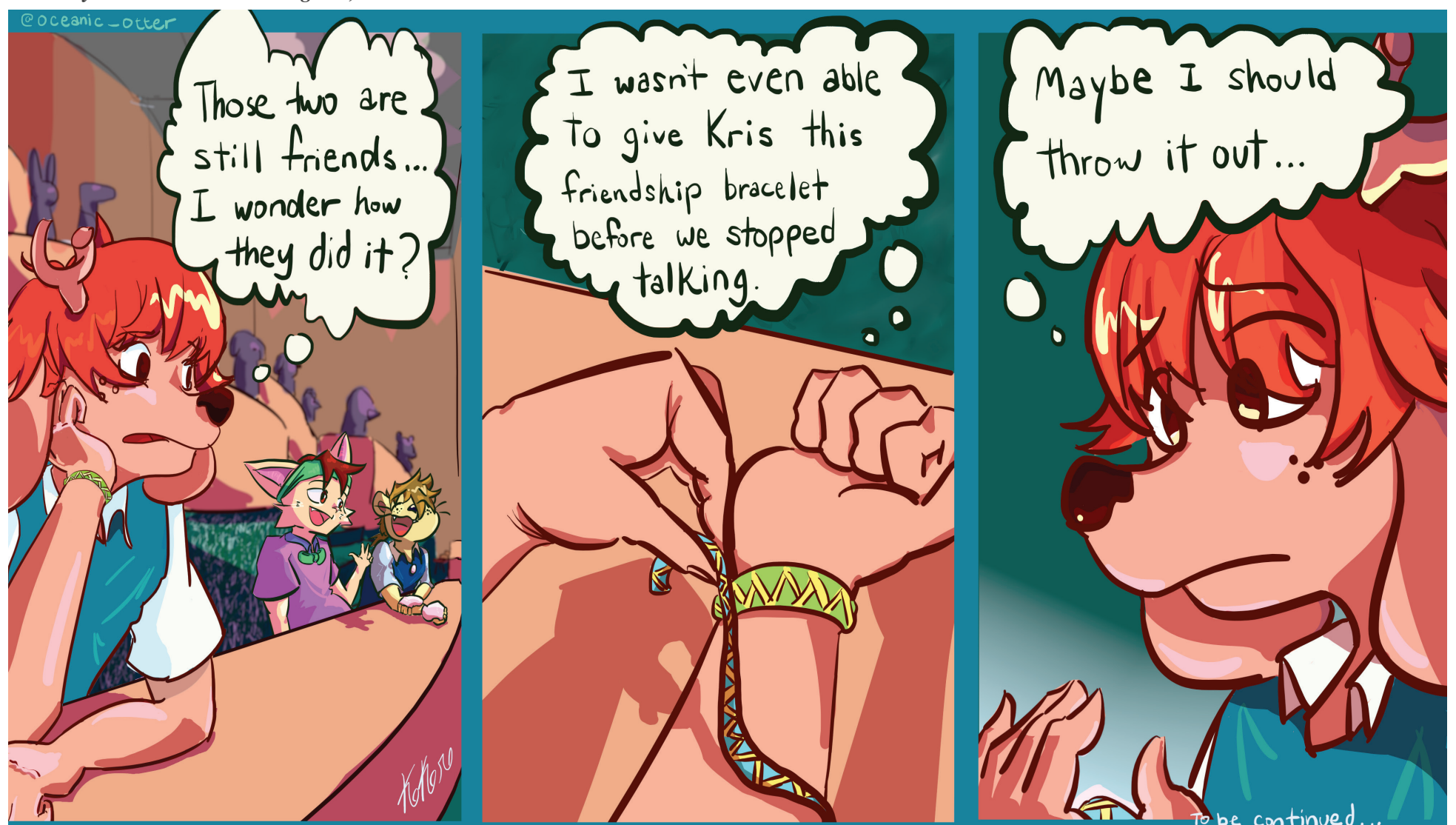
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