

THE **U**NITER

SOMEWHERE OVER THE REIN-BOW—P4

REVAMPING PEDESTRIAN ROAD SAFETY—P10

BLUE'S CLUES & TOXIC NOSTALGIA—P13



**Empty
towers**

REMOTE WORK, SMALL BUSINESSES AND THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN WINNIPEG

WELL, THAT ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING

THOMAS PASHKO
MANAGING EDITOR



In the ramp-up to the Canadian federal election on Monday, Sept. 20, politicians and news media alike were reminding voters that this would be the “most important” election of our lifetimes. But when the smoke cleared and the votes were tallied, it may well have been the least consequential election in Canadian history.

In terms of seats won or lost by the major parties, it might be the Canadian election that affected the least change, with the Liberals gaining one seat, the Tories losing two, the Bloc and NDP each snagging one, and independents losing two. To find an election that’s comparably boring, you need to go all the way back to 1882, when the Conservatives’ majority of 134 seats remained unchanged from the 1878 election – but even then, the Liberals still managed to jump from 63 seats to 73.

As I wrote last week, I always enjoy voting, even when I’m not particularly excited about any of the election’s prospective outcomes. But every step of the process on Monday felt perfunctory. I was struck by a feeling I almost never feel when it comes to politics: apathy.

I spent my early adulthood galvanized by the frustrating reelections of Stephen Harper, a prime minister who slashed arts and culture funding, abolished long-gun registration, lowered Canada’s corporate tax rates to some of the lowest in the world, increased military spending by billions, whipped up xenophobia by proposing a hotline to report “barbaric cultural practices” and still found time to engage in voter suppression and, shortly before his election, attempt to bribe a dying independent MP to vote against the Liberal government. 2015 brought the relief of “no more Harper,” but also the election of Little Lord Justin and his many progressive promises that gave way to much less progressive policies.

But this election felt like, for lack of a better term, a fart in the wind: silent but not at all deadly, it was a big hullabaloo that changed nothing. That’s not to say there’s nothing to be mobilized by. For instance, the far-right People’s Party of Canada raked in 800,000 votes despite its well-documented ties to white supremacists. Canadian anti-racists have a lot of work to do between now and the next election. But for folks who get excited about politics, this was the *Game of Thrones* finale of elections.



PHOTO BY KEELEY BRAUNSTEIN-BLACK

Winnipeg singer-songwriter Rein’s new EP explores the sounds of classic vocal jazz and old Hollywood. Read more on page 4.

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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.

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ALONE TOGETHER

Art show explores the theme of loneliness

SARAH LONDON | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | [SRA_5000](#)

Whether it's living alone during a lockdown or feeling misunderstood in a room full of people, loneliness is a feeling that, ironically, just about everyone understands. An upcoming art exhibition explores this paradox.

Within Otherness by photographer Glodi Bahati runs from Sept. 27 to Oct. 28. It's a free show curated by Mahlet Cuff and hosted at Take Home BIPOC Arts House at 622-100 Arthur St.

The inspiration for the show's title came to Bahati while reading an article about otherness that immigrants feel, which she related to after coming to Canada as a refugee, she says.

"The otherness that a lot of immigrant people feel, and the perpetual otherness that loneliness creates, as well — perspective-wise, that's where I'm coming from with the show," Bahati says.

"The show really is about embracing that uncomfortable feeling and reveling in your loneliness."

Over the past year, Bahati learned to embrace her loneliness, which ultimately helped her recognize the importance of connecting with her community, family and friends, she says. She hopes *Within Otherness* does the same for attendees.

"I want people to face their own loneliness, because I feel like, a lot of the time, we're running away from it," she says.

"I think the first step is facing all your loneliness without ... feeling guilty (and) seeing what it shows you about yourself."

Daniel Perlman is a sessional instructor

at the University of Winnipeg teaching psychology. He describes loneliness as basically when folks "feel disconnected from other people."

In line with Bahati's hope that the show inspires viewers to approach their own loneliness rather than running from it, Perlman distinguishes between loneliness and solitude, emphasizing solitude's positive effects.

"Being by yourself has ... what you might think of as refreshing properties," Perlman says.

When starting out with the work featured in the show, Bahati knew she wanted to explore the theme of loneliness but wasn't sure how. Speaking with others, researching and reflecting inspired Bahati to write a poem, which became the catalyst for the show. The poem will be performed the opening night on Sept. 27.

A way to overcome loneliness is to be with people who have similar interests and values, because you're likely to form bonds with them, Perlman says. Additionally, he says enhancing relationships one has also alleviates feelings of loneliness. It's "what happens with people who are in a community."

"Simply the act of revealing oneself" can attract people to an artist, because, generally, when we self-disclose, folks react positively, Perlman says.

Revealing herself and creating a reflective, social experience is just what Bahati is doing through her photography. As she writes in the exhibition description,



"(to) paraphrase the words of Solange, this is me lifting the veil, I'm ready to be seen. Can you see me now?"

Within Otherness runs from Sept. 27 to Oct. 28 at 622-100 Arthur St. Entry is free.

'WHERE FILM, TEXT AND SOUND MEET'

Winnipeg Film Group hosts film-poetry workshop for emerging directors

ISABELLA SOARES | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | [BELLASOARES0601](#) [@BELLA_SOARES16](#)

Film and poetry go hand-in-hand in the upcoming Winnipeg Film Group (WFG) workshop, curated by Irish-born and Montreal-based poet Rachel McCrum.

After receiving recognition as the first BBC Scotland Poet-in-Residence and earning the Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship, McCrum is ready to share her knowledge once again with students. This time, it's with Winnipeggers through Zoom. Despite never having visited the city before, she is excited to discover how each participant in the sessions will capture their surroundings through the lens.

"Film-poetry is the point where film, text and sound meet, so I am looking forward to hopefully (giving) people some tools to capture their environment in a different way," McCrum says.

She further explained that the three-part workshop series (which will take place on Sept. 18 and 25 and Oct. 2) is geared toward beginners who are learning how to hold a camera and edit footage for the first time.

"This is a short course to show people the context and intricacies to the basics of editing ... By the end of (the course), what I am hoping is that everyone is able to create their own short film and also have

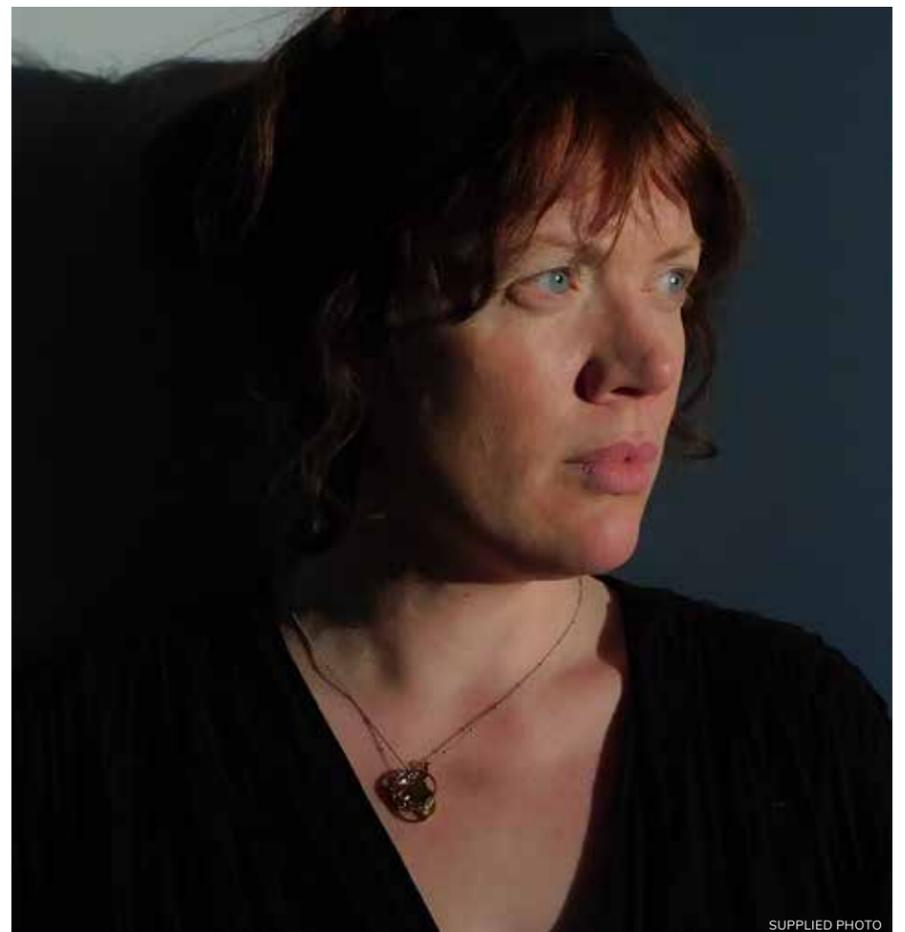
a taste of what it is like moving forward," McCrum says.

Other than preparing for the workshop series, the poet has kept herself busy with the return of performing events in Montreal. She is also focusing on her second book, following her previously published collection entitled *The First Blast to Awaken Women Degenerate*. Even though McCrum is in the early stages of the writing process, she hinted at the theme for her next project.

"I am working on the concept of shame or shaming, which is a huge topic, and it's a landscape that is constantly changing," McCrum says.

According to WFG production co-ordinator Karen Remoto, the organization is thrilled to have McCrum curating the workshop series, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic has expanded the reach for instructors and participants to join. Remoto says these workshops are targeted to different skill sets, and that the camera learning sessions tend to be the most popular.

The film-poetry workshop is designed to assist emerging filmmakers with techniques to enhance their craft and get the basics down. There are only a few



Montreal-based poet Rachel McCrum is hosting a film-poetry workshop with the Winnipeg Film Group.

essential tools to keep in mind for the sessions.

"To be able to participate, you just need a laptop and a poem. It is fairly easy, because each session is about one hour each," Remoto says.

The Film-poetry with Rachel McCrum workshop series has limited seats left, and passes are between \$40 and \$80. For more information about joining, email training@winnipegfilmgroup.com.

LITTLE LOVE ENCOUNTERS

Rein's third EP explores different facets of love through old-school jazz

ISABELLA SOARES | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | [TW BELLASOARES0601](#) [IG BELLA_SOARES16](#)

Diving into old-Hollywood ambience, Filipino-Canadian artist Rein is about to release his latest EP, *Encounters*, on Sept. 30.

Like many artists who set aside their hobbies and passions for everyday "priorities," Rein decided to spend some time off from video production as a Creative Communications student and went back to making music during the COVID-19 pandemic. He was eager to come up with songs that are in sync with his former high-school vocal jazz sing-alongs, in the hopes of bringing chill vibes and refurbishing the classic genre.

"The main difference is that this (EP) has a whole genre of music that people never heard me do before, other than my high-school friends," Rein says. "Looking back at it now, I had never incorporated jazz or a classic sound to any of my songs, so I wanted to incorporate more of that in it."

Notably, the inspiration behind the acoustic-led tracks were classic films. Rein's "all-time favourites" include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Disney films like *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

"The sound that they have is not something that you really hear in most songs today, so I thought it would be cool if (this sound) could be brought back within

our generation," he says.

Aside from the classic-sounding tunes, *Encounters* is driven by the theme of love in its different shapes and forms. Whether it's a relationship destined to be doomed at first glance or a genuine friendship bond, the songs reflect the importance of connection during troubling times.

"Love is what got me through tough times, whether that is romantically or with my friends. With the pandemic and everything going on right now, people need to find a sense of love to carry on with their life," Rein says.

Regarding the writing process, Rein unveiled a couple of the stories behind tracks such as "Red String" and "Blue Skies." The first verse of "Red String," for example, was built on a card that his significant other gave him.

"Blue Skies" was just a reflection of me and my friend. I wrote it in the perspective that she leaves on a flight tomorrow, and I'm like 'blue skies show up, I want to be with this person before they leave,'" he says.

After the EP's anticipated release, the singer-songwriter is working on a new project for the end of the year. This time, he's covering traditional holiday tunes and creating his own Christmas song that could



PHOTO BY KEELEY BRAUNSTEIN-BLACK

Singer-songwriter Rein's EP *Encounters* explores the vocal jazz sounds of classic Hollywood musicals.

potentially feature a full choir to ignite the festivities.

Encounters features four new tracks and an arrangement of "So This is Love" from the '50s animation of *Cinderella*. Links to all of Rein's work can be found at beacons.ai/reinqc.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	
6AM	MORNING BREATH	!EARSHOT 20	Cafecito Latinoamericano	FLY Travel Radio ★	FANTASTIC FRIDAY World - Island music	THE MAN IN THE GREY FLANNEL SUIT SHOW	CKU-SPEAKS	
7AM				CANQUEER				
8AM	CKUW MORNING NEWS / FRONT BURNER (CBC)						WOODEN SPOONS	
9AM	DEMOCRACY NOW!			DEMOCRACY NOW!			SHADES OF CLASSICS Classical and New Age	
10AM	DEPARTMENT 13 POP/ROCK	This Way Out WINGS	VOYAGE Jazz	PLANETARY RADIO Cheeze Pleasee	SUNNY ROAD Roots Music	MUD PUDDLE RADIO For Kids (Adults too)	INDIGENOUS In Music	
11AM		BOOTS & SADDLE COUNTRY		ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS	NO FIXED ADDRESS LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS	THE ELECTRIC CHAIR	TEMPLE OF JAZZ	
NOON	The Sean Show			!EARSHOT DAILY	HOW TO SURVIVE A TORNADO		NEON BEIGE SOUND EXCHANGE	
1PM	TALKING RADICAL RADIO Truth Before Reconciliation	THE GREEN MAJORITY	ALTERNATIVE RADIO	RADIO ECOSHOCK	GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR	THE IVORY TOWER Eclectic Mix	YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM GOD Gospel	
2PM	GROUNDSWELL New Classical	Your Show Here	Classical Kaleidoscope	BARKING DOG Past 'n Present Folk 'n Roots	What's Up Winnipeg?		Classical Delights ★	
3PM	PSYCLE RADIO	Winnipeg Arena is on Fire	SPACE CADET MUSIC, OUT OF THIS WORLD	WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON?	Chart Noises CKUW's Top 30	THE TRIP PSYCHEDELIC ROCK	The Shortwave Report Bikini Drive-In	
4PM	INNER CITY VOICES	THE GREEN BLUES SHOW	SYSTEM KIDZ Youth in Care	AMATEUR HOUR So Bad, It's Good	PAGES	PEG CITY PLAYLIST	Jokes On You Local Comedy	
5PM	THE WORLD World	Lost Chunes	TWANG TRUST Country/ Roots/ Big, Dumb Rock 'n Roll	TAWNY, THE BRAVE Pop/Rock	THE HOW DO YOU DO REVUE	WE BUILD HITS Hip-Hop	THE C.A.R.P. The Completely Asinine Radio Program	
6PM	THE TONIC Garage, Punk, Surf, and R&R	BLUESDAY PLAYING THE BLUES	S.A.N.E. * RADIO Local Experimental Music	Adult Kindergarten	CHECK CA Funky	RED BOX Hip-Hop	Rank and File Radio: Prairie Edition	
7PM	DESTINATION MOON Sock-Hop-A-Go-Go		Your Show Here	Dub City Steppers	QUADRAFUNK Electric Dance Party		THE GASHLYCRUMB TINIES	
8PM	!EARSHOT DAILY	!EARSHOT DAILY	!EARSHOT DAILY	PHASE ONE Electronic	Brain Drainer Radio	DANCE HALL FEVER Dancehall and Reggae	ISLAND VIBES Caribbean	
9PM	BREAK NORTH RADIO ★	MONKEY SPARROW	Two Princes					
10PM		LISTENING PLEASURES						
11PM	METAL MONDAY	NIGHT DANGER RADIO	HURLEMENTS SUR LA TOUNDRA	THE WONDERFUL & FRIGHTENING WORLD OF PATRICK MICHALISHYN	MANITOBA MOON	CRYSTAL PALACE	Rainbow Country	
12AM	MODERN JAZZ TODAY	The Motherland Influence	THE SENTINEL'S MARVELOUS KALEIDOSCOPE				Your Show Here	
1AM	AMPLIFIED RADIO	Old Parlour Radio	DEEP THREES					
2AM			CELT IN A TWIST					



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ALTER-NATING

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12 Some programs are on hiatus and/or airing different content due to university closure for COVID-19.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

SHANG-CHI AND THE LEGEND OF THE TEN RINGS

Currently playing in theatres



KEESHA HAREWOOD | FEATURES REPORTER | @KEESHAHAREWOOD

Marvel Studios' *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* is a superhero film that follows Shang-Chi (Simu Liu) in his attempt to foil the evil plot of his Machiavellian father Xu Wenwu (Tony Leung).

To kick things off, the fight scenes in the film are a refreshing departure from Marvel's tendency to show off flashy CGI magic or tech in their battles.

The gorgeous hand-to-hand martial fight choreography is stunning. It's quick, fun and incredibly impressive. While most of the fight sequences pale somewhat in comparison to the bus scene toward the end of the first act, the excitement and momentum is sustained throughout the majority of the movie.

That said, the action does wane some-

what during the final battle, where CGI and special effects rear their heads. Even so, it's not so disappointing that it eclipses the rest of the viewing experience.

Another wonderful aspect of the film that differentiates it from other Marvel works is the friendship between Shang-Chi and his best friend Katy (Awkwafina).

It's a longstanding tradition of sorts that a superhero has their counterpart, and when the superhero and their counterpart are of different genders, they often fall into a romantic relationship. This does not happen for Shang-Chi and Katy.

Their platonic relationship is established early on and firmly remains that way for the entirety of the story. Additionally, they're shown to be a team that supports each other. They laugh together, have fun together and make poor choices together. Seeing a lighthearted but strong friendship on screen adds an extra layer of enjoyment to *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* – not to mention that Awkwafina is a delight to watch in general.

Unfortunately, there is one lacklustre facet of the film that hinders its rating,

but not overmuch: in a nutshell, there are some issues with the villain, Xu Wenwu.

Xu Wenwu is established early on as an immortal man empowered by the magical and dangerous 10 rings. Wielding the rings as a weapon, he creates and commands a hostile organization that shares its name.

Xu Wenwu, however, renounces his evil ways upon meeting the love of his life Ying Li (Fala Chen), only to revert back to villainy upon his wife's death.

This is a lot of character development to pack alongside everything else going on in the narrative. Unfortunately, the way it is handled is subpar. While it's easy enough to just go along with these rapid character changes during the first and second acts, Xu Wenwu's motives become weaker as the film goes on, and his arc comes off as flimsy toward the end.

All together, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* is definitely worth catching in theatres. Despite its errors, it's a fun, action-packed time with solid performances and its fair share of thrilling scenes.

ARTS BRIEFS

CIERRA BETTENS | ARTS AND CULTURE EDITOR | @FICTIONALCIERRA @CIERRABETTENS

Apollo Suns release new single

The award-winning, Winnipeg-based jazz group Apollo Suns will release a new single titled "Lake Country" on Sept. 24. The song, which was written as a love letter to the natural wonders of British Columbia, is a part of an EP that will be released at a later date.

Good Will re-opening show

The Good Will Social Club (625 Portage Ave.) has officially opened its doors to the public. To celebrate, the venue is throwing a re-opening party on Oct. 2, where musical acts Caid Jones, Mooki and Boogey the Beat will be present. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased through showpass.com. The show is 18+ and proof of vaccination is required at the door.

Black Forest Sanitorium installation

In collaboration with WNDX, the PLATFORM centre for photographic and digital arts will present Diana Thorneycroft's stop-motion animation installation, *Black Forest Sanitorium*, from Sept. 17 to Oct. 29. An artist talk, hosted by the Women's Film and Video Network, will take place at The Cube at Old Market Square on Sept. 25 at 12 p.m.

Brandi Vezina album release party

Award-winning, Métis singer-songwriter Brandi Vezina is releasing an album titled *#dontsettle* on Sept. 25. To celebrate, an album release party will happen at 48 Albert St. at 7 p.m., featuring special guest performances by Riley Dutiaume, Lucien Spence and Jesse Bandura. Tickets are \$10. Purchasing details can be found at brandivezina.com/shows.

WSO Community Celebration Concert

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra will perform a special free concert as part of Culture Days Manitoba's programming. The Community Celebration concert will be at the Centennial Concert Hall (555 Main St.) on Saturday, Sept. 25. Seats are limited and can be reserved by calling the box office at 204-949-3999 or by visiting wso.ca.

Project Jazz at Old Market Square

Organized by Jazz Winnipeg, *Project Jazz* is a series of public art installations incorporating jazz music and multimedia art. The installation is one of many at Nuit Blanche Winnipeg and will go up at the west end of Bijou Park on the Red River College campus, The Cube at Old Market Square, the west exterior wall of the Rachel Browne Theatre and the north wall of the lot at the junction of King and Bannatyne. *Project Jazz* is free to view on Oct. 1 and 2 from 8 to 11 p.m.

FEATURE	Words by Callum Goulet-Kilgour	City Reporter	 cgouletkilgour
	Photos by Daniel Crump	Photo Editor	 dannyboycrump



Phil Klein, the owner of Bagelsmith on Carlton Street, says he signed the lease on his new business the day before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

Remote work, small businesses and the future of downtown Winnipeg

Working from home has its perks. Sweatpants, new pets and sleep-ins are certainly appreciated by workers. For small businesses downtown, however, the lack of office workers due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been economically devastating and has accelerated some negative trends that existed prior to 2020.

Major employers, schools and business establishments have been shut down. For example, the University of Winnipeg, which has more than 10,000 employees and students,

has operated almost entirely online since March 2020 (with a partial return to in-person classes this month).

The Canada Life Centre, which usually attracts more than 15,000 people for Winnipeg Jets games and concerts, has been closed since the beginning of the pandemic. Perhaps a symbol of downtown's decline, the historic Hudson's Bay Company store on Portage Avenue permanently closed in late 2020.

Since downtown Winnipeg is home to 70 per cent of all

office space in the city, office workers were extremely important for the region's economic success and cultural vibrancy. This cannot be overstated, especially since there are few people who live in the area. In fact, only 2.3 per cent of Winnipeggers live downtown. This is much smaller than in Canadian cities like Ottawa (6.4 per cent), Toronto (8.4 per cent) and Vancouver (17.2 per cent).

Business forced to adapt

One strategy to deal with a lack of customers has been adopted by businesses with multiple locations.

Thom Bargaen, the Winnipeg coffee shop, has temporarily closed its downtown locations at 365 Main St. and 250 Kennedy St. This allowed them to consolidate their business at their Sherbrook Street location.

The Second Cup located across from Manitoba Hydro on Edmonton Street has temporarily closed. This likely has something to do with the thousands of Manitoba Hydro employees who have been working from home.

Downtown small businesses with only a single location, however, do not have that flexibility and have faced a variety of challenges during this period.

David Pensato, executive director of the Exchange District BIZ, says the pandemic's impact has been significant on his part of downtown. The Exchange District is an area characterized by a "collection of heritage buildings" and "local restaurants, boutique shops, art galleries, museums and attractions."

"We got hit doubly, because we lost the office workers, and we lost those summer events and tourists," Pensato says. Cultural events like the Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival and the TD Winnipeg International Jazz Festival play a large role in attracting people to the area in a typical year.

The impact of office employees working from home has also been quite noticeable, Pensato says.

"That regular lunch-hour and after-work crowd has been a real loss over the course of the pandemic," he says, adding that the "ground-floor businesses have definitely had to work very hard to find new streams of revenue and new methods of delivery." This has included offering curbside pickup and selling their products at grocery stores.

Absence of office workers leaves hole in bagel shop

Phil Klein, the owner of Bagelsmith, says it has been an "exhausting experience to operate during a pandemic." In fact, this Montreal-style bagel shop has only ever known doing business in the world of COVID-19.

"We signed our lease the day before the pandemic," Klein says. He adds that it was a challenge to find a location. "Being a startup with no track record of owning a restaurant, landlords don't typically want to work with you."

Ultimately, Bagelsmith opened in October 2020 at 185 Carlton St. Klein says he's happy with the location due to the number of office workers nearby ... someday.

"Unfortunately, we didn't get to capitalize on that just yet," he says, referring to the fact that many people are still working from home.

"I would love for everyone to come back to work, but I also recognize, practically, that it's just not wise," Klein says. "People need to follow the rules, and government needs to keep the restrictions in place until we see where we're at with the fourth wave."

"I'd rather lock stuff down more and keep restrictions in place and get through this already, so we can have some normalcy."

Other challenges Bagelsmith has faced include erratic traffic trends and staffing difficulties. This latter problem has, in fact, affected employers across Canada and is a key factor that might slow the country's economic recovery, according to the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Despite these issues, Klein says "support from across the city" has allowed Bagelsmith to be quite busy. "It's been a (hectic) time, but I've been very lucky," he says.

Pensato echoes this sentiment.

"There's a real sense of community here, so when our businesses pivoted (to online operations), (patrons) were tremendously supported by the community that is normally here in person," he says.

"As we weather the storm, hopefully things will pick up organically," Klein says.



"That regular lunch-hour and after-work crowd has been a real loss over the course of the pandemic ... ground-floor businesses have definitely had to work very hard to find new streams of revenue." - David Pensato, executive director of Exchange District BIZ



"I would love for everyone to come back to work, but I also recognize, practically, that it's just not wise." - Phil Klein, Bagelsmith owner

Bookstore hopes dark chapter will soon be over

Well-established businesses have also been struggling with the lack of people downtown. Book Fair, which sells comics and used books, has been around since 1978. Owner Judy Weselowski says they may be forced to shut down if things don't pick up.

"All the office people are working from home, so we don't have our regular clientele to buy used books," she says, adding that it's "a real struggle."

"Everyone wants to sell (us) their books and get cash, but we want to get money in to pay rent," Weselowski says.

The lack of customers has forced them to make difficult decisions. "I had to lay off a worker, and we just don't have enough business to bring the worker back," she says.

Weselowski believes it's not just a lack of workers downtown that is hurting businesses like hers. She says the general public might be scared of coming downtown, and many "just don't feel it's safe anymore."

"We've had people from out of town coming in the last couple of weeks and saying 'oh, it's really rough downtown,'

Weselowski says.

A recent report entitled "State of Downtown: The impact of the pandemic to date" prepared by the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ noted that, though crime rates dropped during the pandemic, "signs of poverty, mental illness and drug use may have become more visible in the city centre."

"Perception that downtown is unsafe could be fueled in part by widespread social stigma surrounding homelessness, mental health and substance use," the report notes.

Concerns about COVID-19 might also be at the top of patrons' minds. To make their store more welcoming, Book Fair has implemented safety protocols to ensure a good shopping experience for customers.

"We work on an 'open-on-demand' (model) instead of keeping our door unlocked, because we're basically the only retail on our block right now," Weselowski says. "We know who's coming in. We do contact tracing, so it just makes it easier that way."

Weselowski points to a decline in retail stores downtown, which has long preceded

the pandemic, as a key concern for the stores that remain.

"Unless you can fill up the storefronts on Portage (Avenue), you're not getting people coming downtown," she says.

One potential revitalizer is the redevelopment of the Portage Place mall "into a new mixed-use complex with retail and office spaces," scheduled to start later this year. The Retail Insight Network reports that this project has an estimated economic impact of almost \$700 million and could "generate 3,343 years of employment." However, many have expressed concerns about this project, given that the lead company, Starlight Investments, has a poor track record with its other developments across Canada.

'Patterns are unpredictable'

Pensato notes there are reasons to be hopeful, though the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation remains difficult for businesses.

"We've seen some office workers coming back in the last two, three weeks – certainly the restaurants are noticing that – but what's

happening is that the patterns are unpredictable," Pensato says.

"It's very hard to staff appropriately when you don't know what the patterns are going to be," he says, adding that the only pattern they know is one of "waiting and seeing."

"We are waiting to see to what degree office workers return in the fall, how often they're coming in," Pensato says.

The concern about whether this remote work is temporary or permanent lingers, though he believes this is slightly overblown by the media.

A survey released in April 2021 revealed that most Canadians are still hesitant to return entirely to in-person work. Only 9 per cent of respondents said their preference was to work all hours outside the home. 40.8 per cent voted for an evenly split hybrid model, while almost 40 per cent still prefer to work most or all hours at home.

"We have to wait and see when the dust settles," Pensato says. "I think the main thing is that we need to keep that going: support your community and support these businesses."



Downtown is home to 70 per cent of Winnipeg's office space, but only 2.3 per cent of Winnipeggers live there. The decrease in people during the pandemic has been hard on downtown businesses.

Bagelsmith is open Monday to Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and is located at 185 Carlton St.
 Book Fair is open Monday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is located at 340 Portage Ave.

CITY BRIEFS

ALEX NEUFELDT | CITY EDITOR

Four things to fear downtown

Fear Winnipeg will reinstate their Halloween programming for the first time since 2019, when their venue was destroyed in a fire. Starting Oct. 1, they will host four different horror experiences at a secret location in downtown Winnipeg. More information on the experiences and how to purchase tickets is available at fearwpg.ca.

DJing and drag at interdependent driving decennial

On Sept. 24, Wall-to-Wall Mural & Culture Festival and Peg City Car Co-op will hold the Walk Bike Bus Birthday Bash at The Beer Can to celebrate the carsharing program's 10-year anniversary. There will be DJing sets from DJ Luv and Wanda G, plus drag performances from Prairie Sky, Cake, Rose Mortel, Special K and Lady Fortuna.

Equity in access to (canine) contraception

If you've adopted a dog during the pandemic, as many have, and haven't been able to afford spaying/neutering, the City of Winnipeg is now providing that service for free. To qualify, you must have a social-assistance case number, be a new permanent resident or refugee for under 18 months without filing a tax return or fall under the low-income cutoff.

Get vaxxed on campus

There will be a pop-up COVID-19 vaccine clinic in the RecPlex Community Gym on Sept. 29 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The clinic will carry a limited number of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis to provide a convenient option for those who have received their first dose and are looking to get their second before the Oct. 19 deadline to gain long-term campus access.

Cyber Sanctuaries at 1C03

Gallery 1C03 is hosting *Sanctuaries* – a virtual exhibition from artists Anique Jordan, Akum Maduka and Rajni Perera in a virtual space created by Odudu Umoessien – from Sept. 20 to Dec. 19. On Sept. 19, there will be a virtual discussion with the exhibition participants, as well as Mahlet Cuff and Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, presented by the University of Winnipeg Critical Race Network.

Byelections, senators and students-at-large

There are currently many opportunities to get involved with the University of Winnipeg Students' Association. The UWSA byelection candidate nomination period begins on Sept. 27, and the organization is currently looking to fill UWSA senator seats (to represent students in the University of Winnipeg senate) and student-at-large seats on several board of directors committees. Visit theuwsa.ca for more details.



PHOTO BY THOMAS PASHKO

The signalized intersection at Maryland Street and Westminster Avenue in West Broadway is part of a major artery for automobile traffic, despite the fact that less than half of the neighbourhood's residents drive.

HIT THE STREETS, THEN FIX THEM

Evaluating public consultations for the City's new road-safety plan

ALEX NEUFELDT | CITY EDITOR

Sixty-three per cent of West Broadway residents don't drive a car.

Or rather, even if they can drive, they primarily bike, walk and take public transportation. And yet, there is an incredibly busy and dangerous traffic artery that slices through the neighbourhood: a thoroughfare that is simply not designed with the neighbourhood's residents in mind. Almost every day, Jacob Nikkel sees someone have a near-death experience trying to cross that thoroughfare in the legally sanctioned manner.

Nikkel is the community safety outreach co-ordinator for the West Broadway Community Organization. He has seen Winnipeg's city council prioritize the convenience of cars over community transportation needs for years.

"We know how to create safer and more efficient transportation. The evidence and the best practices are clear: it looks like better public transportation, safe vehicle speeds and better infrastructure for people on foot and bike," Nikkel says in a statement to *The Uniter*. "We can't keep letting concerns over losing a few on-street parking spots, or car speeds being slowed down a bit, to keep overriding community demands for safer streets."

So all things considered, Nikkel is optimistic about the City's Road Safety Strategic Action Plan, which he says reflects many of the community's transportation needs.

The City of Winnipeg is currently in the final consultation phase of the strategic action plan: a project that aims to determine the direction of road-safety development in the city based on data, public input and stakeholder group input. Their outreach has included collaborating with the WRENCH to provide bike tune-ups to cyclists participating in pop-up consultations.

Anders Swanson, the executive director of Winnipeg Trails Association, has been involved in some of the stakeholder meetings and says the City needs to take responsibility for their past decisions before they can truly commit to a new direction for road safety.

"We know what needs to be done in terms of the nuts and bolts, but we need for somebody to say 'this was wrong, it can't continue, and we're sorry,'" he says. "The details in a road-safety plan are less important than that first step."

Swanson says the current state of road safety in Winnipeg is "a systematic repression of certain peoples' right to use space," and that the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates just how much the City has failed this test of equity in transportation.

"The people who were systematically discriminated against with barriers to their transportation are most impacted when their transportation options are at risk," he says. When people began to be cautious about taking buses due to the spread of COVID-19, there wasn't wide-

spread bike infrastructure, and the City didn't rush to produce it.

Compared to public transportation, cycling, and walking, Swanson explains that car infrastructure is a user-pay system (meaning that it's costly for users to be involved in), and so there was no safe transportation option for many Winnipeggers. "When you compare what people want to do versus what they can do, it comes down to road safety," he says.

The first round of consultations was intended as an initial safety assessment, while the second shaped the City's long-term and short-term visions and goals for road safety. The third will help to determine focus areas and what specific actions the City will undertake.

After the first two rounds of consultations, the City has drafted a document of potential safety policy actions that apply to five subjects within road systems: signalized intersections (meaning intersections controlled by electronic signals like traffic lights and pedestrian crossing signals), pedestrians, cyclists, speed and road-safety culture.

Nikkel and Swanson both emphasize that understanding road-safety issues as cultural problems created by policy makers rather than individual drivers is important, and Swanson stresses that the city should address correcting that culture outside of the police ticketing system.

Rebecca Peterniak, the community traffic engineer with the City of Winnipeg, says the focus on signalized intersections is a result of the unique-for-Winnipeg focus on urban road safety in this project.

"This is the first time that Winnipeg is developing a hyper-localized road safety plan for the city," she says. "In the past, we've followed and partnered with the province on a larger-scale provincial plan, but this took a much deeper dive into the key issues in Winnipeg and the customized solutions we're looking for."

She says that, because of this focus, the project has drawn on Winnipeg-specific collision data, City of Winnipeg-specific policies and practices and

has a focus on stakeholders local to the city. While she says the focus on pedestrians, cyclists and speed are common in both urban and rural road-safety projects, the focus on signalized intersections is much bigger in the cities.

That's because most collisions with pedestrians happen at intersections. Brian Pincott, the executive director of Vélo Canada Bikes and a former Calgary city councillor who advocated for bike infrastructure, notes that most vehicle collisions with pedestrians also happen when the pedestrian has the right of way.

Pincott also cites studies in other cities that found prohibiting right turns on red lights can reduce these collisions, and that lowering speed limits may prevent injuries and fatalities from cars and have minimal impacts on total travel time. So with facts like these, he wonders why the City is undertaking a public consultation in the first place.

"These actions have all been done in one way or another somewhere else," he says. While Pincott recognizes that public consultation is important, he says it can also be inappropriate, and that, in this case, it may create unnecessary debate about policies with well-established results. "You can 'public engage' things to death," he says.

Pincott also wishes the potential actions were more ambitious.

"The big piece that is missing is for the road that we build tomorrow: how do we make it safe for everybody? The assumption that the City goes in with is that you build a road that works for cars, that is most efficient for cars, and then you try to make it safer for everybody else, as opposed to (making) it safe for everybody," he says. "I just wish they would aim higher."

Residents of Winnipeg can review the actions being considered and complete the survey until Sept. 30 at engage.winnipeg.ca/roadsafetyplan/survey_tools/winnipeg-road-safety-focus-areas1.

PLANNING MORE EQUITABLE CITIES

Meet the new IUS director, Dr. Gina Sylvestre

REESE ESTWICK | CAMPUS REPORTER |  REESESESTWICK

The University of Winnipeg, which is home to the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS), has recently welcomed a new director: Dr. Gina Sylvestre, an environmental gerontologist. Sylvestre is an accomplished academic and earned her bachelor of arts, master's degree and doctorate from the University of Manitoba.

Sylvestre's research has primarily centred around the aging population, focusing "on where older people live and how that impacts their quality of life." Sylvestre says she is "very interested in the human experiences and urban landscapes, in particular about social inequality and how we can address that."

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many of Sylvestre's research interests into the public spotlight and started conversations about the different inequities that exist throughout communities, specifically in urban city centres.

Sylvestre says the pandemic "has really highlighted, in some ways, some good things about community, and also where that inequality in our system exists."

On many consultation projects, the

IUS has worked alongside the City of Winnipeg and different organizations to promote access to housing for those who are a part of marginalized demographics. One example is the *Indigenizing Housing First* guide that was produced by the IUS in consultation with local homelessness-serving organizations in 2019.

"*Housing First* is a best-practices model of assisting people experiencing homelessness that focuses on moving people quickly into housing before providing needed health, mental-health and social services," Scott McCullough, senior research associate for the IUS, says.

"Our guide expanded the knowledge we had gained from the At Home/Chez Soi research demonstration project in Winnipeg, through interviews and focus groups with Indigenous homelessness-serving organizations from across Canada and elsewhere," he says.

Sylvestre says the IUS can be a valuable resource during city planning moving forward, "in discussing how these issues that are being looked at – the health of communities and so on – (and) how they



PHOTO BY CALLIE LUGOSI

Dr. Gina Sylvestre is the new director of the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies.

can be looked at from an urban-planning perspective."

She continues to explore some major questions the City of Winnipeg should ask regarding equity and sustainability in city planning.

"The housing crisis is serious across Canada but has disproportionately impacted vulnerable, marginalized and racialized groups," McCullough says.

"There is a lack of affordable housing nationwide. Many, many people are

in core-housing need (paying more than 30 per cent of their income on housing). Most of those in core need are renters, and some of these are students. We see increased vulnerability to evictions, especially as older-affordable housing stock is redeveloped."

McCullough says there are many ambitious projects on the horizon, including one focused on "rental discrimination with a focus on seniors, LGBTQ+ and racialized tenants."

'IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT ... YOU'RE NOT ALONE'

Many students reporting cases of sexual violence on campuses

REESE ESTWICK | CAMPUS REPORTER |  REESESESTWICK

On Sept. 17, approximately 10,000 Western University students, faculty and staff walked out of classes to protest the rape culture and sexism impacting their campus and campuses everywhere – as well as to stand in solidarity with survivors of sexual violence.

After just one week on campus, four women filed formal complaints to the Western University administration about sexual violence. Many other allegations were found across various social-media platforms.

"I think whenever rape culture is pointed out in an institution, it is a reminder that misogyny and other forms of oppression that dehumanize are not specific to a location but a wider set of beliefs and practices," third-year University of Winnipeg student Janine Brown says. "I'm disappointed in how campuses tend to link to gendered violence. However, I don't think it's surprising when we know these institutions are linked and feed into each other's histories of patriarchy and colonialism. Having campuses built on stolen land finds them on violation of consent."

These reports of assault, although devastating, are not shocking to many. Dangerous campus party culture has existed for a long time. A Facebook post by Respect, Educate, Empower Survivors (REES), a safe, online sexual-violence reporting system, reads, "the first six to eight weeks of the fall semester, commonly referred to as the Red Zone, refer to a statistically heightened period when instances of sexual vio-

lence occur."

For many students, the transition to post-secondary environments is a major culture shift. With the COVID-19 pandemic keeping (most) students off-campus for nearly two years, there are now significantly more people participating in university parties and social events for the first time.

Mary Lobson, founder and CEO of REES, says some people are referring to this year as "the double Red Zone," because most first- and second-year students are on campus for the first time.

Although the fact that there are essentially double the number of people navigating university culture does not, at this time, prove that the Red Zone is heightened, Lobson says "it is certainly worth considering that there is double the amount of students who are coming in after a period of being in lockdown, where they haven't seen their friends, and they haven't partied."

The conversation surrounding sexual violence is often focused on the heinous acts that survivors have faced, but Lobson notes that the conversation needs to be much broader than that. She says the "million-dollar question" is "how do we shift the culture?"

Lobson says this culture includes "cat-calling, the comments that get made, the words or gestures or behaviours that are happening, not just on campuses ... at society at large."

As this misogynistic culture has been socially accepted, Brown explains that the



SUPPLIED PHOTO

REES founder and CEO Mary Lobson

"fear around sexual assault and the litany of small protection employed to avoid it (going out with friends, being aware of your surroundings, holding your keys and phone when alone) are already standard practice, and these incidents serve more as reminders and less as awakenings."

Many institutions lack transparency and accountability for those who have perpetrated sexual violence. Lobson says having systems in place to hold perpetrators accountable "potentially, will make it a deterrent to behave in particular ways."

Just like sex, consent is often considered a taboo topic. A lack of consent education often enhances patterns and messages of toxic masculinity, leading to victim-blaming, slut-shaming and sexual violence – most often targeting women, specifically Women of Colour.

"Systems, generally speaking, don't understand (victim blaming)," Lobson says. She explains that many people do not understand that the behaviour and language they use is victim-blaming, because it, alongside other harmful cultural norms, has been so normalized in society.

"Consent seems to have been boiled down to a transactional and legal mechanism under capitalism instead of a holistic understanding of how people interact with humility," Brown says. "Practicing consent should be a way of living and learned process as opposed to a stated fact."

Students who have experienced sexual violence are encouraged to call or text the Sexual Violence Response Team at 204-230-6660 for support or to email svrt@uwinnipeg.ca.



‘THROW THE BOX OUT THE WINDOW’

Dr. Kristi Kenyon, associate professor, Global College, U of W

KEESHA HAREWOOD | FEATURES REPORTER |  KEESHAHAREWOOD

For Kristi Kenyon, one of the best things about being an associate professor at the University of Winnipeg’s (U of W) Global College is the energy of the classroom.

“The world kind of changes in the classroom,” she says. “We’re learning from each other. We’re having conversations. It’s a safe space to think through new ideas.”

Kenyon teaches courses that pertain to human rights. Prior to teaching, she worked as an activist and researcher for a variety of organizations.

“I worked for Amnesty International in London. I worked in Botswana on HIV with a local organization there for two years. I worked in Malaysia, mostly on sexual reproductive health rights,” she says. “I was working in that field and really enjoying it.”

After being out in the field, Kenyon decided to pursue a career in academia. This allowed her to maintain a connection with human-rights work and to research.

“I was really excited to see that opportunity, to be in a place that’s engaged with the community where I can do research outside of the box or even just throw the box out the window,” she says.

Alongside the joy of sustained research, Kenyon loves the interdisciplinary nature of Global College.

“We’re the only undergraduate human-rights program in Western Canada,” she says. “I’m from Western Canada, and I love being in an interdisciplinary program. My research has always been interdisciplinary.”

Kenyon is excited to teach the History of Human Rights in Canada course during the fall and winter terms. She’s enthusiastic about the course’s growing popularity and the opportunity for interesting conversations.

“The history of human rights in Canada, this is all of our story,” she says. “Whether we’ve just arrived or whether our families have been here forever, it’s everybody’s story. But it’s actually a collection of different stories. It’s really nice to be able to have that conversation in the classroom.”

What is something you’ve learned from your students?



SUPPLIED PHOTO

“When we’re talking about human rights, everything is personal to somebody. I don’t always know how or to whom, but it is.”

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

“I think I’d have to go with time travel.”

What do you hope to inspire in your students?

“I want people to come out of my classes feeling like it is possible for things to change for the better.”



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

Student Services

Study Skills Workshops: Advice & Tips for Academic Success

Study Skills Workshops are designed to improve your learning skills and help you achieve your academic goals.

Organized by Academic & Career Advising, these workshops continue Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30 to 1:20 pm, via Zoom, until Sept. 29.

Registration in advance is required. For details, see: uwinnipeg.ca/academic-advising/study-skills-workshops.html.

Truth and Reconciliation Day

The University will be closed for Truth and Reconciliation Day on **Sept. 30**.

Apply Now for Fall/Winter Awards

The online application for Fall/Winter 2021-22 Awards, Bursaries, and Scholarships is now open.

Deadline: Oct. 1, 2021

Apply now! Go to: uwinnipeg.ca/awards

In-Person Service Resumes for Some Departments in Student Services

Some departments in Student Services are now open for in-person meetings - by appointment only. All offices are continuing to offer some remote meeting options. Please see this webpage for details about each department: uwinnipeg.ca/student-services

Use the myVisit App

Need some help from someone in Student Central and/or Academic & Career Services? Download the myVisit app today. The myVisit app enables students to add themselves to a virtual line for drop-in Zoom sessions at Student Cen-

tral. The app can also be used to book appointments for a Zoom or in-person meeting with a student central staff member or an academic or career advisor. Appointments with advisors can also be booked through the website: myvisit.com.

Fall Reading Week

The University of Winnipeg’s annual Fall Term Reading Week will take place from **Oct. 10-16**. No classes, except for Education students taking 4000-level certification courses are required to attend class and practicum during this period. Please consult your course outline for more information. The University will be closed for Thanksgiving Day on **Oct. 11**.



FOREIGNER AFFAIRS

Millennial blues

VINAY SHARMA | COLUMNIST | @VINAYTHEPOOH

Recently, a very interesting video has been circulating various social-media platforms. In it, an older, seemingly wiser Steve from *Blue's Clues* – the beloved television show many millennials grew up watching – gives a heartfelt speech about how proud he is of all that we, his now-adult viewers, have accomplished.

“We started out with clues,” he says, “and now, it’s what? Student loans and jobs and families. And some of it has been kind of hard.” To me, this seemingly innocent and uplifting message is one of the many indicators of a need for a nostalgic rush to save the current older-millennial generation from entering a void of pure nihilism.

In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson defines postmodernism as a cultural moment involving a loss of historicity, depth and emotional affect. In his theory, he imagines culture at a crossroads, where people have determinately lost their ability to visualize the future.

Whether or not one agrees with Jameson’s definition, it is clear that contemporary culture struggles to grapple with the future and what it will hold. Unlike Jameson, I don’t believe that humans are unable to visualize the future. Instead, I think it is precisely *because* we have a good idea of what the future might hold for us that we often vehemently refuse to entertain such premonitions in the

first place.

We would love for Steve to be right. We would love for terminated student loans, affordable housing and a loving, fully functional family of our own to either be a prominent part of our current lives, or something that’s right around the corner.

But the reality of the situation (for many Canadians) is that housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Student debt has become a similar problem, and people are having fewer children.

The future is pretty easy for me to imagine, and I think many others in my generation share the same sentiment: one wherein we are soulless, childless, overly medicated and therapy-dependent individuals living in an economically unequal, globalized society with an expanded surveillance state.

The question remains: why is this video so popular? If my hypothesis is correct, and (at least) some part of us knows that the vision of the future Steve is offering is unduly optimistic, why can’t people get enough of this man coming back into their lives and blessing them with words of affirmation?

In my opinion: people actively infantilize themselves in order to soothe feelings of inadequacy that may be related to not reaching certain benchmarks of adulthood. In short, people revel in and dwell on the past, so they don’t have to think

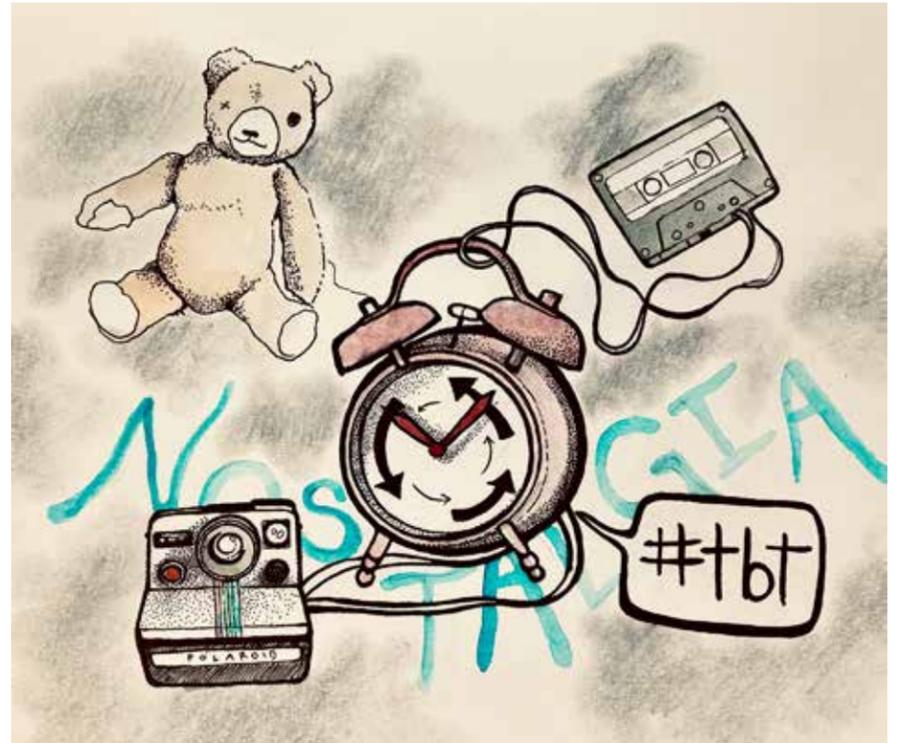


ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

about the present or the future.

I believe this is why many adults read YA fiction, consume Marvel movies that are essentially made for children, watch cartoons or refuse to stop playing video games. I’m not exempt from this either. I still watch a fair share of cartoons from my childhood to feel a nice, calming rush of nostalgia. However, I want to understand why I feel the need to do so. Stretching the boundaries

of youth in this way allows people to avoid asking themselves questions about why they don’t yet own a house, or why they aren’t economically capable of supporting a child. And just like that, 30 has become the new 20, with all the socioeconomic instability to boot.

Vinay is a fourth-year philosophy student at the University of Manitoba.



COMMENTS

THERAPY FROM HOME ACTUALLY WORKED FOR ME

Talking about my darkest feelings to a screen? Sign me up!

KIM UDUMAN | VOLUNTEER | @SHINGEKI_NO_KIM

Everyone should have the chance to go to therapy.

Not because we’re all dealing with serious mental illnesses, but because it’s beneficial to talk out tough and negative feelings.

In Canada, going to therapy has become more common throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. With programs from Manitoba’s provincial government, such as a free two-session virtual counselling program and the AbilitiCBT digital therapy program, therapy has become more accessible to adult Canadians.

Online therapy takes a variety of forms. Some programs offer scheduled meetings with a licensed therapist, and others use self-led methods and units, almost like homework, to address mental-health issues.

Certain types of therapy from home, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), have been clinically proven to be just as effective as in-person methods. Still, there are quite a few people who are skeptical about signing up for therapy that doesn’t involve talking to their therapist face-to-face.

I’ve actually only been to therapy online, and I have to say, I think it’s the way to go.

Online therapy has made getting mental-health support more accessible to the general public.

Online therapy sessions allow people who live out of the city or who have physical

limitations to easily access mental-health resources. Offering therapy online also lets people choose therapists based on what they want help with and not solely on their location. On top of this, clients save money on transportation.

Personally, I find that therapy from home allows me to be genuine and upfront about my feelings.

My home is comfortable and familiar. It’s the place that I feel the most safe. Any type of medical office, even a therapist’s office, can often feel clinical and unwelcoming.

So, despite only seeing my therapist through a computer screen, I feel I can create a genuine relationship with her.

Like anything in this world, there are downsides to virtual and online therapy.

Some people don’t have safe home environments. I’ve heard stories of people signing up for virtual therapy but attending their sessions inside their cars. Sometimes, a lack of privacy, an unsupportive family or, in the worst cases, domestic abuse stop people from getting the mental-health support they need.

Self-led modules and assignments can also be challenging, as clients are then the ones who have to hold themselves accountable to their progress.

A friend of mine who was enrolled in the AbilitiCBT program told me they had trouble completing the therapeutic units. De-



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

pression can make it hard to get out of bed, and having to fulfill therapeutic homework can be next to impossible. Since my friend wasn’t able to complete their units, their therapy file is now closed.

Despite these cons, I still believe that therapy from home is great. I’ve conquered some of my own mental-health issues this past year because of it. With online therapy becoming more accessible, I hope more people can take advantage of resources that

are available and get the support they may need.

Kim Uduman is finishing up her bachelor’s degree in rhetoric, writing and communications at the University of Winnipeg. In her downtime, she loves caring for her plants, cuddling her orange-tabby cat and attempting latte art.



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

'ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE UNVACCINATED'

In a pandemic, it's not simply your body, your choice

DANIELLE DOIRON | COPY AND STYLE EDITOR | DANIELLEMDOIRON

I broke one of the cardinal rules of journalism. I read the comments.

This time, they weren't attached to anything I'd written, but underneath one of Nahanni Fontaine's Instagram posts. The NDP MLA for St. John's took to social media earlier this month to call out the hundreds of anti-vaccine protestors who gathered outside the Health Sciences Centre (HSC) on Sept. 1.

Actually, "gathered" is putting it mildly. CBC Manitoba described a confrontational crowd that "swarmed Winnipeg's largest hospital," both "hampering foot traffic" and

"impeding vehicles turning into the drop-off loop for the rehabilitation and clinic areas." Many protestors held signs that read "My body, my choice," "hostage" or simply "stop vaccine passports."

Originally organized by a group called Canadian Frontline Nurses, this protest was held in response to news that Manitoba's frontline workers (including nurses) who deal directly with vulnerable people must be vaccinated against COVID-19 by the end of October or undergo regular testing.

However, many quickly drew parallels be-

tween these protestors and the anti-abortion proponents often seen outside reproductive healthcare centres like the HSC. "These people protesting 'my body, my choice' in front of HSC today are the same people who protest against people accessing abortion services in the very same facility," Fontaine's post read.

Her observation, as many irate, vitriolic commenters pointed out, is somewhat flawed. There's no way to know whether the people who protested Manitoba's vaccination mandate outside the HSC are also the folks who decry abortion at the same hospital. But many of these protestors share the same conservatism, misguided views on bodily autonomy and outright disregard for human rights.

As of Sept. 1, the same day anti-vaccination protestors blocked patients from entering the HSC, Texas lawmakers banned abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy – before most people learn they're pregnant.

The coronavirus pandemic and abortion access are both public-health issues with one crucial difference. "A person who doesn't want to be pregnant harms nobody by choosing an abortion," Eva Wiseman writes for *The Guardian*. "Making that choice does not result in (their) breathing abortions on to six strangers. But by refusing a vaccine, a person is putting others at risk."

"The burden of this pandemic now rests on the shoulders of the unvaccinated," Anita Sircar, an infectious-disease physician, writes for the *Los Angeles Times*. It rests "on those who are eligible to get vaccinated but choose not to, a decision they defend by declaring, 'Vaccination is a deeply personal choice.' But perhaps never in history has anyone's personal choice affected the world as a whole as it does right now."

It's ignorant at best and malicious at worst to co-opt the "my body, my choice" slogan from reproductive healthcare advocates and use it to promote a blatant disregard for public safety.

David Cole and Daniel Mach summarize this best in *The New York Times*: "Vaccines are a justifiable intrusion on autonomy and bodily integrity. That may sound ominous, because we all have the fundamental right to bodily integrity and to make our own healthcare decisions. But these rights are not absolute. They do not include the right to inflict harm on others." And while some protestors outside hospitals like the HSC may assert otherwise, there's nothing "pro-life" about refusing vaccines.

Danielle Doiron is a creative and educator who splits her time between Winnipeg, Philadelphia and small Midwestern towns. Catch her reading, procrastinating or defending the pineapple on her pizza.



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Ambience/ASMR: Work at home (with background Zoom call and cat throwing up)

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COMIC BY TALIA STEELE | @ST_TALLICA



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