

THE **U** N I T E R

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AND PERHAPS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IS AFRAID OF THAT

A ROLLING DOUGHNUT

THOMAS PASHKO
MANAGING EDITOR

THOMPASHKO

It's February in Winnipeg. This means that, after what had so far been a mild winter, we've moved into the phase of winter that can be charitably described as "inhospitably cold."

Yesterday, I masked up and took an expedition to stock up on groceries. After a weekend that felt like a cold day at Echo Base, a wind chill in the low -30s seemed like a walk in the park. "This isn't so bad," I sincerely thought to myself as my eyelashes froze together.

I've always prided myself on being comfortable with the cold. I have to admit, I've often harboured feelings of resentment toward friends who have moved from Winnipeg to warmer locales purely because of the climate.

A tweet or Facebook post along the lines of "Boy, I'm sure glad I'm not in Winnipeg today, lol!" from a recent Vancouverite would leave me stewing. Don't these people understand that moving away from Winnipeg because of the cold isn't something to brag about?! That just means they lost and Winnipeg won!

My whole life, I've been determined not to let Winnipeg win. I've always been able to handle the cold. If I find it a little chilly, even better. My natural state is "drinking coffee while wrapped in a woolly, cable-knit cardigan." But these last few years, I have to admit, I've been starting to feel the cold in my bones. Even on a day when I don't leave the house (which, recently, is most days), the inescapable chill seeps in.

Given this cold spell, it's important to remember that many Winnipeggers don't have the option to just stay inside or move to the warmer coasts. For the unsheltered, Winnipeg winters can quite literally be deadly. Here's a friendly reminder that organizations like Main Street Project, Si-loam Mission and United Way's Coats for Kids all need donations of money, clothing and food in this bitter cold.

It is also an unfriendly reminder to any city councillors urging police to clear people experiencing homelessness from the warmth of bus shelters: go take a flying leap at a rolling doughnut.



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

Volunteer writer Kim Uduman describes how the COVID-19 pandemic has made things worse for service-industry workers. Read more on page 14.

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Submissions of articles, letters, graphics and photos are encouraged, however, all new contributors (with the exception of letters to the editor) must attend a 45-minute volunteer orientation workshop to ensure that the volunteer understands all of the publication's basic guidelines.

In-person volunteer orientations are currently suspended due to COVID-19, but over-the-phone and remote orientations can be arranged. Please email volunteer@uniter.ca for more details.

Deadline for advertisements is noon Friday, six days prior to publication. The Uniter reserves the right to refuse to print material submitted by volunteers. The Uniter will not print submissions that are homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic, ableist, racist or libellous. We also reserve the right to edit for length/style.

CORRECTION

In the Feb. 4 article "Plenty of good to go around," a quote describing the mission statement of Black Owned Business Manitoba was mistakenly identified as the mission statement of The Black Label WPG. The quote has been replaced with Black Label WPG's mission statement.

The Uniter regrets the error.

THE SPIRITS ARE TALKING

Urban Shaman brings Indigenous art online

SUNNY ENKIN LEWIS | VOLUNTEER

Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art has launched a virtual experience to bring the gallery's programming to people across Canada, especially those on reserves, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Niizh Manidoog Giigidowag / The Spirits are Talking is a collection of large works by acclaimed Indigenous artist Joseph Sánchez. Sánchez was a founding member of Professional Native Indian Artists Inc., also known as the Indian Group of Seven. They formed the group in the early 1970s in an effort to get Indigenous art shown in commercial galleries and museums.

The paintings are inspired by conversations with the spirit world, Sánchez says. His art holds a powerful political message. The art is "saying things about the environment, about the treatment of women, all the 'isms,'" Sánchez says. "We're in trouble as a planet. We just can't seem to stop consuming at a rate that's going to leave us extinct."

While the online format allows many people to access the exhibit, there are some challenges. "It doesn't allow people to get close to it ... A lot of this big work is meant to be viewed up close," Sánchez says.

Daina Warren, director of Urban Shaman, echoed the benefits and emphasized how hard it is for people in remote communities and on reserves to have access to galleries. The pandemic sped up the process, but Warren thinks "it's really valuable for many reasons other than just the pandemic."

Warren compares the virtual gallery experience to Google Maps Street View. "You'll be able to move around the space where all the paintings are hung, and then,

with each painting, you'll be able to click on them and get information," Warren says. The virtual tour also includes four videos from Sánchez and an essay.

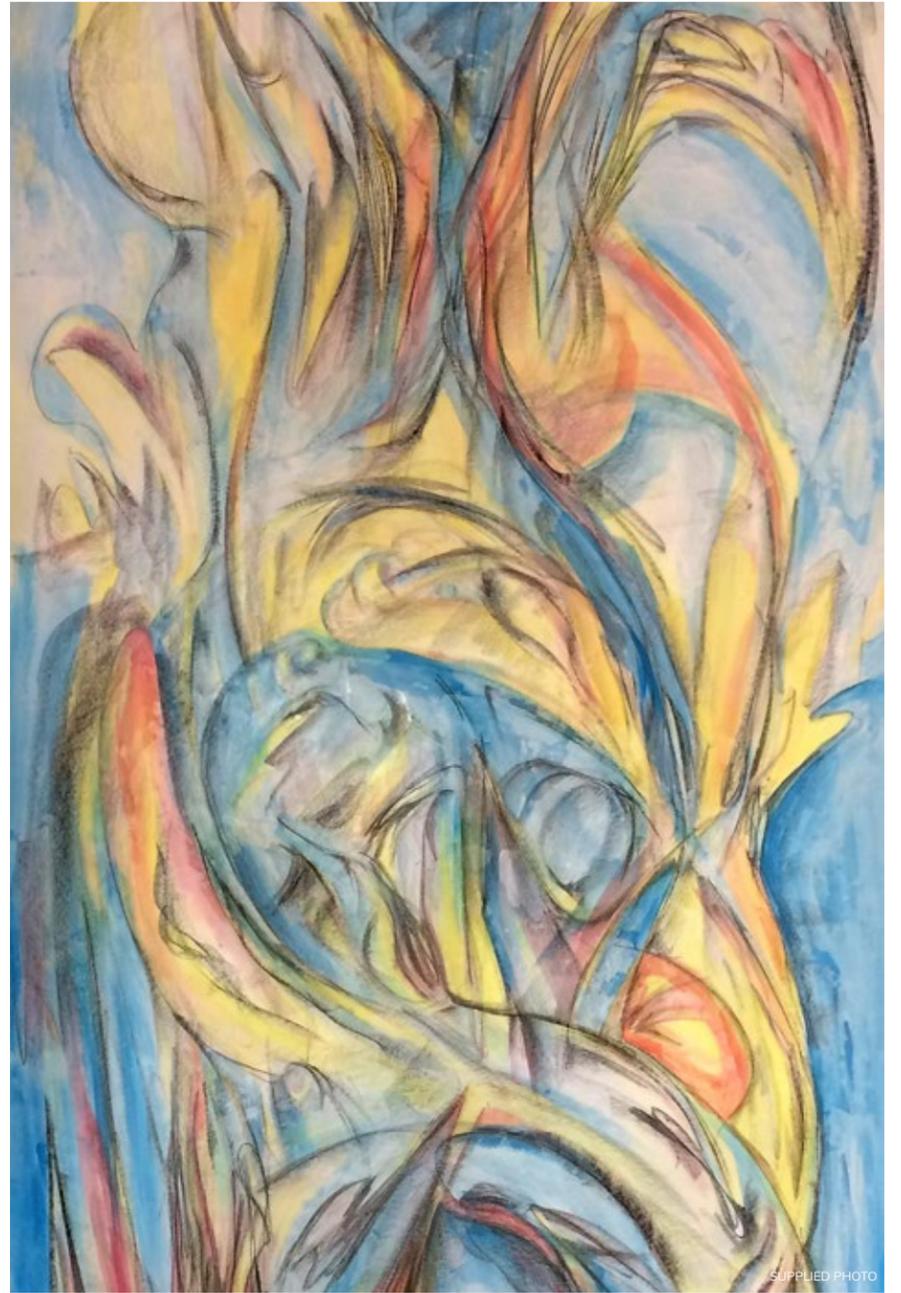
The exhibit features "The Story of My Life," a painting which traces Sanchez's journey to Canada and back to the United States. The art show displays connection to the land and honours femininity.

This will be the non-profit, artist-run centre's first online show. The gallery was founded in 1996 by a group graduating from the School of Art at the University of Manitoba. "They really wanted to create a space that would be more open to showing their art, bringing in other outside artists that were Indigenous, as well as curators," Warren says.

Both Warren and Sánchez spoke of the challenges Indigenous artists faced when Urban Shaman was founded and continue to face. In the 1970s, when Sanchez's group was started, "Native work was not being shown anywhere in Canada except in gift shops and trading posts," Sánchez says.

"Since that time, I would say the arts environment has really opened up," Warren says, but now challenges include organizations placing too much pressure on Indigenous employees to indigenize whole institutions.

The virtual tour of *Niizh Manidoog Giigidowag / The Spirits are Talking* will be available at urbanshaman.org from Feb. 12 to May 12. In-person viewings are available by appointment until Feb. 27. To book appointments, email info@urbanshaman.org.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

A virtual exhibition of works by the influential artist Joseph Sánchez will be presented online by Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art.

IMAGINING NEW WORLDS

Origins Stories: David A. Robertson

KEELEY BRAUNSTEIN-BLACK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER |  KEELEYIMAGE

David A. Robertson is the author of the 7 *Generations* series, *Will I See?* and *The Reckoner* trilogy. He lives in Winnipeg and is a member of Norway House Cree Nation.

In 2017, he won the Governor General's Literary Award for his book *When We Were Alone*. However, Robertson did not start out as an award-winning writer.

Robertson wrote his first poetry while sitting alone in the dark coat room at the back of his third-grade class. His teacher had assigned students to write a single poem. Prior to this, Robertson had not done a lot of writing, but he suddenly found himself composing 10 poems.

After his teacher turned his poems into a booklet, Robertson could imagine himself doing nothing else and has written almost every day since.

In middle grades, he focused mainly on short stories, returning to poetry later in high school. While in university, he focused on poetry and longer stories. It was then that Robertson started reading more to improve his writing. He also learned the importance of practicing to better a craft, reading to see how other writers approach things and writing to develop a personal style and voice.

Now, Robertson is interested to see what kinds of change can be created through his publications. "We are all teachers. We can all educate," he says, mentioning that it's just a matter of teaching and modelling.

His goal is to educate children and youth about different topics through an Indige-

nous lens, including foster care, Cree culture, Indigenous history, culture, contemporary issues and resiliency.

"What I want them to learn, to teach, I take that responsibility seriously. (It's important) to have a good message, especially to youth. They will create the change," Robertson says.

Recently, Robertson has moved on from writing about trauma-based stories. While he notes their importance (especially since there haven't always been platforms to discuss these issues), he wants to be careful about victimization. According to Robertson, there is another side to stories, namely, "resiliency and power."

Robertson also writes for fun. "I like creating new characters, imagining new worlds and reimagining classic literature, paying homage to it through a different lens," he says.

Before COVID-19, Robertson used to travel a lot for work, giving talks, lectures and visiting classrooms. Oddly enough, Robertson has found that his reach, in a way, has increased. In early February, he did three talks to classrooms in Austria. Robertson thinks it is wild that he can "expand my reach by standing around in my PJs."

Robertson has three books coming out later this year: *On The Trapline* in May, *The Great Bear* in September (the sequel to *The Barren Ground* in the Narnia-inspired series *The Misewa Saga*) and *Version Control: The Reckoner Rises Vol 2*.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

David A. Robertson is a celebrated and prolific Winnipeg author whose work has achieved widespread acclaim.

POEM-INSPIRED, COFFEE-FLAVOURED

Workshops and art expos abound in the SWANA festival

NAAMAN STURRUP | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | @NAAMANSTURRUP

The University of Manitoba hosts the Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA) Festival from Feb. 5 to 18. The free online festival highlights films, poetry and workshops with artists from these regions.

Starting Feb. 12, during week two's theme "We Didn't Sleep," poet and clinical psychologist Hala Alyan hosts a poetry-reading session with her opening poem "Sleep Study No. 3." Alyan says the poem's inspiration stems from her fascination with sleep.

"I am interested in the borderland of not being quite asleep and not being quite awake," she says.

Alyan has lived with insomnia for brief periods in her life, and she says writing is a great way to bring this and other mental health issues to the forefront.

"Writing saves lives," she says. "Regardless of what your life's circumstances are, there is a certain degree to which being a human means to know suffering ... and I think poetry and writing can be really powerful ways to put language to that."

One of her most recent works, "Object Permanence," is a poem that addresses lost love, and Alyan points out that it also focuses on transience, which is something she has dealt with her whole life.

"The idea of a place intersecting with memory is something that I have always

found interesting," she says.

"I am someone who has moved back and forth between two parts of the world, (the United States and the Middle East). It felt like I had to shed different parts of myself every time I moved cities, and in that shedding, it also felt like your memory gets reformed, re-fashioned and, in some ways, reset."

Workshop leader Levon Kafatian also has history with poetry, and the weaver says something happened during a 2019 poetry workshop that led to their new focus.

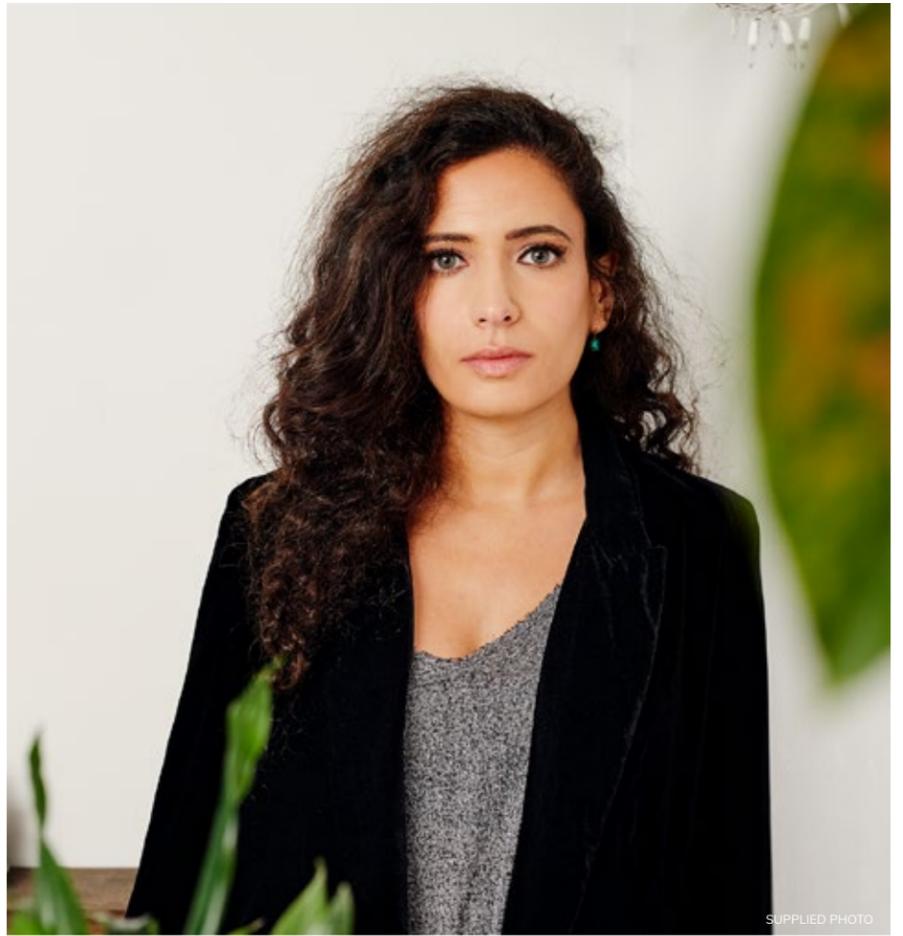
"In the bottom of the cup of espresso I had, I saw a single image in it while I was having great difficulty with a writing exercise, and it inspired me to write an entire poem around it," they say.

Kafatian is hosting a workshop on Feb. 12, where they will teach tasseography, the reading of fortunes from coffee grounds and tea leaves.

As someone who learned the craft from their family, Kafatian says this practice is important because of the active part everyone plays in the future, something that can be intimidating.

"It is vital to our future, because, on a daily basis, we are taking part in shaping that future," they say.

"Without having the space to imagine what that future will be like, we end up stay-



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Poet and clinical psychologist Hala Alyan is one of the presenters at the Southwest Asian and North African Festival of films, poetry and workshops.

ing in our own established cycles. Using the imagination to play with the future helps us to imagine possible and potential futures that we can inhabit, which can inspire us to work towards them."

The festival runs from Feb. 5 to 18, and a list of events can be found at umanitoba.ca/art/swana.



The C2 Centre for Craft is finding ways to connect local crafters, despite having to cancel its January 2021 Member Show.



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

EXCHANGING CRAFT

Manitoba Craft Council members trade crafts

KEELEY BRAUNSTEIN-BLACK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER | @KEELEYIMAGE

C2 Centre for Craft (C2), located in Winnipeg's Exchange District, has found a crafty way to connect to its members and foster a sense of community.

C2 is a shared initiative of the Manitoba Craft Council (MCC) and the Manitoba Crafts Museum & Library. In order to combat the isolation that COVID-19 is having on parts of the community, MCC members can participate in a craft exchange from Feb. 10 to 13.

"It was with a heavy heart we cancelled our

2021 Member Show in January. We reflected on the role of the member show: showcasing member work and facilitating the connections that create a strong and vibrant craft community in Manitoba," Katrina Craig, the program co-ordinator for C2 Centre for Craft, says in an email to *The Uniter*.

The exchange furthers the MCC's mandate of benefiting members through information sharing and promotional reach. Sharing each other's crafts allows for networking, discovery of new members and reconnection between

old friends and colleagues.

In order to participate in the exchange, members drop off a piece of functional or decorative craft and receive a surprise piece of work. All items are dropped off and randomized. The following week, the packages will be ready for pickup.

They get to "interact in a physical way through the creation of someone else," Craig says.

The trade is designed to help people feel a sense of community during this time of isolation through fun, discovery of a new artist, and reconnecting with old colleagues. A member who receives something that doesn't align with their personal tastes can share it as a gift to someone else.

"The past year has been heavy, without as many opportunities for surprises and novelty, and we are happy to provide opportunities for this at the Manitoba Craft Council," says Craig says. "In addition, many artists trade work at

craft fairs, especially their seconds or slightly flawed work, and without seasonal fairs, this little tradition has been skipped this year."

The exchange is only open to MCC members. Membership costs \$30 for students and seniors or \$50 for a regular membership. In addition to the option to participate in the exchange, members receive a biweekly e-news bulletin with current news, information, events and opportunities in contemporary craft, as well as access to exhibition and sale opportunities, professional-development workshops, artist talks, an online gallery page and a subscription to *Studio: Craft and Design in Canada*.

Upcoming programming includes a winter and spring talk series co-sponsored by MCC and MAWA on YouTube Live. Connie Chappel is slated for March 18. Find out more about MCC membership by visiting the C2 Centre for Craft website.



Liam Zarrillo is one of three playwrights whose work will be featured in *Winnipeg Stories*, an audio-only online theatrical experience from Prairie Theatre Exchange.

THERE IS A STORY INSIDE EVERY BUILDING

Winnipeg's architecture examined in audio dramas

NAAMAN STURRUP | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | NAAMANSTURRUP

Prairie Theatre Exchange's next production is in a different format than one might expect.

Winnipeg Stories is a free, online, audio-only series that runs from Feb. 15 to March 31. It showcases playwrights Ellen Peterson, Liam Zarrillo and Jo MacDonald as they share takes on Winnipeg's older architecture and its relationship with history.

Ellen Peterson, writer of *Stories Houses*

Tell, says although it is good to save these buildings, what is more important is to preserve the stories they help tell.

"The physical structures of a community are really just homes for the stories, the people and for the culture to grow in," she says.

"When the ice melts in the spring, we will all remember this COVID winter for the restrictions, the masks and the outbreaks, but we will also remember the

(Assiniboine River Trail) and what a good time we had."

Stories Houses Tell discusses an elderly woman and her shared memories with buildings that are now gone.

Peterson says these buildings give Winnipeg its physical character and provide excellent film locations, but she acknowledges that there should be a balance between the old and the new.

"The Exchange District and parts of downtown that have preserved buildings are interesting and beautiful, especially when new construction has been carefully designed to fit with existing structures," she says.

"I do feel we need to develop the city carefully and try to preserve and use what we can. Environmentally, this is the best choice, as well."

Liam Zarrillo's *The Green Building* also highlights the personal significance of old buildings, but Zarrillo says the play focuses on a more internal struggle.

"It is a piece about the pressures that we face to become, to make something of ourselves and what it means to design a life that lives up to expectations," he says.

"When a building is your body, some-

times the cracks that come from within reveal themselves over time."

Zarrillo says this struggle is inherent in the city.

"You can look at Winnipeg from very different perspectives, and based on what your experiences are, what your identity is and how close you are to the dominant voice, that really influences the privilege and the success or the potential barriers and challenges that you face in our city."

Zarrillo says these self-imposed and external expectations can be alienating experiences, but he notes there is something in the city that brings people together.

"I would be remiss to talk about isolation without mentioning the community that comes from that," he says.

"There are incredibly resilient and robust communities that can be found all over the city. From that struggle, something has evolved, something really strong and radical that, in my mind, really defines Winnipeg for what it is and what it can be."

***Winnipeg Stories* runs from Feb. 15 to March 31, and the links will be available at pte.mb.ca/performances/winnipeg-stories.**



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SUPPLIED PHOTO

SOUL

Currently streaming on Disney+



KEESHA HAREWOOD | FEATURES REPORTER | @KEESHAHAREWOOD

Pixar's film *Soul* follows African-American man, jazz musician and middle-school band teacher, Joe Gardner (Jamie Foxx), who discovers the meaning of life through a brush with death.

In general terms, *Soul* is a solid film. It's visually pleasing, has a decent narrative and is enjoyable to watch – aside from one glaring flaw. The film has significant issues with how it treats its Black protagonist and Black culture.

Many media outlets are covering an unfortunate, but common trope seen in

Soul and other animated films: the dehumanization of Black characters by turning them into animals or creatures.

Funnily, this film has a unique approach to this trope. Despite the fact that Gardner does not occupy his body for the vast majority of the film, his body is on screen for a significant amount of time – he's just not in control of it. Not only is he seen as a wispy, teal soul entity, but after a body-swap scenario, another character inhabits his body while he takes the form of an animal.

In fact, over the course of the 90-minute runtime, Gardner was a Black man for approximately 20 minutes of the film. This is problematic for a number of obvious reasons, but for this film, it stings in a particular way.

Soul had the perfect opportunity to meaningfully explore soul music and themes related to life and living. The fact that the film did not seize this chance was a profound disappointment.

Further, any elements of Black culture featured in the film were no more than shallow decorations. The importance of jazz music to the Black community or its history, for one, was barely discussed.

A scene where the characters go to a barbershop gets close to cultural representation, but ultimately, it falls short, as the focus of the scene is put on a non-Black character in Gardner's body. Further, the inclusion of a barbershop might seem culturally significant, but Gardner, in the form of an animal, cannot communicate with his community at the time.

Frankly, it often felt as though *Soul* was

made up of two separate films that were melded together. With the primary focus of the plot being put toward universal themes of life, Gardner's character and background could be swapped out with any other character from any other race. With Gardner eliminated and replaced by a new character, the core messaging of the film would still be intact.

This barely qualifies as Black representation. Diversity needs to go deeper than just slotting BIPOC into general stories and roles. An effort needs to be made to feature Black stories that represent Black culture and history before Black people can be put into universal roles.

Those glaring issues aside, the film has a few merits evident in most Pixar films. The animation is well done, the comedy is fine, and it has some emotional moments.

Overall, the film isn't half bad. For those who already have a Disney+ subscription and are interested in taking a look at the movie, it's worth a watch. Other than that, this is a film that can be skipped.

ARTS BRIEFS

HANNAH FOULGER | ARTS AND CULTURE EDITOR | @FOULGERSCOVFEFE @SPEAKSTORY

Cr8ery exhibition closing soon

Cr8ery hosts a member gallery and studio exhibition from Jan. 6 to Feb 13. The show on the theme of *Space* was slated to run in the physical gallery, but, due to Code Red restrictions, the exhibit transitioned online. The show features a number of Manitoban artists, including Bill Rademaker, Brian Longfield, Christopher Chuckery, Connie Wawruck Hemmett, Drew Perry, Gary Potter, Heather Craig, Heather Gillespie, Jackie Turnbull, Jeffrey Gross, Jennifer Labella, Juanita Klassen, Judd Fagrie, Norma Jones, Pamela Desmet Franklin, Richard Webb and Robert Coulter. The last day to view it in person is Feb. 13 at 5 p.m., but the exhibit will be online at cr8ery.com until Feb. 16.

Stuck at Home

While many people haven't experienced being stuck at home before the COVID-19 pandemic, many disabled people have been in similar situations for years. On Feb. 11, Sick + Twisted Theatre launched a new five-part video series featuring people with disabilities. This video series is funded by Safe at Home Manitoba and available at [instagram.com/sickandtwistedtheatre](https://www.instagram.com/sickandtwistedtheatre).

Disabled People Talking

Accessible Sport Connection Manitoba (ASCMB) hosts their second community dialogue event, Disabled People Talking: An Introduction of Accessible Sport Connection Manitoba's Strategic Plan to the Community. This discussion will focus on ASCMB's future. Individuals are invited to speak for up to three minutes. ASCMB hopes to hear from people with and without disabilities. The event will be held online on Feb. 13 from 3 to 5 p.m. on Eventbrite. To request accessibility accommodations, email mbaccessiblesport@gmail.com.

356 Days/365 Plays (One Act)

University of Winnipeg's Acting III Honours class will perform *356 Days/365 Plays (One Act)* by Suzan-Lori Parks. She is the first Black, American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama. U of W's student performance is staged in a socially distanced manner, and the production will be live-streamed. Directed by faculty member Hope McIntyre, the production features set and light design from faculty member Adam Parboosingh and costume design by student Kate George. All technical work is done by production students. The show streams from Feb. 9 to 13, and free tickets are available to order from uwinnipeg.ca/theatre-film/order-form.html.

Free big-band concerts

The Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra's next live-streamed big-band concert series is on Feb. 15 at 7:30 p.m. The performance of *La Nouvelle Nation* will feature Andrina Turenne and Ariane Jean of Chic Gamine, performing in a live broadcast from the Royal MTC Tom Hendry Digital Studio. For the livestream link, go to the Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra website between 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. the day of the concert.

Light up the Pyramid, hosted by MEMETIC

Live from the Pyramid Cabaret, MEMETIC presents two nights of local music. On Feb. 12, the live broadcast will have a variety of different styles, featuring PRZM, Fresh Fries, Home Cookin', ST i X, Chris Komus + Devon Dare and Pretty Stella. Feb. 13's show will feature seven hours of swing-inspired house, tech and breaks. Performers include DJs Lotek, Manalogue, Komus and Nathan Zahn and visuals by Pixel Pusher and Jabez Wray. The event will be hosted live on Twitch. Find out more about how to tune in at facebook.com/MEMEFest under the events page.



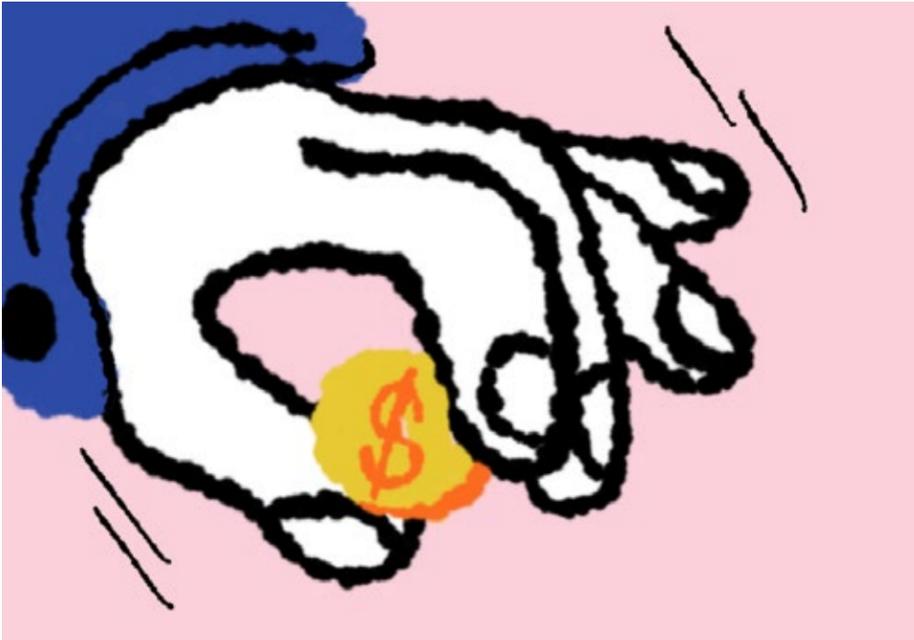
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AND PERHAPS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IS AFRAID OF THAT

The Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba (CFSMB) recently launched an online campaign aiming to spread awareness on the potential ramifications of the Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act (Bill 33).

If legislated, amendments to Bill 33 will give the minister

of advanced education, skills and immigration the ability to create guidelines for tuition and/or student fees set by a university board. It would also give the minister more control over whether or not certain student fees are mandatory and potentially subject them to a maximum limit.

If the minister determines that an institution has overcharged a student, an equivalent amount to the overcharging may be deducted from the institution's grants.

Conservative governments meddling with student governments

“Bill 33 challenges the autonomy of post-secondary institutions by giving the provincial government control over student fees, fees that were democratically determined through referendums and voting,” Jonathan Henderson, the University of Winnipeg Students’ Association (UWSA) vice-president external affairs, says.

CFSMB is developing a campaign to oppose the bill in collaboration with student unions across the province.

Brenden Gali, chairperson of CFSMB, says the organization first realized the government was preparing for a major shift in post-secondary education when the corresponding ministerial duties were transferred from the minister of education to the minister of economic development and training in 2019.

“It seemed that they were no longer in the business of education, but more managing the education system in a way that would fix budgets,” Gali says.

At the time of this publication, the ministerial duties for postsecondary education are now in the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, which was created following the cabinet shuffle on Jan 5, and is currently led by Wayne Ewasko, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet.

In an emailed statement, a representative from the provincial government said transparency and consistency were key factors in the development of Bill 33.

“The department was tasked with developing strategic mandates for institutions that focus on positive outcomes for students. A flexible, consistent and transparent approach to setting tuition and student fees will ensure that post-secondary institutions are able to continue to offer high-quality, leading-edge programming that meets the needs of students and employers now and into the future,” the representative wrote.

They did not specify whether these changes were made in response to complaints about current student fees or tuition fees.

The statement also suggested the bill would help to further ensure that Manitoba will continue to have the lowest tuition rate in Western Canada, and that there will be consultations with a variety of stakeholders, including students, to determine new policies.

Inflicting austerity on anti-austerity programs

Gali says the bill “is just a step forward in the corporatization of our public institutions.”

“What they’re trying to do is exploit a pretty vulnerable sector of our province, post-secondary students specifically, and leaving these institutions out to dry and opening them up to the private sector that would create biases in what students wish to study,” he says.

Section 2.2(7) of the bill, which would allow the minister to set different tuition rates for specific classes, could allow lobbying and private-interest groups to dramatically transform postsecondary institutions in the province.

“We have a strong opposition, not only to the amendments that the Province is proposing, but also what those amendments can lead to in terms of the academic freedoms of students to study what they wish to study,” Gali says.

Dougald Lamont, the leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party and MLA for St. Boniface, says student unions are an essential part of the fabric of universities in Manitoba.

“Student unions actually help provide services for students. They actually make the difference between whether people can afford their medication and healthcare or whether they can afford to eat,” Lamont says.

Food banks, the U-Pass transit subsidy and university daycare centres are just a sliver of the services student unions facilitate through student fees, according to Gali. Student fees also sustain other campus organizations, such as student newspapers, campus radio stations and mental-health supports.

Henderson notes that many of the



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Brenden Gali, chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba



UWSA’s services, such as student advocacy, the U-Pass, the health plan and the food bank have been in high demand since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Why target students during this pandemic? This bill will affect many that are vulnerable,” he says.

“Speaking as an Indigenous student, getting an education is already hard enough as it is, and (if I had) not had the supports that were in place for myself, I might not have had the success I had in my education,” he says. “My feeling is that this will definitely have a negative effect and could even be detrimental to Indigenous students in pursuit of their educational goals.”

Gali emphasizes that Bill 33 will mostly impact the most vulnerable students, with international students particularly at risk. He explains that when operating grants

and funding are cut, administrators often raise tuition.

While the bill restricts how much administrators can raise tuition, it’s currently unknown whether there will be a discrepancy made for international students, as there is currently no limit on tuition increases for international students.

After primary healthcare coverage was cut for international students in 2018, Gali says this bill “will be another attack on international students who study in Manitoba.”

“This province is becoming more and more of an unlivable environment for international students,” he says. “So much is asked of them financially, as well as culturally. When this province chooses to boast about its multicultural, diverse society, it’s really becoming unlivable and a bit of a detriment to completing education.”

In the footsteps of Ford

On Jan. 17, 2019, the Ontario government introduced a similar policy called the Student Choice Initiative (SCI) that gave students the choice to opt out of “non-essential” student fees. On Nov. 21, 2019, the initiative was struck down by the Ontario courts, which contended in writing that the imposed directives “are not authorized by law and are inconsistent with the autonomy granted universities.”

The difference between the Student Choice Initiative in Ontario and the Bill 33 amendments in Manitoba is that the former was a policy directive, while the latter is a legislative act. Gali says this makes Bill 33 a bit more worrying.

“The Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario (CFSON) and the York Federa-

“BILL 33 CHALLENGES THE AUTONOMY OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS BY GIVING THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER STUDENT FEES, FEES THAT WERE DEMOCRATICALLY DETERMINED THROUGH REFERENDUMS AND VOTING.”

— JONATHAN HENDERSON, THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (UWSA) VICE-PRESIDENT EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



tion of Students were successful in overturning the SCI, as it was deemed by the courts to be unconstitutional,” Gali says. “By proposing this bill, if we were to resort to a similar path by holding our Province accountable through the court system, we wouldn’t necessarily get the same outcome, because they would have changed the law so that they wouldn’t be breaking the law.”

Sébastien Lalonde, chairperson of CFSON, emphasizes that a fundamental part of any discussion about student-union fees must be the essential roles student unions fill – roles that campus administrations refuse to take responsibility for.

“The consistent failings of our institutions cannot also be the failings of our student unions, and that is not for the government to decide. It’s up to students and their democratic processes,” he says.

As students in Manitoba prepare to grapple with the bill, Lalonde says a big lesson Manitobans can learn from the We The Students campaign undertaken by CFSON is the importance of understanding what different fees go to and why.

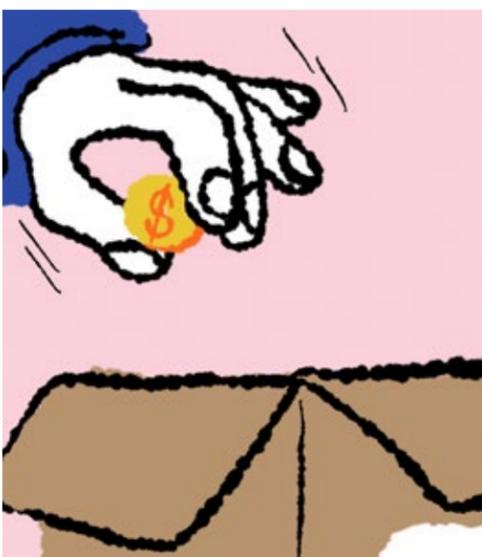
“The first thing is to educate folks, to make them understand that their tuition fees are vastly different from the levy fees that are collected, because they were voted for democratically by the student body,” he says. “Second is why those fees are so essential to the functioning and well-being of students on their campuses.”

He says it has been important for students to understand “not only why opting out (of paying student-union fees) is not only not an ideal option, but, on top of that, why the whole idea of the Student Choice Initiative is unethical and doesn’t follow the democratic process that students put in place to be represented by their students unions.”



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Sébastien Lalonde is the chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students Ontario. CFSON fought against similar threats to university funding from the conservative Doug Ford provincial government.



Solidarity forever, at least on this subject

Ultimately, Gali, Henderson, Lalonde and Lamont argue that the changes are in opposition to democratically elected student governments.

“Really, what they’re doing is taking away decision-making control from students who should be able to make decisions about how they want to live at university,” Lamont says. He argues that many current politicians in the Manitoba legislature “benefited from formerly being in student unions” and should, therefore, “understand what the importance of student unions are.”

The changes to Bill 33 through the Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act were originally introduced on Oct. 4, 2020 but will move to committee hearings in spring 2021.

Gali says planning this sort of campaign during a pandemic is a little difficult, as this is the kind of issue that would usually be met with tabling on campus and in-class presentations, but CFSMB is trying to use social media to rally students and encourage them to speak when the bill goes to committee. Henderson also encourages students to register with the legislative assembly clerk’s office to speak against the bill.

While organizing during the pandemic may be difficult, Lalonde points out that there are still many points of community within postsecondary institutions, and that this kind of legislation threatens a lot of them.

“This isn’t about one simple cause. This is all students, all of their interests and all of their capacity to organize,” he says. “On this very specific measure, ‘students are united’ is the key message to send to your institutions and government.”



To contact the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Office of the Clerk and book a time to share thoughts on Bill 33 with the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, call 204-945-3636 or email clerkla@leg.gov.mb.ca.

“This province is becoming more and more of an unlivable environment for international students. So much is asked of them financially, as well as culturally.” - Brenden Gali



The UWSA food bank (left) and the festivities at Roll Call (right) are just two of the many services made available through the University of Winnipeg Students’ Association.



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

HOLDING ACCOUNTABILITY TO ACCOUNT

Community groups allege structural issues prevent police liability

CIERRA BETTENS | CITY REPORTER |  FICTIONALCIERRA  CIERRABETTENS

On Jan. 28, the Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba (IIU) publicly released a report concluding the officer who shot and killed 16-year-old Eishia Hudson in April 2020 would not face criminal charges. Zane Tessler, a lawyer and the civilian director of the IIU, claimed he was confident that “no stone was left unturned” in the investigation.

In light of the report’s findings, a number of community groups, politicians and advocates have pointed at organizational flaws within the IIU and other institutions meant to hold police accountable.

James Wilt, an organizer with Winnipeg Police Cause Harm (WPCH) argues there are structural issues within the IIU that raise red flags. In 2019, the *Winnipeg Free Press* (WFP) conducted an investigation that revealed only seven out of the 153 reports that were conducted or monitored by the IIU in nearly three-and-a-half years led to charges.

“The officer who killed Eishia didn’t have to be interviewed for the investigation, and that’s a right police officers have under the current system,” Wilt says.

According to the WFP report, many members of the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) have resisted cooperation. When the WFP report was published in November 2018, only 23 out of 81 investigated officers had fully cooperated with the IIU since it was established in 2015. While witness officers are required to submit interviews and officer notes to the IIU, the subject officer — alleged to have caused a death — is not.

Wilt also mentions another issue: the overwhelming majority of investigators within the IIU are former members of the police service. In June 2019, the *Canadian Press* released an investigative report that revealed 111 of the 167 members of independent investigation units in Canada were former police officers. Wilt argues that this creates an unfair bias that can lead to detrimental consequences.

“There’s just so many layers that obscure the actual process behind this,” he says. “We see it as a very deeply compromised institution.”

Events of police violence inflicted on BI-POC youth, like Hudson, do not exist in the vacuum of the IIU. Cam Scott, an organizer with Police-Free Schools Winnipeg (PFSW)

says these incidents of violence — especially for racialized, low-income and disabled students — impact how safe marginalized students feel in schools that employ school resource officers (SROs).

“When we think about the killing of Eishia Hudson by the Winnipeg Police Service, imagine how many teenagers had to go to school and see a police officer the next day,” Scott says.

In September 2020, Winnipeg’s city council voted to continue the SRO program, employing 19 officers in schools across the city. However, some community groups, including PFSW have been pushing against their presence in schools.

Scott says PFSW was born, in part, out of the aftermath of Hudson’s death and the calls for justice that followed. The group, which is composed of teachers, parents, students and community members, argues that police presence in schools creates an environment that is traumatic for marginalized students who have had negative encounters or associations with the police.

“A lot of our concern isn’t only about the direct harm that the school resource officers cause in the day-to-day, but about the associations they incarnate that are pushing people out,” Scott says.

A few weeks before the time of writing, a former fifth- and sixth-grade teacher quit his job after a series of negative encounters with an SRO and a dismissal of the issue by the school administration. After the teacher — who said he worked at a school with the highest Indigenous population in the division — went public with his story, Scott says PFSW was “saddened, but also inspired by the story, because it’s so familiar.”

In a personal statement made public, the teacher alleges an SRO “barged into the classroom unannounced” and “pulled down her mask” to “say hello and joke about arresting students.” When the teacher brought up the issue with the school administration, he al-

leged they were dismissive of his concerns.

Searching for ways to hold SROs accountable for their actions in schools has been a challenge for teachers, students and parents, according to Scott. He says teachers who wish to be critical about a police presence in schools often fear backlash for speaking out.

“When you still have to be this kind of stable presence to children and their families, and you need to get along with your administration, it’s really hard to point out abuses of authority in your own workplace,” Scott says.

As a member of PFSW who does not work as a teacher, Scott says he often speaks publicly on behalf of teachers who fear the workplace repercussions of speaking out.

With local school boards, including the Seven Oaks School Division, declaring anti-racism committees, Scott says recognizing the impact a police presence has on racialized students is crucial, especially in light of Hudson’s death.

“We’re still calling for the complete removal of police from schools as a practical anti-racist measure,” Scott says.

Though the Manitoba Prosecution Service concluded there was “no legal or factual basis” to charge the unnamed officer who killed Hudson, her family, along with other actors, including the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, are demanding a deeper look into the 16-year-old’s death.

Nahanni Fontaine, the MLA for St. John’s, forwarded an emergency resolution at the Manitoba NDP convention, calling for an immediate public inquiry into Hudson’s death. Winnipeg police chief Danny Smyth also announced that Manitoba’s chief medical examiner will conduct an inquest into Hudson’s death in an effort to prevent similar situations in the future.

Wilt says WPCH will continue to support the calls to action raised by Hudson’s family and others. The family has stated they will continue to fight for justice in the aftermath of their daughter’s death.

CITY BRIEFS

ALEX NEUFELDT | CITY EDITOR

Dial “C” for community

The first-ever Sunshine House telethon will take place on Feb. 27 and be broadcast via Facebook and YouTube. The event will raise money for Sunshine House’s programming and feature music, drag, comedy, a raffle, meal kits delivered by drag performers and more.

The road to climate resilience

The Manitoba Climate Action Team and the Winnipeg Foundation are launching a plan for a climate-resilient Manitoba, called *The Road to Resilience*, on Feb. 18 on YouTube. The plan’s authors hope community members will read the plan, discuss and further develop it. Curt Hull, the plan’s lead author, will be a key speaker.

New dean announcements

Laurie-Ann Hellsten, dean of education for the University of Winnipeg, has announced that Dr. Lesley Eblie Trudel began a five-year term as associate dean of education as of Feb. 1. Additionally, Doug Goltz, dean of science, announced that Melanie Gregg is now the acting associate dean of science while Tabitha Wood is on a one-year leave.

Rent better

West Broadway Community Organization is holding a workshop series on renting from Feb. 16 to 18. The series will include Alana Ring-Woodard, a Rent-Smart educator, and will focus on rental rights and common issues faced by new and experienced tenants. The workshop series is free, and those interested in participating can email housing@westbroadway.mb.ca to register.

New immunization site for priority First Nations populations

On Feb. 8, a pop-up immunization site that will serve First Nations healthcare workers, knowledge-keepers and traditional healers opened in Winnipeg. The site will host 889 appointments in the days following its launch, in hopes of protecting priority populations from COVID-19.

Black History Manitoba virtual programming

Black History Manitoba is hosting and taking part in a variety of online events for Black History Month, including A Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Black History Month in Canada, University of Manitoba’s Black History Month Event, a Black History Month History Lesson and other events for children and youth. For the full program, visit bhmwinnipeg.com.



CKUW HOLDS ANNUAL FUNDRIVE

Fundraising campaign sustains local radio station

CALLUM GOULET-KILGOUR | CAMPUS REPORTER | [CGOULETKILGOUR](#)

University of Winnipeg (U of W) campus and community radio station CKUW, which broadcasts on 95.9 FM, is currently holding its annual fundraising campaign. The Fundrive started on Feb. 5 and runs until Feb. 19.

As an independent, locally run radio station, CKUW relies on listener support to finance its operations. Station manager Rob Schmidt explains their business model and says they consider themselves a public radio station.

“The formula for funding public radio is to ask the listener for support,” he says. Large stations like PBS follow this model.

“Being supported by your listeners gives you a freedom to do things that you wouldn’t be able to do on a station that’s supported with commercials, because of commercial pressure or the need to sell ads,” Schmidt says.

In fact, a few years ago, CKUW made the decision to go completely ad-free.

“Fundrive, right now, brings in about 25 per cent of our budget,” Schmidt says. “The sort of things we pay for with that money include our online archives, our webstream, some staffing costs.”

“If we beat our (\$60,000) goal, then we can start planning for the future and putting money aside for future projects,”

Schmidt says. He adds that the Fundrive has allowed the station to better survive the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Having the Fundrive drive ... has helped us ride it out easier than other radio stations, because we don’t rely on advertising,” he says, adding that many community radio stations across Canada have seen decreased advertising revenues due to business closures.

There are various incentives for donating. For instance, \$35 will give a donor the CKUW friends card, \$70 will add a T-shirt (designed by local artist Sadie-Phoenix Lavoie), and \$280 will add two hoodies and a T-shirt.

Program director Sam Doucet says that during events like Fundrive, the community-driven aspect of CKUW really comes to the forefront.

“We can really prove that ‘community-driven’ and ‘listener-driven’ aren’t just buzzwords,” he says. “We ask listeners to reflect on what CKUW brings to them and how they see themselves as being part of the community and acting to help us keep doing what we do.”

Doucet notes that Fundrive is an opportunity to remind CKUW’s listeners they can engage with the station beyond just listening.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

The CKUW Fundrive typically has in-person fundraising festivities, but the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the campus radio station to make adjustments.

“We offer free training workshops to teach people how to make radio, the rules and regulations involved with public broadcasting and everything that goes into understanding what we do,” he says.

Among the many challenges of this year’s Fundrive is that the usual hustle and bustle of fundraising is unable to occur. Fewer employees and volunteers can be in

the same space at once. As such, the usual one-week fundraising campaign has been extended to two weeks to accommodate some of these challenges.

Donations to CKUW can be made at fundrive.ckuw.ca.

U OF W AND VIRTUOSI CONCERTS’ DUET COMES TO A CLOSE

Financial constraints end decades-long partnership

CALLUM GOULET-KILGOUR | CAMPUS REPORTER | [CGOULETKILGOUR](#)

On Jan. 15, Virtuosi Concerts and the University of Winnipeg (U of W) announced the end of their 30-year partnership. According to a press release, “the economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic” left the university unable to continue providing Virtuosi with an operating grant, administrative services and physical space.

Virtuosi Concerts, founded by U of W psychology professor Harry Strub in 1991, is a recital and chamber music series that typically features national and international artists, unlike anything else in Winnipeg. Their concerts were held in the U of W’s Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall, home to the famed Ashkenazy Steinway piano.

Andrew Thomson, executive director of Virtuosi, says that, though he understands the university’s decision, his organization is facing difficult circumstances.

“For an arts group ... such as ourselves, COVID was bad enough, because we haven’t been able to put on any public concerts and thus have limited revenue streams, so having the awareness that we’re going to lose this significant operating grant, let alone finding new space to run our opera-

tion, it’s a big challenge,” he says.

“I knew this was coming before I was even informed because, in the spring, when Premier (Brian) Pallister was ... telling universities they had to give him budgets with 10, 20, 30 per cent cuts, I knew that was the end,” Thomson says.

Kevin Rosen, executive director of marketing and communications at the U of W, explains the decision in an email to *The Uniter*.

“The provincial government has reduced the University of Winnipeg’s operating grant annually for several years,” he says, adding that 2020 to 2021’s operating grant was further reduced due to COVID-19.

The government “has also limited tuition increases, which prevent the ability to make up the lost revenues,” Rosen says. “In addition, as a result of public-health restrictions, the university has experienced dramatic declines in revenues from on-campus service units like housing and parking, while travel restrictions have impacted international student enrollments.”

“We are working with Virtuosi to ensure the transition is as seamless as possible,” Rosen says.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

The University of Winnipeg recently announced the end of its 30-year partnership with the Virtuosi concert series.

It is unclear what Virtuosi’s next steps will be. The uncertainty surrounding the local COVID-19 situation is making it difficult to plan for the next season. Furthermore, the organization is looking at ways it can remain financially viable without the U of W’s support.

Despite the challenges, Thomson remains optimistic.

“Chamber music is a specialized and intimate art form, and I think there’s a great

place for it (in Winnipeg),” he says.

Because of public-health restrictions, Virtuosi has been unable to hold in-person concerts this season. However, they have a few virtual concerts over the coming months. Their Jan. 22 event featuring cellists Yuri Hooker and David Liam Roberts is available free of charge on YouTube.

Virtuosi Concerts’ website is virtuosi.mb.ca.



MONKEY BUSINESS AND VIRTUAL REALITY

Bruce Bolster, associate professor and neuroscience program co-ordinator, psychology department, U of W

KEESHA HAREWOOD | FEATURES REPORTER |  KEESHAHAREWOOD

A point of interest for Bruce Bolster – associate professor for the University of Winnipeg’s (U of W) psychology department and co-ordinator for the U of W’s neuroscience program – is how the brain works during everyday life.

Bolster was initially drawn to his position at the university in 1981 after receiving an offer to build a primate lab.

“I ran the primate lab for about 10 years,” Bolster says, “until function magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) came.”

When fMRI became available, Bolster’s work changed drastically. He went from training monkeys and studying their behaviour to using technology to analyze primate brain activity instead.

These days, however, Bolster’s interest is geared toward navigational processes and memory. He also has new tools for his research.

“In my lab, I’m also using computer-based tasks and virtual reality that allow people to navigate around in virtual environments,” he says.

Bolster finds the immersivity of virtual

reality is key to generating accurate information concerning navigational processes. Plus, he continues to use neuroimaging to monitor experiments.

In the future, Bolster has plans to collaborate with a local neuropsychiatrist. The project concerns people who have behavioural seizures without electrophysiological evidence of epileptic activity.

But even with such a long history of experiments and accomplishments under his belt, a major highlight for Bolster is seeing his students go on to do incredible things in medicine and neuroscience.

“I have students whom I now collaborate with as fellow scientists,” he says.

Above all else, this is something that elicits a great deal of pride.

What is something that you’ve learned from your students?

“Not to take anything for granted. To ask the difficult questions.”



SUPPLIED PHOTO

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

“Oh my ... time travel. I’d like to know where neuroscience is going 20, 50 and 100 years into the future.”

Where do you hope neuroscience is going in the future?

“That we’re going to be able to find noninvasive and reversible kinds of intervention.”



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

Student Services

GRADES

Grades for Fall Term classes are now posted on WebAdvisor.

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, University of Winnipeg students may choose how their grades will affect their grade point average (GPA) calculation for the Fall 2020 term. For details, please see uwinnipeg.ca/covid-19/final-grade-options-faq.html. The deadline to submit a request is **Fri., Feb. 12**.

READING WEEK

Winter Term Reading Week is **Feb. 14 – 20**. No classes all week. The University will be closed on Louis Riel Day, Feb. 15.

FALL/WINTER TERM COURSES – FINAL WITHDRAWAL DATE

The final day to withdraw from a Fall/Winter Term (U2020FW) class is **Tues., Feb. 23**. No refund is applicable. Courses are dropped through WebAdvisor using the “Student Planning/Registration” link.

WEBINAR WEDNESDAYS

In weekly sessions, Student Services staff will continue to share valuable strategies and tips to help you succeed at UWinnipeg. The next session is on **Wed., Feb. 10**. Please see: uwinnipeg.ca/student-services/webinar-wednesdays.html.

BURSARIES FOR GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES EXPENSES

Graduate and Professional Studies Expenses Bursary is available for students in their final year of an undergraduate degree program in the 2020-21 academic year that are applying for Graduate or Professional Studies which begin in 2021-22. The application is open until funds have been exhausted.

STUDENT AID

The Canada Student Aid program is offering more loans and non-repayable forms of aid (grants) this year. If you have ever thought about applying, this would be the year to do so. You can still receive student aid for the September 2020 to April 2021

study period even as long as you **apply before the end of February**. Go to: uwinnipeg.ca/awards/government-student-aid/index.html.

WINTER TERM COURSES – FINAL WITHDRAWAL DATE

The final day to withdraw from a Winter Term class is **Tues., March 16**. No refund is applicable. Courses are dropped through WebAdvisor using the “Student Planning/Registration” link.

GOOD FRIDAY

The University will be closed on **Fri., Apr. 2** for Good Friday.

LECTURES END FOR WINTER TERM

Lectures end for Winter Term courses on **Tues., Apr. 6**, except for courses which have a class scheduled in lieu of Apr. 2 (Good Friday).

MYVISIT APP

Need to see a Student Central representative or an Academic or Career Advisor? You can now queue for Zoom drop-in sessions with

Student Central, and/or Academic & Career Services using myVisit!

Student Central has drop-in Zoom sessions where students can ask questions “in person” with a SC staff member.

The Zoom waiting room is enabled. One student will be admitted at a time. Students wait for their turn and need to present their UWinnipeg student card (or other photo ID) to talk about their account, the same as actual in-person interactions at SC.

To add yourself to the queue, please use the myVisit app (by Q-nomy) available for Apple or Android phones. Turn off the location permission in the app. The SMS notification when it is your turn shortly will provide the Zoom info. Student can add themselves to the queue 10:00 am - 4:30 pm from Monday-Friday.

Thirty-minute Zoom appointments with Academic and Career Advisors can be booked through the myVisit app or via www.myvisit.com as well.



READING IN COLOUR

Add more Indigenous authors to your reading list today

VALERIE CHELANGAT | COLUMNIST | VALERIECHELA

Indigenous people are underrepresented in literature.

Organizations such as Raven Reads are working to combat this problem by offering subscription boxes containing books by Indigenous authors and goods by Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Nicole McLaren, the founder and CEO of Raven Reads, wrote on their website that in order to maintain mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, “there must be awareness of our collective past along with action that will change behaviour.”

COVID-19 lockdowns gave people the opportunity to get back to their reading habits. The killing of George Floyd in police custody shed light on the urgent need to address systemic racism in Canada. Floyd’s brutal killing not only raised an uproar within Black communities, but it also led to a universal discussion of systemic racism that Indigenous people experience firsthand. Gaps in the book industry became more obvious as more conversations on these topics happened.

While we still have a long way to go, more effort is certainly being put into giving marginalized groups a voice within literary communities. At McNally Robinson Bookstore, for example, many books by Indigenous authors are now more visible, displayed on tables as opposed to being tucked away in bookshelves.

In my experience running an online bookstore, I have noticed that more and more readers are going out of their way to

seek books by Indigenous authors. Subscription services such as Raven Reads and book clubs like Erin and Dani’s Book Club (via Instagram) are working tirelessly to promote Indigenous literature.

In Winnipeg, we have a responsibility to learn and understand the story of our city and the people who have inhabited this land for much longer than settlers or newcomers. Katherena Vermette, the author of the teen graphic series *A Girl Called Echo* about a 13-year-old Métis girl named Echo who time travels and learns about the history of the Métis people, once said to me that, especially when living in Winnipeg, we should know Métis history. “The Métis are really integral to the creation of this place,” she added.

Vermette is working to bring Indigenous stories into focus. At under 50 pages, *A Girl Called Echo Volume 1* includes detailed Métis history. Each volume in the series comes with a timeline of events and important dates. This short, illustrated series is a fun read for all ages, as it explores important history in an artistic, adventurous and engaging way.

This Place: 150 Years Retold is another graphic novel I would argue every household should have. It is a collection of 10 stories put together by Indigenous creators who, as the title suggests, explore the past 150 years of Indigenous survival.

The anthology includes important stories about various Indigenous people and their efforts to protect their people amid settler-colonialism. Much like Vermette’s series, this anthology includes graphic illustrations



Poet and author Katherena Vermette

that add to the reading experience. It, too, has timelines that help readers follow along.

As I have written in every previous entry of this column, representation is crucial. Métis and Indigenous communities as a whole must be represented in literature. Non-Indigenous readers ought to pick up books by Indigenous authors and featuring Indigenous characters in order to educate themselves to build mutual respect. But there is still work to do. As McLaren writes, “we are

not there yet.”

Valerie Chelangat is a Kenyan-Canadian writer and bookseller. She loves Winnipeg but struggles with the winter. She gets through the season by reading any books she gets her hands on and drinking too much tea.



PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE, ESPECIALLY IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer-service employees are tired of being mistreated

KIM UDUAN | VOLUNTEER | SHINGEKI_NO_KIM

Working in customer service for the last six years has probably shaved some time off my lifespan.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, I worked at McDonald’s serving coffee, Egg McMuffins, McDoubles and Big Macs around the clock. These days, I work at a café, and the atmosphere is pretty similar: impersonal and fast-paced. My job is to welcome the customer, make their drink and send them off within a few minutes.

At both jobs, it’s common for a customer to make an employee cry for messing up their order. Often, it isn’t even the employee’s fault. Customers sometimes forget to ask for an extra drink or burger, but service workers are expected to smile while they’re being yelled at. As the famous saying goes, “the customer is always right.”

Recently, my supervisor and I were sworn at by a customer in the café, because someone had cut him off in line.

Before the pandemic, I already felt like I was tiptoeing around each customer, always playing the guessing game of “are they nice or not?” Now, not only am I wondering whether they’ll treat me with basic hu-

man decency, but I worry that they’ll pass COVID-19 to me and my coworkers.

On an average day, we serve anywhere between 200 to 400 customers. That’s 200 to 400 chances of getting sick.

Despite following all the safety regulations, such as wearing masks, social distancing, sanitizing our stations and equipment and washing our hands every 30 minutes, the chances of us contracting COVID-19 are still quite high.

Jobs involving frequent contact with the public and where social distancing may be hard to regulate at times, such as fast food and retail, are considered “medium exposure risk,” according to the World Health Organization.

If a service worker gets sick, it’s usually up to their employer to provide paid sick leave. However, they probably aren’t covered by paid sick days like those at other workplaces. I remember getting frustrated after learning that a friend of mine, who works at home as a graphic designer, received an additional two weeks of paid sick leave, while it took almost a month for McDonald’s to require wearing mask-wearing at work at the beginning of the pandemic.



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

Last May, Hartley Bilous, an employee at Foodfare on Portage Avenue, told CBC that working on the front lines “just wears you down, really, but you don’t have a choice. You still need to be making money, right?”

Although the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has made recommendations to governments about the importance of prioritizing employee mental health during the pandemic, service workers still face mistreatment from customers on top of the fear of contracting COVID-19.

After asking friends about their experiences in customer service and their mental health, I found that it is common for ser-

vice-industry workers to not have the luxury of taking a day off for our mental health. In most cases, we barely make enough to pay our bills, or we fear of being laid off.

I hope anyone reading this who works in the customer-service industry can feel reassured that they are not alone. For everyone else, please remember that patience and kindness go a long way.

Kim Uduan is a rhetoric, communications and theatre and film student at the University of Winnipeg. She believes everyone has a voice and hopes her writing and video work will let them be heard.



HOROSCOPES

Yep, Mercury is still in retrograde (until Feb. 21).

Having a positive mindset will not be difficult this Saturday, Feb. 13, as Venus meets with retrograde messenger Mercury at 2:48 a.m., helping us attain a more artful or attractive perspective on things. This can also have some implications about repeating conversations in romantic relationships.

SOURCE: ASTROLOGY.COM

♈ ARIES

Do you want to live your life your own way or according to what other people say? If your reputation is your top concern (and it should be), then you need to stop listening to what other people say and start listening to what your inner voice is telling you! Compromising what you want is never going to help you get anywhere, no matter what people say. Stay true to your beliefs. Talking to an older relative might help you get some insight on how to stay on track.

♉ TAURUS

You have increased mental energy now. Studying and learning new things comes easily to you, and taking tests should be a breeze. Debating is also ideal now, so don't hesitate to express your ideas and opinions loudly and proudly. If there's an argument, you'll probably win it. You're starting to think more about the big picture. Let someone else worry about all the insignificant little details. Right now, you've got a grand plan that you can't wait to put into action.

♊ GEMINI

Momentum could be hard for you to achieve today. As soon as you get into your day, you're probably going to start feeling foggy or unclear about what to do next. If that happens, then turn your focus outward. Instead of getting all wrapped up in your own goals, focus on the things that other people are doing. See if you can help them. Often, when you step out of your own life, you get a better perspective on it. This isn't a good day to start any solo projects.

♋ CANCER

If it feels like too many people aren't getting what you're saying right now, don't get frustrated. Others may misinterpret you, but that doesn't mean they don't want to keep listening to you. People are willing to put in some effort to be a part of your world because being a part of your world is so worthwhile! From time to time you're bound to feel out of sync with them, but so what? Don't strive for smooth interactions all the time. You'll waste too much energy censoring yourself.

♌ LEO

Tempers could be flaring today, including yours. The plans you'd put together aren't working out the way you hoped, and now it looks like today is going to be all about putting out fires. The good news is that you have a strong sense of what you want, so it will be just a matter of figuring out how to get there. Make as few compromises as possible. If you let other people drive things in a direction you're not totally comfortable with, you will regret it.

♍ VIRGO

Romance requires some hard work from time to time, but it always pays off! If you're in a relationship right now, give your partner a little bit more attention and loving care than you've been giving them lately. Compromise will bring the two of you closer. And if you're not in a relationship, it's time to work a little bit harder at making a connection with that person you've been talking to a lot lately. Open up a little more and be vulnerable. Share a dream.

♎ LIBRA

If you're feeling like there are too many limits being placed on you right now, it's probably because you're not pushing against them hard enough! You need to stretch yourself. It will feel good, and it will show people that you don't need them looking over your shoulder. Step up and take on more responsibility and you'll be given more autonomy. Add a little more ambition to the mix and don't be afraid to fail. Even if you fail, at least you'll learn something.

♏ SCORPIO

You don't mind helping people when they need it, which is one of the things people love about you. But be careful not to give aid blindly. Someone who doesn't really need your help could ask for it, and if you can get away with saying no, you should. The two of you usually work well together, but it will feel too much like they're taking advantage of you. They need to be reminded that you might not be there when they really need you. Teach them not to take you for granted.

♐ SAGITTARIUS

If you're looking for an energy boost, look no further than art! Any place that is devoted to the visual representation of ideas has to be a great source of inspiration! If you can't manage to physically get in front of a great painting or sculpture in a museum, then check out what you can find online. If you poke around long enough, you're sure to find some sights and sounds that make you see things in a whole new way.

♑ CAPRICORN

It's a great day to voice your strongest opinions even if that means throwing a tiny temper tantrum. Everyone reverts to their childhood now and again, and today you could be surrounded by people who will understand if you get extreme in your behavior. You won't be embarrassed if you lose your cool. You will feel refreshed! Later in the day, the universe will send you some high energy that makes you feel much better about where things are going. People do listen to you!

♒ AQUARIUS

In the interest of keeping the group in harmony, encourage compromise. There is a lot of subliminal stuff going on, and people don't all share the same goals. To make sure that no one person uses the group power to get what's best for only them, you'll have to keep a sharp eye on the prize. Reinforce what goals everyone should be working for. Don't let one strong personality hijack everything for their own gain. You have the skills to keep things civil.

♓ PISCES

It's way too easy to let other people take control. While it's actually quite healthy for you to step back and hand over one or two of your responsibilities, it's not wise to completely disconnect yourself from the work at hand. There is a difference between delegating a job to someone who could use the opportunity for some hands-on learning and getting something off your plate just so you don't have to deal with it anymore, and you know it. So trust yourself.

MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN A PLANET IS IN RETROGRADE?

By definition, a planet is retrograde when it is moving backward in the sky. However, in astrology, the significance of a retrograde is much more deep and complex than just an apparent motion.

MERCURY IN ASTROLOGY

Mercury is a celestial anomaly and a singularly disruptive, tricky character, in both mythical and astrological interpretation. Mercury in the natal chart embodies

the ways we think, speak and write, as well as the ways we use our cunning to bend the truth and sidestep responsibility.

HOW DOES MERCURY IN RETROGRADE AFFECT US?

During Mercury retrograde, things typically do not go as planned. Communication, technology and travel can be particularly chaotic.

The safest bet is to wait until Mercury is both out of retrograde and its shadow before undertaking important decisions.

Although the most obvious effects of Mercury in retrograde happen externally, the most important work manifests when we undertake deep internal reviews.

Mercury's retrograde cycles, however disruptive they may be at times, offer us the ability to gain greater objectivity in a particular area of life.

Another overlooked aspect of Mercury retrograde is that things not going as planned does not necessarily mean the deviation from expectation will be negative.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do:

- Re-do, re-think, review
- Revisit leads that had previously fizzled out
- Approach previous clients for business
- Repair old items
- Search your closet for forgotten goodies
- Back up your computer, phone, etc.
- Tie up loose ends

Don't:

- Finalize negotiations, especially with new or unknown partners
- Start a new job
- Launch a new venture
- Purchase electronics or big-ticket items
- Send or receive shipments (buy the insurance!)
- Complete highly detailed tasks, especially numerical ones

A Conversation with Andrea Subissati and Alexandra West

The Faculty of Horror

Tackling all things horror with a slash of analysis and research. The Faculty of Horror is your best source for classic and contemporary horror film discussions that will haunt the libraries of your mind!

HOSTED BY OLIVIA NORQUAY
OF *BIKINI DRIVE-IN*

THURSDAY, FEB 25 / 7 P.M.

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