

'SOMEONE LIVES HERE'



**AFGHANI FAMILY
MAKES
MOVE
TO CANADA
P.3**



**COST OF LIVING
IMPACTS
STUDENTS,
EXPERTS SAY
P.9**





SANTIAGO HELOU QUINTERO

Residents of the St-Stephen-In-The-Fields Church Encampment were displaced when the city evicted their encampment with heavy machinery.

When tents are displaced in winter, the unhoused are left without options

**Annicca Albano
Jeferson Quiros-Vargas**
Social-Justice Reporters

One predawn morning at around 4 a.m., while the city slept, Al awoke to a woman screaming and crying.

Al, whose last name is being withheld due to concerns surrounding harassment, checked the tent next to theirs, where the sound came from. Inside was a man who said everything was okay. The woman, who was cold and had been offered shelter, was raped, Al recounted.

“That’s the kind of situation that people end up in when you don’t let people set up their own tents and have their own personal space and their own autonomy,” Al said.

Al, whose pronouns are they/ them, endured almost nine months unhoused, more if couch-surfing at their friend’s house counts. They consider having a roof over their head during the cold season a stroke of luck, given over 10,000 people are unhoused as of October, according to City of Toronto shelter data.

Moreover, about 275 people are turned away from shelters every night.

The city’s Winter Services Plan includes adding up to 180 shelter spaces, expanding Warming Centre operations and enhancing street outreach efforts to persuade people to come indoors, but only when temperatures drop to -15 degrees.

Any colder, combined with wind chill, heightens one’s risk for frostbite, according to William Osler Health System.

“The City acknowledges that it may not be sufficient to address the increasing demand for shelter and housing,” the news release read.

“We live in a place with unlimited need, with limited resources,”

said Deqa Farah, director of housing access at Fred Victor, a Toronto-based charity dedicated to helping people with little to no income secure housing, employment and health care.

Farah said various things could prolong the housing process, including discrimination and inflexibility from landlords, unavailability of treatments around withdrawal management and brain injuries resulting from assaults.

She said people should be more understanding, even if addiction and mental health issues are what drove people to homelessness.

“I don’t see anyone who romanticizes an encampment... what leads people to those spaces is desperation and lack of options,” she said.

Anyone who has thoughts of self-harm should call 9-8-8, the Suicide Crisis Helpline. Those who feel they need counselling can contact Wellness Together Canada at 1-888-668-6810.

When encampment displacement happens, authorities “take people’s tent and insulation, pallets, sleeping bags, winter clothing, blankets, everything a person needs to survive, including the documents people need to qualify for housing,” said Jennifer Jewell, a disabled, queer woman in her 50s, and a member of the Toronto Underhoused and Homeless Union.

Jewell is a former encampment resident at Dufferin Grove Park.

“When people are stationary, meal programs, Streets 2 Home, harm reduction, medical care and other supports know where to find them,” she said. “They lose those when they’re displaced, too.”

The city evicted the encampment near Kensington Market

on Nov. 24, in what advocates called a traumatizing decision. A petition on Change.org is also demanding the Toronto City Council to “restore Allan Gardens for everyone,” citing Toronto City Bylaw 608, which prohibits individuals from living in tents on public parkland.

The petition has collected more than 3,000 signatures as of Dec. 15.

A.W. Peet, a volunteer with the mutual aid collective Toronto Food Not Bombs (TFNB), has been helping run weekly food drives at Allan Gardens to feed anyone in need.

Peet, whose pronouns are they/ them, is a physics professor at the University of Toronto.

When Humber News met them, Peet wore what they called a “Batman belt.”

“It’s got all sorts of stuff on it: things to fix tents and, if somebody got their tents slashed by someone with a knife, I got a tape to fix it,” Peet said, who joined the group last winter.

While extreme cold keeps meals for longer, Peet said that any water bottle people buy or receive must be kept close to their bodies or wrapped in clothing so they won’t freeze.

“[The city has] plenty of gardeners that water all the plants, loads and loads of water for the plants, water for the dogs, but no water for the human beings,” Peet said.

Fellow member Ian, whose last name is being withheld due to harassment concerns, manages TFNB’s TikTok account, where he updates donors, explains their mission and encourages community members to help.

“One individual can’t change the world, but we can take steps to change the corner of it that we belong to,” he said.

However, Ian said the respon-

sibility to help the less fortunate shouldn’t solely be on individuals.

The Toronto City Council unanimously approved the Ontario-Toronto New Deal on Wednesday.

“We’re unlocking Toronto’s potential,” Mayor Olivia Chow said in a statement. “We now have billions more to spend on affordable housing, fixing our aging transit system and building communities with all the things that make them wonderful places to live.”

In the meantime, more than 10,000 unhoused people in Toronto will have to wait.

Al, 20, would have specialized in history or psychology had they not dropped out of the University of Toronto, where they said accessibility services were inadequate.

Al engaged in encampment support and activism before experiencing homelessness.

When they first got offered an apartment, they were met with dead bed bugs, cockroaches crawling around and a door that “had damage from someone trying to break in.”

They said the Toronto Housing Community’s policies involve deciding on the spot. Al declined the offer.

“It takes a lot to make an apartment worse than a tent in a park, where I’m scared for my life,” they said.

They sometimes left the park to update their taxes, get an Ontario photo card and meet social workers, not knowing if they would have their tent and all their belongings upon their return.

“When you feel like every level of the government and every level of society has abandoned you and wants you dead, you do what you need to do [to survive],” Al said, who moved to a home suitable for them and their two cats, Goose and Bones, this year.

ETC •

Humber Et Cetera is the Humber College journalism program laboratory newspaper.

It is created by journalism students in the Advanced Diploma and Post Graduate Certificate programs. Et Cetera serves to inform the Humber community and give its readers well rounded coverage on the things that matter to them.

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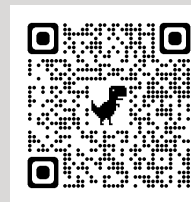
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AP PHOTO/EBRAHIM NOROOZI

Afghan refugees settle in a camp near the Torkham Pakistan-Afghanistan border in November. Refugees entered the border before the Pakistani deadline to leave or face deportation.

Afghan family flees after threats from Taliban

Ayesha Barakzai
News Reporter

Before the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Jane, whose real name is being withheld for her safety, was a storyteller.

She often spent her days reporting on the lives of other Afghan women, alongside her husband John, whose name is being withheld for his safety.

John is a fellow journalist who reported on security, terrorism and corruption in Afghanistan. Together, they had three children - a family and friends. Everything was normal until the Taliban captured Baghlan, their home province.

"All of [this] was gone in a blink of an eye when the Taliban attacked our city and took over the local government and security buildings," Jane says. "We were shocked because we weren't expecting such a defeat from our government, and we were certainly not prepared to leave."

It started with the threatening phone calls, threatening John and Jane would be punished if found. Because of their work, John and Jane were at a major risk of danger. This also happened to other journalists and social activists in the same province.

After many threatening calls, John and Jane decided to leave Baghlan. They moved to Kabul, Afghanistan's capital.

"We left everything. We just got our telephones and some clothes," John said.

Jane and John found sanctuary in Kabul while staying with relatives, which did not last long.

"When we were there, we couldn't stay at a house for more than two or three days... because there were difficulties with threats," Jane said.

While staying with relatives in Kabul, John and Jane made several requests to journalist support organizations to be moved into safe houses. Their requests were not met.

Leaving Kabul via the airport was not an option for the family because Jane and the children did not have passports.

They had to lay low in a nearby guesthouse, unable to move. That was until their youngest child got extremely sick, causing them to leave and seek help from a doctor.

On their way back to the guest house, John was recognized and called out by a member of the Taliban. John was brutally beaten to the ground.

John held his child in his arms to protect him while he was lashed, but that still did not stop them both from sustaining injuries.

Their children's safety was the couple's main priority. To escape the Taliban, John and Jane split up.

"There was a crowd. People were coming and I think there was a funeral or something," John

said. "We joined people and went through that. We started splitting because we knew that if we both were together with the kids and they found us, they would do what they wanted."

All these events made Jane and John realize they needed to flee Afghanistan, not only for their safety but also for their children.

"We were scared that someone could report us to the Taliban," Jane said. "We couldn't stay in Kabul for another second."

They chose to leave and made their way to Pakistan via road, but that journey was not easy.

Once Jane and John arrived in Islamabad, Pakistan, they immediately sought treatment from doctors and nurses for their injuries. But being in Pakistan was difficult for them.

"My kids would face trauma for a long time, he had nightmares," John said, referring to his oldest son, who was beaten with a stick on their way to Pakistan.

Although they were away from the Taliban in Afghanistan, they did not yet feel safe.

Local police in Pakistan often persecuted Afghan refugees. Afghans were regularly arrested and harassed by police, all to extort money.

Currently, there are about 1.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, some born there, while others are those who escaped Afghanistan over the decades.

They are all being deported for reasons such as entering the country illegally and being undocumented.

More than 300,000 have already been deported or left Pakistan. The government of Canada has accepted over 40,000 Afghan refugees in Canada since the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

It took some time for Jane and the children to get passports and Pakistani visas. She had applied for a passport back in Kabul but had to pause the process because of the threats to her husband's life.

Then a miracle happened.

The family was sponsored by the Canadian Lutheran World Relief, a Christian organization that provides international relief to those facing injustice. After a year in Pakistan, the family was finally headed to Canada.

"Our oldest son has always said, 'Let's go to Canada,'" said Jane, speaking of the miraculous opportunity.

In November 2023, their plane landed in Calgary. They were welcomed by a local church, St. Peter's Roman Catholic, and they were given every basic necessity from coats to temporary housing.

But even then the family knew that Toronto was their end destination. By December, the family had settled into the city thanks to the help of St. Philip's Lutheran Church in Etobicoke.

The couple envisions a bright future here in Toronto. They hope to continue their careers as journalists and to help build the community that has welcomed them.

"We are extremely happy, and most importantly our kids are happy," Jane said.



AYESHA BARAKZAI

Jane and her husband John, both journalists, fled Afghanistan to Canada.

Students kicked out of residence for winter break

Liam Neilson
News Reporter

With finals coming to an end and the break between semesters beginning, most students look forward to a time to recuperate and relax before their next semester.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for many students living in Humber College's residence.

On top of the stress of exams and final assignments, those living in Humber's dorms are forced to leave by Dec. 18, disproportionately affecting international students who don't have nearby family homes to return to during the break.

Lucas Bazarin Ribeiro is an international multimedia design and development student who travelled to Canada from Brazil. He lives in Humber College's residence and works as a resident assistant.

Bazarin Ribeiro said he returns home between semesters, taking a 10-hour flight. He said that it can be unfair to international students who are unable to do this.

"Although a lot of students do wish to go back home for the holidays, there are a lot that can't because of the distance or don't have the finances to do that," he

said. "It would be beneficial to a lot of us to be able to stay where we are."

"I'm pretty sure [Humber's] residence has something with a hotel in Mississauga you can stay at, but there's a deadline you have to apply by and they charge additional fees," Bazarin Ribeiro said.

At the North Campus Residence, a Life Staff member named Ben, whose last name is being withheld for privacy reasons, said a block of the Delta Hotel in Mississauga is booked by Humber Residence for students without lodging during the break.

However, Ben said students must apply by a strict deadline.

"The deadline was Nov. 21, but that deadline has already passed, and now students will have to find their own accommodations," he said.

For many international students, the interim between semesters seems more of a headache than a break meant for them to relax.

Matthew Redwood, a domestic student enrolled in Humber's 3D Animation program, made comparisons to the difficulties international students face at this time in contrast to the simplicity of being able to go back to a family home.

"I have buddies who are from



LIAM NEILSON

Lucas Bazarin Ribeiro, a Humber student who lives residence and is a residence assistant on site.

India scrambling to find a place because it's so much money to fly back to their homes," he said. "I live two hours away from here, so I don't know what I'd do if I needed to go somewhere that far.

"Do you try to rent a place out for a bit, do you stay with a friend or do you go back home? I don't know, maybe the student services like IGNITE can help out with that," Redwood added.

After inquiring about this possibility to IGNITE, Jackie Lam, a support employee for the student union, wrote in an email to that it offers no assistance to students

finding themselves in a housing dilemma.

"Currently, we do not offer assistance for students having trouble finding a place to stay during the period between semesters," Lam said in the email response.

Lam encouraged students facing this issue to go to Humber's website regarding residence inquiries.

According to section 2.1 of the Residence Agreement, students who still do not have a solution to this problem have until Dec. 18, however can arrange to stay until Dec. 20 under the circumstance of having trouble finding off-campus

accommodations.

But after this date, no exceptions are made and all students are required to vacate their dorm rooms until the return date of Jan. 6. The agreement also outlines international students who require lodging before Dec. 6 may be permitted to return on Jan. 3, however a daily fee based on the size of their room will apply.

The daily fee is \$30 for students in the single rooms, and \$35 for students in suites. This is assuming the student has submitted their application for such service, which was due no later than Dec. 10.



LIAM NEILSON

The front door of the Humber College residence. Students are being forced to move out of residence for winter break, causing serious problems, especially for international students.

Gender-inclusive washrooms still hard to navigate

Julia Vellucci

Social-Justice Reporter

Jam Allen, who uses she/they pronouns, is a Humber North campus student who experienced discrimination while being fem-presenting when going to use the women's washroom at a bar.

"I had a security guard stop me and tell me I'm not allowed in there and tell me like over and over again like no, you're a man, you can't go in there," Allen said. "And I tried to argue back and then I was not allowed. Security would not allow me in there."

An Ipsos survey from 2016 reported that 35 per cent of LGBTQ+ Canadians (seven per cent strongly and 28 per cent somewhat) face gender-based discrimination.

Allen prefers using the gender-neutral washroom if there is one because it feels safer to them than entering a men's washroom fem-presenting or possibly being misgendered in the women's washroom.

"At Humber, at least the one that's where my program is, it's the gender-neutral washroom and also the accessible washroom—using like the accessible washroom as the gender-neutral bathroom doesn't feel like the full solution," she said.

"If someone who has accessibility issues comes by and needs a washroom and then I come out fully able-bodied using their washroom, which is like also the all-gender washroom, it's like you feel a bit bad doing that because it's not like there's any other option nearby," Allen said.

Kai Zamora, who uses they/them pronouns, agrees with Allen that most gender-inclusive washrooms are also accessible washrooms, which is an improvement but more progress is needed.

Zamora is the executive director of Justice Trans, a Canadian organization with the mission to create a transphobia-free world.

"Those washrooms also are often far and few between," they said. "People will have to travel. Let's say, you're in a university, sometimes you have to go to the basement for one, sometimes you have to travel to different floors for one. It's about more than just inclusion, it's about centring."

"In terms of raising awareness, I think that there's just a lot of this normative privilege, which is to say that folks who aren't trans don't have to think about how it feels not to be able to have a washroom that feels safe for you or that acknowl-



JAM ALLEN

Jam Allen taking a selfie in one of Humber College's gender-inclusive/accessible washrooms, which LGBTQ+ students prefer to use if available.

edges who you are," Zamora said.

For small business owner of Silk Fang, E Li, who identifies as a Trans man and has been in the LGBTQ+ community since the age of 14, believes no washroom should have to be gendered.

"Every time you step into a men's washroom, it's nasty, and every time you need to use a woman's

washroom, you're waiting 20 minutes," Li said. "Like, it's just so silly, and it's based on very restricted ideas of what gender should be and how it should function in society.

"The truth is that no gender needs, no washroom needs to be gendered, nothing in life truly needs to be gendered," he said.

Li uses the women's washroom

for safety reasons due to his long hair although it goes against his gender identity.

"If your appearance and body don't align with the incongruence of what your gender expression should be, that's when the violence happens, that's when the stigma happens," he said. "Right, because there's an incongruence between

what we've been told by society is acceptable and people's truths, people's lived experiences."

"I was talking to an elder butch lesbian," Li said. "She's a short-cropped hair, plus size woman and she walked into the women's washroom and was using it and she gets stares—it is again, not a transgender issue, it is a gender issue."



E LI

These are some of the pronouns that E Li's small business, Silk Fang, offers. E Li believes washrooms, and nothing in life, should be gendered.

Students need sleep, mental health services

Zoe Pierson
Senior Reporter

Kylah Triffo, a nursing student at Humber North campus, said she and her friends went to investigate the IGNITE student union Sleep Lounge.

“It was interesting. It looks like a cool resource, but I would never use it, ‘cause it feels a little bit creepy in there and I would be scared of my stuff being stolen,” she said.

But there’s a need for a place for students to recharge. A rising focus in Canada on mental health care has prompted Humber College to invest in many mental health-care projects, including the IGNITE Sleep Lounge.

Humber College has invested more than \$30,000 into a mental health-care project, Sleep Lounge, yet students say they are cautious about using it.

Melany Palacios-Naranjo, IGNITE Student Advocate, said in an interview the Sleep Lounge has been very successful at Humber North and has supported over 15 students per day since it reopened this year.

Palacios-Naranjo said the main focus of the Sleep Lounge is to allow students to “recharge, refocus, and sleep,” which are all essential parts of taking care of one’s mental health.

She said IGNITE dedicates its resources and time to making sure Humber and Guelph-Humber students receive adequate mental and physical care from the school.

“A lot of our focus is not only on ensuring that students are doing well academically and in their career, but also that they’re taking care of themselves in all ways that we can help,” Palacios-Naranjo said.

IGNITE initially opened the Sleep Lounge in 2016 and closed it in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only reopening it on Jan. 9 of this year.

A report from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) said that sleep is an essential part of taking care of one’s mental health.

“Between work and school, doing chores and cooking meals, there isn’t always time left over to practice self-care,” CMHA said. “And when you’re tired, you’re more likely to skip the activities that can support your well-being.”

Sleep is an important ingredient of good mental health, but also impacts general health in many ways, CMHA said.

“When you’re short on sleep, it’s a lot harder to concentrate, solve



The Sleep Lounge at the IGNITE Centre where students can take naps. It opened in 2016, closed in 2020 due to COVID, and reopened this year. ZOE PIERSON

problems and make decisions,” CMHA said. “This means that, without enough sleep, it’s difficult to be your best self at work, school and in your social life too.”

The 2022-23 IGNITE impact report said 871 students used the Sleep Lounge at Humber North Campus.

Humber North Campus said it has over 19,000 full-time students, which means the mere 871 students that used the Sleep Lounge this year represent just over four per cent of all full-time students.

Kyla Legatt, another nursing student at Humber North, said that she was worried about her safety in the Sleep Lounge.

“It looks like office cubicles. The chairs look like therapist chairs,”

she said. “There’s no one sitting at the front desk like there should be.”

Palacios-Naranjo said IGNITE hired two part-time staff for the Sleep Lounge who work for 12 hours a week each.

“We have two specific Sleep Lounge people, but when they’re not there, we have one of the front desk students help out,” she said.

In an email, Palacios-Naranjo said the Sleep Lounge cost \$30,000 to create and has 12 beds, now owned by Humber College.

“Additionally, it also costs us about \$5,000 a year to keep running,” she said. “That’s not including paying the part-time staff.”

IGNITE has also put other mental health-care resources in place for students, including Zen

Space, and has allocated enough funding for five thousand yearly Headspace app plans for students.

Palacios-Naranjo said the money for these programs, including the money invested into the Sleep Lounge, comes from student tuition.

“That money gets spread out between not only your insurance and the activities that you do but also to all the mental health resources that you’re allowed to access,” she said.

There are other options near Humber Campus for students who want to evaluate or fix their sleep issues if they do not believe taking a nap will adequately support them.

The Etobicoke Brampton Sleep Clinic, located across from

Humber College, said they offer patients treatment for sleep apnea, sleep paralysis and other medical conditions impairing one’s ability to sleep.

In a phone interview with Humber Et Cetera, Preeti Takhi, the director at Etobicoke Brampton Sleep Clinic said that the clinic sees patients who range in age from two years old to 95, all suffering from varying sleeping conditions.

She said the clinic has nine doctors, including one relatively new doctor who specializes in anxiety and depression as a clinical sleep disorder.

Takhi said the clinic sees many students aged 18 years to 24, but was not able to say whether or not they were Humber students.

A report written by the Douglas Research Centre (DRC) said nighttime difficulties have become common and are hindering students’ ability to thrive in school.

“Of approximately two million Canadians between the ages of 14 and 18 years, as many as 975,000 suffer from a serious lack of sleep,” DRC said.

DRC reported a lack of sleep on weekdays, coupled with unhealthy nighttime routines on weekends, can lead to challenges during the school week for students.

“When choosing how to balance our cultural and personal commitments with our sleep requirements, it is helpful to remember that sleep is an important factor for performing at our best physically, mentally, and emotionally,” DRC said.



Two students in formal attire stand in front of a wooden IGNITE sign. IGNITE’s sleep lounge has reopened. ZOE PIERSON

Humber's no-smoking policy ignored

Anusha Siddiqui
Senior Reporter

Leaning against the wall opposite the Humber bus stand, Ref Mitrovich pulls a vape out of his pocket and casually inhales a puff.

As he blows out, the no-smoking sign behind him stands in a resounding contrast to what he exhales.

He moves his JBL Tune 510 behind his left ear on being approached.

"I honestly had no idea this was a non-smoking campus until you mentioned it just now," said Mitrovich, a landscaping student.

Humber College implemented a no-smoking policy on campus premises on Jan. 1, 2019, but it is not uncommon to find people on campus smoking.

The policy prohibits smoking on college property, including all campuses, buildings, spaces, grounds and residence facilities.

Margaret Fung, the occupational health and safety manager at Humber College, was a member of the decision-making committee when the policy was implemented.

"It's a hard policy to enforce. People who smoke feel like they need to smoke it now, so they hide in corners and do it," she said.

Under the Smoke-Free Campus Policy, the college has posted no-smoking signs at all exits and entrances, but the implementation remains flexible.

Fung said the college adopted the policy by the Smoke-free Ontario Act, 2017, Cannabis Control Act 2017, and the Okanagan Charter.

The Okanagan Charter describes itself as an international charter that promotes health and sustainability at educational institutions, contributing to well-being.

"I think there should be a designated area to smoke," Mitrovich said. "I know smoking is not allowed. There are some lanes I go to, but you never know when a kid might come around."

Institutions like Seneca College and York University have designated smoking areas to "counter secondhand smoke," according to their official websites.

"It was something we looked at, that other people had designated smoking areas," Fung said. "You would see that people are walking by the smoking areas and being exposed to the smoke."

"None of this is a perfect solution," Fung said.

Simon Pundir, a Business Administration student, described himself as an active smoker of cannabis and cigarettes.



SANTIAGO HELOU QUINTERO

A student vapes in front of a no smoking sign at Humber College. Even though Humber banned it, smoking and vaping is common.

"I smoke (weed) in the Arboretum. It's quiet, it's open, it's safe. I have never been told by the security in the Arboretum," Pundir said.

The procedure against smoking is defined under the college's Code of Conduct policy. The offence falls in the same category as possession of illegal drugs (2.1 Level 1).

Rob Kilfoyle, director of public safety and emergency management at Humber College, said his team of security guards is responsible for the enforcement of the rules in the college.

"People that don't comply can be brought before the student Community Standards Group and can be charged with an offence under the policy adjudicated by the department," he said.

"Penalties could be, a warning, a notation or in extreme circumstances, they could be banned from campus," Kilfoyle said.

He said there have only been a

handful of cases since the implementation of the policy where things have escalated to the final level.

Rules are stricter for employees because of the employee contract. Employees can be reported to their managers, and it can go up to the Conduct Officer, Kilfoyle said.

Max Manning, an Info Kiosk security guard, said the amount of smoking has remained the same as before since the implementation of the policy.

"When it's cold, especially, people will smoke on the property or close, but in summer, they still do it in some corner, behind LRC, behind the plant or Arboretum," Manning said.

He said that on getting caught, students say they did not know that Humber is a no-smoking campus. The guards let students go with a warning.

Kilfoyle said the college has taken an educational approach towards

the prohibition of smoking.

"We tried to take a bit of an educational approach, not always to be heavy-handed," Kilfoyle said.

Fung also referred to the educational approach.

"We can be much harsher and heavy-handed, but we are not making that choice for others," she said.

"We're not saying you can't smoke. Just don't do it on the property," Fung said.

Pundir said that the stress of exams and assignments is his primary reason for smoking in college.

"I was smoking at the exit of the building near the parking lot," he said. "A security person told me I'd not be allowed to graduate if I didn't stop."

"I thought to myself, with the amount of pressure and stress, graduating is hard anyway," Pundir said with a laugh.

"I am always on the lookout to

find places to smoke because the Arboretum is far and there is only so much time between classes," Pundir said.

Gabriela Yepez, the associate director of Mental Health and Counselling Services, said this is an addiction issue and the need for counselling is high.

"Counseling can always contribute, perhaps from an aspect of wellness, mental health management, and anxiety," Yepez said.

She said it is the institution's responsibility to provide support to help with addiction along with the responsibility of the individuals.

Kilfoyle said the policy is in place for the benefit of smokers and non-smokers alike and is not a problem big enough for the policy to warrant a change.

"It doesn't make sense and the lines can get blurry. A lot of people smoke here. The hack is, you can smoke I guess, but don't get caught," Mitrovich said.

Asian journalists underrepresented in newsrooms

Annicca Albano
Social-Justice Reporter

Aloysius Wong said he remembers how news media wrote about frontline workers during the pandemic.

He said many pinned the PPE crisis on healthcare professionals instead of highlighting their lack of access to resources.

People forgot that front liners, some of whom are Asians, also “put themselves and their families at risk,” Wong said.

So when a new survey raised an alarm over the shrinking number of Asian journalists working in newsrooms, Wong said it might result in stories without the nuance of someone with lived experience.

“Unless people are going out of their way to engage with communities to hear what stories are impacting them, stories just don’t get pitched that much,” Wong said.

Three successive annual surveys by the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) show that racialized, women and non-binary journalists are concentrated in the most precarious positions, posing a threat to inclusive journalism.

Asian journalists, in particular, saw a 3.1 per cent decrease in their newsroom representation according to this year’s results.

Wong, a Filipino-Canadian, said this gap means telling fewer stories about and for the Asian community, a gap that could be dangerous during a time of rising anti-Asian hate.

The consequences on the page are obvious, but producer and host of TVO’s *In Our Heads* podcast Tiffany Lam, whose pronouns are she/they, said that the gap also affects journalists on a personal level.

“It takes a toll on your emotional and mental health to not know when the next paycheck will come,” said Lam, an East Asian born in Scarborough. “If you have a lot of familial responsibilities, if you take care of a lot of people or have a lot of dependents, I think it’s a consideration.”

They added that intergenerational support is embedded in Asian culture.

TVO workers, including Lam, went on a strike, that began on Aug. 21 and stretched for nearly three months.

Although it was the first in the organization’s 53-year history, the strike only amplified journalism’s “precarity penalty,” a term coined by a 2015 PEPSO study.

Researchers found that even when racialized and foreign-born



ANGELINA KOCHATOVSKA

Ishmeet Singh, the technical journalist advisor at Humber College, works on pages for the Humber Et Cetera, Humber’s student-run newspaper.

workers find secure employment, they still face discrimination in “accessing training, sustaining healthy households and in socializing.”

More recently, a 2021 Statistics Canada study revealed that many racialized populations, including Koreans, Chinese, South Asians, West Asians, Japanese, Arabs and Filipinos, had higher educational attainment but reported lower employment earnings and lower rates of unionization and pension plan coverage.

Wong shared the same sentiment, saying immigrants tend to “pick a career that’s financially viable and financially stable” to keep up with the rising cost of living.

“My [parents] sacrificed a lot to move here and get themselves established,” he said.

“Journalism is one of those few places that still have things like unpaid internships, and then even if you get out of school, there aren’t that many jobs,” he added.

CBC/Radio-Canada, the country’s public broadcaster where Wong works on contract, announced massive layoffs and

programming cuts on Dec. 4, citing budget pressures.

Wong was spared, but 600 others were not.

Despite these hurdles, Lam said Asian journalists should be trying to pursue their passions.

“I think there’s a lot of curiosity about where we’re from and a desire to reconnect with our roots,” Lam said, quoting the slogan, “nothing about us without us.”

While admissions to some journalism programs in Canada have been paused, journalism professor Lisa Yeung said she is hopeful.

Yeung, who was born in Toronto and has Chinese and Trinidadian roots, said more than half of the students she teaches at Centennial College belong to racialized groups reflective of Toronto’s population.

“I do definitely see students who have a passion and a desire to tell stories from their communities because they feel that maybe their communities are underrepresented in media,” said Yeung, who served as an advisory board member behind a guide for BIPOC journalists by Journalists for Human Rights.

The downloadable guide

explores five scenarios BIPOC journalists encounter: “deadlines, tokenism, stereotypes and assumptions, DEI competency and online hate,” said Anita Li, project lead and The Green Line CEO, in a LinkedIn post.

In a follow-up email, Yeung said having allies in the newsroom and hiring Asian and racialized staff was crucial to HuffPost Canada’s goal to nurture a culture of trust.

“It was the Asian and racialized editors and reporters who pitched, chased and produced stories from their communities that they were passionate about telling,” said Yeung, who served as co-editor-in-chief before the news site shut down in 2021.

“As managers, our job was really to get out of the way and let them do their jobs,” she adds.

Apart from rethinking its culture, Yeung said that media organizations should define a “clear path” for young reporters to grow into senior journalists and newsroom leaders.

To get there, TVO’s Lam said more career development opportunities and financial aid are needed to allow disadvantaged communi-

ties to “be part of and stay” in the industry.

Lam cited a media fellowship from the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada that lets Asian Canadians do journalism in Asia. The Canadian Journalism Foundation has also begun offering a bursary for BIPOC student journalists since last year.

Both Lam and Wong say they would like to see more organizing within Asian journalist communities.

Lam envisions a supportive space where journalists could vent about work stress and simply “hang out.”

For Wong, attending seminars that brought journalists from the Philippines to Toronto made him appreciate the value and privilege of his work and continue to inspire him today.

Lisa Yeung said there are “bright, passionate, inspired talent” that will hopefully enter newsrooms soon.

“Trust in yourself,” Yeung said. “Trust that your stories need to be told. And trust that they will enrich the world once they’re out there.”

How the living cost increase impacts students

**Krishna Bhagnathsingh
Abhisha Nanda**
Campus Life Reporters

Geetika Gupta spends more than \$1,000 a month just for basic necessities.

"I pay \$550 for my rent, \$200 for my groceries and \$200 for my transportation and \$100-200 on miscellaneous expenses," Gupta said, a Paralegal Studies student at Humber College, and an Amazon fulfillment worker.

"I earn around \$2,200 to 2,300 per month," Gupta said. But she's bracing that the cost of her education is soon going to jump.

But with Ontario's advisory committee on colleges and universities recommending a five per cent tuition hike, Gupta's budget is going to get even tighter.

A report by the Ontario Living Wage Network said that people need to make a minimum of \$25 per hour to be able to earn a living wage in the Greater Toronto Area.

There is also a difference in the spending and savings for men and women. This is mainly because of choices and preferences but there are some basic differences too.

"It is mainly because we consider different things as important and for girls other things are necessary," said Aryan Pandey, a Paralegal Studies student at Humber College.

Pandey will enter his final semester this winter.

"I cook my own meal as I do not like the taste of the food in the tiffin service," Gupta said.

"Cooking food on my own is much more cost-efficient than tiffin service," Gupta said when asked if cooking for herself or tiffin service is more expensive.

"That is one more reason why I prefer to cook the food on my own as compared to tiffin service," she said.

Gupta was asked if there is a difference in expenses between men and women.

"Yes, there is definitely a difference as we girls tend to spend more on skin care items as compared to boys," she said.

According to data from Samir Mechel, the vice-president finance and operations at the University of Toronto, their financial aid program saw 436 applications, and 181 were accepted.

Mechel said more than this number were deserving but they did not have the budget for the semester to fulfill them.

The average amount distributed was \$445 per successful applicant, and the budget was \$80,000. They are looking to approximately



KRISHNA BHAGNATHSINGH

A group of students sits and eats Humber College's cafeteria. The rise in the cost of living will impact all students, education wise and personally.

double the budget next semester.

Aidan Thompson, the vice-president of public and university affairs at the University of Toronto, spoke about how the cost of living impacts student life at the institution.

"When we look at housing in particular, this tends to be the number one cause for students, at least for domestic students who are paying roughly \$8,000 in tuition per year," Thompson said.

"Compare that to international tuition which are around \$16,000, but for domestic students, when you compare the tuition cost, eight thousand dollars a year again, to rent, which tends to range in the \$20 thousand to \$30 thousand dollar per year range," he said.

"That really is the number one [cost] that students are facing," Thompson said.

He said about 33 per cent of students that are commuters live in off-campus housing and roughly eight per cent [of students] live off the campus alone.

"So when you combine that, you end up with about 40 per cent of our students who live in off

campus market housing, paying that type of expense," Thompson said.

"Of those students, we find that roughly 25 per cent of them feel as though they are at high risk of a collection of housing-related concerns, with the primary one being inability to pay rent," he said.

Thompson said about 33 per cent of the students feel that is the number one threat to their current housing situation.

"In general, we try to meet many of these demands as possible," he said.

Thompson said they have increased the number of services and our availability services in response to the affordability crisis.

"Notably, we have expanded our food bank offerings, so that's one thing that we try to do to address the food piece," he said.

Thompson said they have "amped up their legal services, in response to a slate of issues surrounding land or tenant disputes, roommate disputes.

"Everything is worse when you can't afford to live anywhere," he said. "We do provide free legal

services for students seeking support on matter of housing but also [employment] issues,"

Thompson said these services are offered by the University of Toronto Student Union (UTSU).

"The university tends not to respond to these types of situations," he said.

"Some universities in Canada, particularly in Quebec, have taken that as a call to action to start building and get back into the business of building student residences," Thompson said.

Thompson said the university has acknowledged that this is the solution in conversations that they've had with them.

"When we had the pandemic in 2020, it was the student union that stepped up to meet that crisis from the affordability perspective," Thompson said.

He said that right now, they are seeing a record number of students feeling as though they are not going to be able to pay their rent next month.

"Students are demanding and we're seeing this our data that they want more student housing

on campus and more affordable housing on campus," he said.

Thompson said the university is not really stepping up to the plate and tackling the affordability crisis, but he said that's where the student union really steps up.

"Typically people who are experiencing financial burden, if they are spending two hours, three hours every week just figuring out how they're going to make ends meet," he said, speaking about how this issue intersects with the mental health of students. "They're going to have a lot more on their mind and they're going to have less energy to focus on handling interpersonal issues or figuring out if they should drop a course or focusing on their next assignment"

Thompson said they see underlying concerns for students.

"Putting somebody in that type of high-stress environment, particularly if they have underlying factors, if they are dealing with uncertainty in their living situations, related to food, related to anything else, you're going to see people really struggle," he said.

EDITORIAL

Canada's social contract is unravelling into a crisis

The basic fundamental necessities of a modern, healthy society are in a state of despair. The social contract has been broken while the wealthiest are thriving.

Essential goods and services are the things people need to sustain and maintain a basic standard of living in society. Some examples are food, housing, healthcare, education, transit, telecoms and anti-poverty programs.

These needs have been slowly eroded without society noticing just how dire the situation has become.

It is not unlike the story of the boiling frog, which dies due to failing to perceive the danger posed by the water it is immersed in and is slowly raised to a boil.

Food insecurity is soaring as food prices continue to rise and reports show food bank usage rising as a result. In Toronto, lines outside of food banks often wrap around entire blocks and food banks are not a sustainable long-term solution.

Agriculture relies on the exploitation of temporary foreign workers, which the United Nations describes as modern slavery. Temporary workers often face exploitative living conditions, which are difficult to address since their status is tied to their employers. Earlier this year, Jamaican workers were deported after staging a one-day strike protesting their "substandard living conditions."

Housing affordability remains out of reach despite dominating headlines. Shelters are turning away hundreds of people per night and encampments are popping up across the city. Instead of solving the crisis, the city continues to violently displace encampment residents.

The York-South Weston Tenant Union occupied the management office of 1440 Lawrence Ave. W. near Keele Street in Toronto on Thursday night in protest of the eviction of an elderly woman allegedly being ousted without notice.

The erosion of healthcare continues. Thou-

sands of Ontarians are dying, waiting for surgeries and diagnostic services. Nursing shortages show no sign of improving and nurses are burning out trying to keep up.

Post-secondary remains afloat on the back of exploited international students who face challenge after challenge while attempting to secure their status after graduation. The student debt crisis puts thousands at a disadvantage from the moment they leave school. Educators are denied job security and are being squeezed for every drop.

Toronto Transit sees users pay among the highest prices in the world for both single fares and monthly passes while racialized and impoverished areas of the city are underserved. Look no further than Scarborough, where the death of the SRT leaves the underserved borough even further behind.

Canadians pay among the highest prices anywhere in the world for both internet and cellular plans, a market dominated by an oligopoly.

How did we get here?

It did not happen overnight. These crises are the result of decades of cuts and underfunding that occurred under both Liberal and Conservative governments.

It happened so slowly that it was easy to ignore those who have been sounding the alarm bells for years.

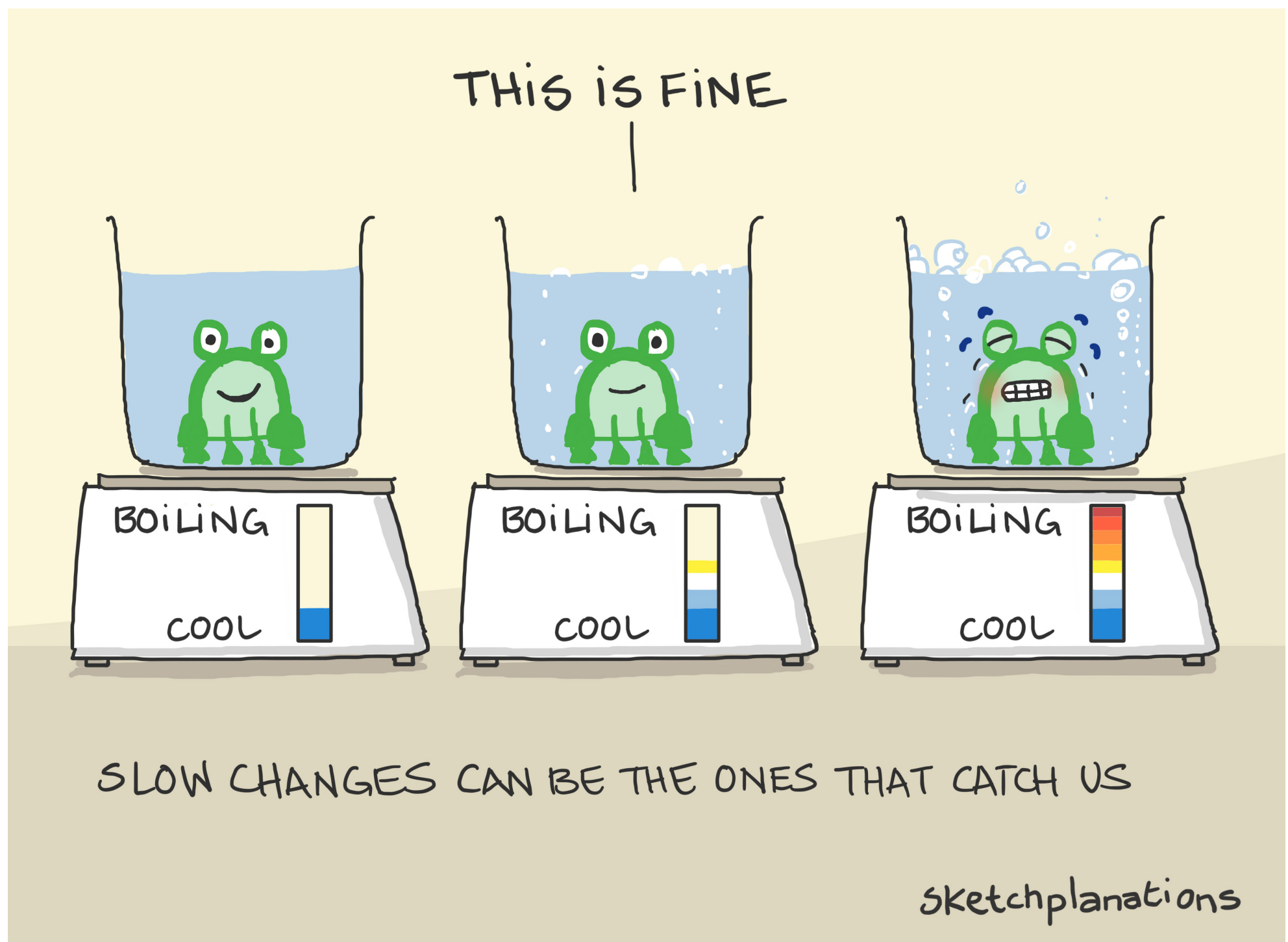
Looking forward, there is little reason to believe that we will find a way out of this mess anytime soon.

We are staring down a climate crisis that will send shockwaves across the world in the form of global famine and mass displacement.

At the same time, newsrooms across the country have been gutted, making it harder for the public to stay informed about the issues that affect them.

Answering these questions is the major challenge of the time and it will require radical change unlike anything this country has seen in generations.

Remember the frog. Turn down the heat before we all boil together.





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TIGER BALME/FELICE TRINIDAD

Toronto's bittersweet music scene needs help in viability

Liv Chug

Senior Reporter

Canadian Queer and BIPOC musicians are underpaid, but Yang Chen of the band Tiger Balme has a plan to create economic opportunity by having ethical community standards.

Percussionist Yang said during a break at Tiger Balme's Nov. 29 performance that more is needed to make the Toronto music scene more diverse.

"The city is very financially difficult to live in for most people, especially artists who are not doing high-paid commercial work frequently," Yang said.

According to the city's Music Office, live music venues generate \$850 million annually and another \$514 million in tourism.

But research led by the Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA) showed that BIPOC music workers earn about \$11,700 less annually than white music workers.

Its 2022 report found persons identified as BIPOC are disproportionately represented as artists, with 28 per cent as owners or entrepreneurs. White respondents were evenly distributed across the roles of the artist at 40 per cent and 44 per cent as an entrepreneur or owner, the report stated.

"If BIPOC workers and artists currently in the community earned

the same as their white counterparts, they would add \$202.2 million to the industry's annual contribution to GDP," the report said. "In total, the 'missing' GDP contribution of missing BIPOC people and missing wages is an estimated \$273.5 million."

Yang's East Asian Toronto-based alt-indie Tiger Balme celebrated the first anniversary of the release of their self-titled debut album they independently produced. However, amid the celebration, Yang has not forgotten the struggles in creating and promoting their work in the Toronto music scene.

Toronto remains a difficult place to survive for both queer and BIPOC

artists, they said. While Toronto financially and culturally profits from live music venues and music production, the city's many music workers often don't directly benefit from these significant profits.

Queer and BIPOC music workers are far less likely to find financial stability in the industry, especially when compared to their white counterparts.

Tiger Balme has future goals to help promote what Yang calls "organic diversity" to address the inherent economic bias in the Toronto music scene, as well as how to move forward.

"I hope we will no longer need to think about, 'Oh, this program only

has white, men, et cetera (majority) artists. We need to program POC, queer, et cetera (minority) artists. Hmm, I wonder who we could choose," Yang said.

"If this thought process ceases to exist and programming is naturally diverse, it would mean that representation is more equitable, we are no longer programming to fill quotas, and the barriers around art-making for minority and/or disadvantaged groups are lessened or eliminated," they said.

As Tiger Balme addresses alternative routes to avoid systemic bias, fostering a community space is one of the most important ways to build the music scene, Yang said.

"I often play in micro music scenes (free improv, non-western music), which I find are created by some of the strongest proponents and builders of community," Yang said.

Fostering safe communities is just as important for Tiger Balme fans as it is for fellow musicians, who keep an eye out for economic opportunities for fellow community members.

"We always need more community; this life is too hard when lived alone and, at least for me, art is easier and more joyful when made/enjoyed with others," they said.

The safe space Tiger Balme creates is one that specifically impacts East-Asian queer youth in Toronto, an often-underrepresented demo-

graphic in the music scene.

A need for music of a demographic similar to Tiger Balme's is why Yang remains hopeful about the band's future in the scene.

"Toronto is a dense hub of opportunity and communities of the most hard-working, inspired, and loving artists, and I am constantly grateful and surprised when Tiger Balme is asked to play shows and when fans come out again and again," they said.

"This warm reception and continued opportunity indicate a need for this band in the Toronto music scene."

This feeling of belonging is met with a plan to continually address adversity and to promote the change Yang wants to see both within their community and beyond.

Change begins on an individual level and can look like aligning workplace values with plans to make decisions aligning with those values, Yang said.

They said consequences are needed if workplaces are deemed unsafe and advocate for oneself but also for those who are not in the room.

Tiger Balme identifies a need for further opportunity in a competitive industry and plans to create opportunities out of adversity. As Yang transitions into full-time freelance music work, their goals to create a safe space where opportunities are achievable remain the same.



LIV CHUG

Yang Chen, Tiger Balme member, at a November 2019 performance gig.



COURTESY/ CANVA

Christmas is lonely for some, experts say

Julia Vellucci

Social-Justice Reporter

At this time of year, it's common to hear the "Merry Christmas" greeting without thinking twice, but for those who don't celebrate, counsellor Juliana Bruyn says that it can be a time of isolation and mental health challenges.

"For the folks that don't celebrate these kinds of Judeo-Christian holidays, there might be feelings of disconnection, or there might have been bullying," Bruyn said.

Bruyn recalls texting her friends as a kid, "What did you get for Christmas," realizing later in life not everyone celebrates the holiday and those experiences can create

feelings of isolation for others.

Founder and clinical director of Peak Resilience, Jennifer Hollinshead, who uses she/they pronouns, agreed with this as she emphasized invisible systems such as the supremacy of some religions over others and the idea of some humans being more deserving of life and resources.

"I think by integrating an analysis of these really oppressive systems and naming them and being like wait a second, you know, not necessarily taking them at face value is a huge part of us taking our mental health back and our relationships back from all of the harmful effects of those things,"

Hollinshead said.

Bruyn emphasized this, saying it is important to understand what makes certain things hard for someone else.

"These holidays, these expectations, these are what we see in the media as what we're supposed to be doing on these days, and that is really harmful to a lot of folks," Bruyn added.

"What's really important when we're supporting each other is exploring, like what's going on, like, 'Oh, you're having a really hard time, like what does that look like for you,'" Bruyn said in regards to the holidays bringing up mental health challenges such as seasonal

affective disorder (SAD).

Founder of NKS Therapy and professor at Humber College Natasha Sharma said the holidays affect people's mental health as the holidays mark a passage of time.

"People who are looking to make a big change but are putting it off can definitely feel a sense of distress or depression around this time as a result of that," Sharma said.

"It's an opportunity to use any negative emotions to try and understand what they're trying to say to you, right? Are you missing family? Are you longing for something? Are you needing to make a change in your life? These are usually the things at the root of them,"

she said.

Bruyn said there's no need to suffer alone and that people can get help.

"It's really important to sort of reach out to different supports," Bruyn said. "There's also Connex Ontario which you can look up, and they have all the different mental health and substance use supports that are in Ontario that are free."

"You can call Connex and if you just sort of say, 'Hey, I've been really noticing that I'm not doing great, I'm a little different,' they can give you a bunch of resources that kind of best suit what's going on for you," she said.

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Racism a problem, Black musicians argue

Carlo Cantisani

Entertainment reporter

Rachel “Ray” McFarlane was only 12 years old when she fell in love with Concerto No. 4 in F minor, otherwise known as “Winter”, one of the famous classical canons in Vivaldi’s “The Four Seasons.”

“That was the first time I heard kind of violin in action with the solo spotlight,” McFarlane said.

Fast forward 10 years later and McFarlane has found herself at one of the most prestigious music schools in North America, the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she’s currently double majoring in Film Scoring and Video Games Scoring. She also plays with the Grammy Award-winning Silkroad Ensemble created by celebrated cellist Yo-Yo Ma, while simultaneously working on score commissions for various video game companies.

Yet, as a Black musician, she still feels the hostility and weight that the classical music environment has thrown at her since she started studying violin.

“When I was growing up, I was scared to start playing music in an orchestra because I never saw anyone like me before in an orchestra,” McFarlane said. “So obviously the first question is if I even belong here...having that pressure of having to do well because you’re the only person that’s representing your whole ethnicity is really hard.”

Classical music has always been associated with a white environment to such an extent that the contribution of Black composers has always been overlooked and minimized, just as the musicians who want to access orchestras and leadership roles come up against barriers and hierarchies still rooted in the contemporary classical environment.

Some institutions recognized this situation. Orchestras Canada, created ‘Perfect Fifth of Diversity’, an assessment framework for orchestras to be used when taking action towards equity, diversity and inclusion.

The Orchestras Canada board also approved the members’ Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Declaration in May 2017 adopted by the entire Canadian orchestral community.

Although historical figures are being rediscovered such as Joseph Bologne Chevalier de Saint-Georges, the first Black composer to be widely known in European cohorts, one major issue is that



CARLO CANTISANI

Rich Coburn, works with BIPOC Voices, which helps underrepresented communities share their work and provide demo recordings.

Canada lacks data and knowledge on Black classical music of the past and the present, undermining the public perception of the importance Black composers play in the Canadian music landscape.

According to the Executive Director at Orchestras Canada Katherine Carleton, there are between 1500 and 2000 musicians distributed in 25 professional orchestras in Canada, that is orchestras that offer enough work to be the major focus for a musician’s professional activity as opposed to freelance engagements. She said there is no “good data” on cultural or ethnic representation in Canadian orchestras at the moment.

“I think there’s also some deeper cultural questions in terms of what it’s like to work inside an orchestra.

If you’re the only black person in the room, do you feel exoticized? Do you feel welcomed for who you are and what you bring?” she said. “In order for orchestras to be safe places for people of colour to flourish and make their strongest contribution, I think orchestras themselves need to change.”

Tanya Charles Iveniuk teaches violin at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto and the Royal Conservatory of Music, and she is concertmaster of the Obiora Ensemble and violinist with Ensemble Du Monde, Toronto Mozart Players, and the Odin Quartet. She was also McFarlane’s second violin teacher.

“I feel like in many circles where I find myself in my professional work, whether it’s teaching or performing, I feel like a chameleon,”

she said. “I just have to change a little bit of who I am to tailor it to the communities or to the circles in which I’m running.”

Iveniuk agrees that a lack of representation is one of the biggest problems facing Black classical musicians, but she also said that economic insecurity poses a barrier since many marginalized communities may not see classical music as a lucrative option worthy of investment. Even with all of her accomplishments, Iveniuk still feels like she has to change who she is to fit in.

“I feel like it’s very common within my sphere,” she said. “Speaking to some of my colleagues at the professional level who are of colour, there’s just a sort of hyper analyzing every single interaction they have with somebody to decide if that’s a sincere feeling that this person is giving me or if they actually do love what I’m doing.”

Black musicians and composers find themselves putting in extra effort not only to succeed but also just to get into the classical environment and share their art with the world. BIPOC Voices is a platform that brings together compositions by artists belonging to minority groups in a single large database to show Canadian listeners the incredible variety of music.

Rich Coburn, founder and director of the project and senior manager of the Community Partnerships and Repertoire Diversity at the National Arts Centre Orchestra, said changing the system that has been designed for centuries for just a group of people in power involves a lot of effort.

“The challenge for a Black composer is that they’re not only fighting to have something original

to say, to be great at their craft and to be excellent at creating emotion, but then also for them to succeed, it relies on other people altering their systems, devoting extra time and resources to going out of their way to doing that,” he said.

Thanks to virtual instruments and modern music technology, the project helps artists record demos of their compositions for less than half the price it would cost to play with an actual orchestra. One of the main points stressed by BIPOC Voices is that listeners don’t know what the music of lesser-known musicians sounds like just because composers who have performed less have been also recorded less.

The Canadian Orchestras Repertoire Report published this year found music from minority composers increased to 11.7 per cent during the 2022-2023 season from 7.2 per cent in the 2019-2020 season, but white musicians still account for the vast majority of programming, with 88.3 per cent in the 2022-2023 season, the most equitable season studied so far.

Even if changes are happening at a slow pace, Black musicians and composers are nevertheless pushing against underrepresentation in the Canadian classical environment by teaching the music they love, sharing their art and promoting new composers.

Iveniuk is unsure about the future of Canadian orchestras, but she will keep pushing for change.

“My hope is that it all becomes more accessible, more equitable, and with more diverse spaces,” she said. “I just try to focus on the things that I can change and be in the ensembles that make me feel not only proud to be in, but that feel comfortable for me to be in.”



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TORONTO RAPTORS

The North Side Crew has the important job to perform dances at half court to hype up fans at half time and timeouts during Raptors games, whether they are winning or losing.

Raptors cheerleaders shares passion with fans

Antoni Canyameras Rojas
Senior Reporter

A timeout was called in the Boston Celtics-Toronto Raptors game at Scotiabank Arena on Nov. 17 with the score was 97-97 and four minutes remained while the crowd roared.

The players left the court on a timeout, and the Raptors' cheerleaders, known as The North Side Crew, came out. Six men and 10 women burst into a dance with passion and energy for a short but intense minute and a half.

Dominik Cooper-Clarke, a dancer and one of the three captains of the group, was among them. He ended the dance almost out of breath, but with a smile. The crowd was roaring.

"It's very exciting to have the ability to impact someone, to make a fan's day brighter," he said. "But you have to be more than a dancer. We also interact with fans with T-shirt tosses, running in the stands.

"If the fans are a little bit mellow, we have to pump them up," Cooper-Clarke said.

The Raptors lost, but whatever the result, the North Side Crew shakes the arena every game.

They are one reason the Raptors' crowd is considered one of the most boisterous in the NBA, where the North Side Crew were pioneers.

"We became the first NBA cheerleaders team to have women and men in the 2018-2019 season, the one of the championship," Cooper-Clarke said.

Lindsay Aquin and Derick Robinson are the other captains of the band. The group has 22 dancers, and they rotate to have 16 in each game. But in the summer audition, 500 dancers showed up to compete.

Shavar Blackwood, the choreographer of the group, is one of the judges who participated in selecting dancers.

"I look for the whole package of full dancers," Blackwood said. "I look for dancers who pick up quickly, who understand the details and strong performers."

"But I also want people with positive and pleasant energy. I get up from my table in the cast, I

walk around and I literally see how many people are looking at me with a smile," he said.

"I remind the dancers every game of the opportunity to enhance the experience of everyone in the arena. I try to empower them, to inspire them to be passionate, the energy is contagious. That energy helps the ball to go to the net," the choreographer said.

During auditions, dancers are taught a routine and then perform it a few times in groups of 75. Dancers are selected to go to the next round and then perform in groups of 10. The judges then select the final team.

While some Raptors players might be guaranteed to return next season, no dancer in this group is guaranteed to return.

"Our system is very fair to make sure there is an opportunity for everybody," Blackwood said.

"Dancers of previous years still have to do the audition as well. They have to show their willingness to be part of it."

However, the intense work behind the scenes continues throughout the season. Lindsay

Aquin, another captain, said it takes a lot to perform with such a high level of sync and effort.

"A lot of people don't see the work that goes in prior to the game rehearsals," Aquin said. "Our choreographer has to prepare the material before every rehearsal. We have to do our workouts. There's a lot of extra work outside.

"It's a big commitment," Aquin said.

Besides that individual work conditioning, they train for seven hours weekly.

Dancer Angelika Manuela said nutrition is a key part.

"We do a lot and we need to be at a high level," Manuela said. Like her mates, Manuela has to deal with the handicap of juggling jobs.

"I teach professional dance and I do children's programs," she said.

Cooper-Clarke and Aquin are also dancing teachers.

"Being part of the North Side Crew, it's a full-time job," Cooper-Clarke said.

"It's a part-time job, but the type of commitment makes us have to prepare for it like it was a full-time job. I want to move myself to a very

high standard."

The North Side Crew must push itself to a very high standard to perform in front of 20,000 people, with the required control of the emotions that come with it.

Aquin said her feelings were running high when she performed for the first time in the arena.

"Oh, my God, I was so nervous," she said, chuckling. "I was on the court, and I just kept looking up and up and the seats kept going and going. It was like wow, it was such a humbling experience.

"It's cool seeing the rookies of the group coming and seeing their eyes lighting up in their first games," Aquin said.

Fans get excited when the dancers begin. Those non-stop roars have become among the most feared noises in the NBA.

Manuela said she is privileged to dance in front of such good fans.

"I feel blessed seeing how many people come," she said.

"You have to take a moment out of you and look around. You have to give yourself credit for having this opportunity to impact so many people."

HUMBER @ NEWS



Humber breeds winners the Hawks' way

Caleb Moody
Senior Reporter

As the final buzzer sounded and Kia Watt stepped off the court, she reflected on another commanding win for Humber women's basketball.

She looked down at her hand to see the two Es she had written there, as she does every game. It's a reminder of the mantra of her coaches: High energy, high effort.

After a win like this, she was once again reminded of how not being complacent can produce success.

"No matter the game, no matter who we're playing, we always need to have high energy and high effort," Watt said.

From the student-athletes to the coaches to the Athletic Directors' office, Humber Athletics bears the same unique and spirited culture at every level, which has led to decades of continual success.

Of the currently active sports in the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association, the Humber Hawks have won 247 provincial championships and 47 national championships, with many of those won in the past two decades.

Watt, a CCAA All-Canadian



CALEB MOODY

Humber's athletic community has been building a winning culture for years and the results have been showing across all of Hawks' sports.

Team member last season and the team leader in scoring this season said there's pressure to come out and perform their best every game.

She said it's because every team they play knows it takes their best to go toe-to-toe with the Hawks.

Watt said regardless of the season or the roster, there is the identical goal of success and an intense competitive atmosphere

every year.

"Even though we may be a different team this year, we still have that same work ethic and that same drive that Humber has instilled in us," she said.

From a coaching point of view, Humber women's softball coach, Duaine Bowles said he shares Watt's view of the importance of Humber's work ethic and drive.

Bowles, a 2019 provincial champion and 2020 Coach of the Year recipient, said it's important to have players that move the Humber Hawks culture in the right direction.

He said he makes sure his players know the value of working hard for their teammates and themselves.

Bowles said what has led to success for him as a coach, along with his team, has been the investment made into the person rather than just their athletic ability.

"We want them to be the type of player that leaves the program better than they found it," he said.

He said for him, Humber Hawks culture is built on the legacy student-athletes leave behind, by being mindful about how they're impacting the program not only now, but for those in the future.

"When you finish playing here, what are people going to say about you when leave?" Bowles asks his players. "What type of person do you want your teammates to think you were when you graduate here?"

Assistant Athletic Director Michael Kopinak feels the goal of building a legacy is also present in the coaches.

Kopinak said when the athletic director's office hires head coaches, they look for those with deep connections to Humber, which offers

an opportunity to continue to build that Humber legacy.

He said they are inclined to hire those with not just experience but experience playing and assistant coaching at Humber.

Kopinak said the passion for the Blue-and-Gold and the culture that brings makes it more than just a job for them.

"We want to hire people who live and breathe Humber Hawks," he said.

"Some of our best players, they've left here, they've gone and some coaching other places and now they've returned here," he said. "Because they [have] that passion to give back to Humber."

Kopinak said the winning culture really began with the previous athletic director, Doug Fox, in the early to mid-2000s.

Although Kopinak acknowledged that Humber had won championships before Fox's tenure, he said the consistent winning came under the winning culture Fox introduced.

And since then, current Athletic Director Ray Chateau and Kopinak have carried the torch in continuing the winning culture created by their predecessor.

"Winning breeds winning," Kopinak said.

He said the Athletic Director's office has provided the necessary resources to teams to foster that winning mentality.

Kopinak said the Humber Hawks provide their student-athletes and coaches with a varsity academic centre, a therapy department and a high-performance facility.

He said the athletic department has top-notch therapy and equipment staff with experience working

on Olympic teams, world cups and various world championships.

All this support is felt among the coaches as Duaine Bowles said the support and resources are second to none.

"There is no place that I think that I could coach in the country that's going to give me the resources that I have here," he said.

When Watt prepares for a game, she said she's reminded of the Humber winning culture the coaches have created and, in the case of women's basketball, have experienced before.

Alongside national championship-winning women's basketball head coach Ajay Sharma, is a coaching staff that includes Ceejay Nofuente and Aleena Domingo.

Both Nofuente and Domingo were members of those national championship teams, something Watt said she hopes to achieve before her Humber playing career ends.

Watt said the winning culture her coaches have experienced and created fuels her and her teammates to attempt to follow in their footsteps and achieve the same.

"They also have, I'm going to say, two, three national championships under their belt, so when they talk to us or when Ajay talks to us, we know we have to listen," Watt said. "Because they got there, they won, they have rings, they have banners, and we don't have that yet."

As Kopinak said, winning breeds winning.

With student-athletes like Watt, coaches like Bowles, and athletic department staff like Kopinak, the Humber Hawks culture of winning is alive and well as they continue down the long-standing path of success.



TROY BLACK

Fourth-year basketball player Kia Watt has had success with Humber.

Lakers win first NBA in-season tournament

Sam Belton
News Editor

The Los Angeles Lakers went down in history as the first NBA team ever to win the inaugural in-season tournament, defeating the Indiana Pacers 123-109.

The team went undefeated in their seven games in the tournament, winning five games by more than 10 points; the most decisive victories being their 131-99 victory against the Utah Jazz, their 133-89 victory against the New Orleans Pelicans, and finally, their championship victory against the Pacers.

According to the NBA, all games in the in-season tournament count for the regular season - except the championship.

Had it counted, it would mean season-high stats for Lakers power forward Anthony Davis. Davis scored a whopping 41 points, 20 rebounds, and 5 assists, more points and rebounds than any game he's played all season.

Davis is second in rebounds so far this season, with an average of 12.6 per game. He is also the third in blocks.

In a post-game interview alongside Davis, LeBron James said his enthusiasm about Las Vegas remains.

"My enthusiasm about being here post-career, bringing a team here, has not changed," James said.



AP PHOTO/IAN MAUEL

Anthony Davis lead the Lakers to capturing the first ever in season tournament after a strong performance.

James has recently expressed a desire to own an NBA franchise in Las Vegas.

Because the pair have played together for a long time, Davis said he and James work well together.

James pointed to their defence as an important factor in their victory.

"As of today, I like the way we played in the semi-finals on Thursday and then tonight. Our defence intensity - in order for us to win, and win at the highest level, we have to defend and we've been doing that over the last few weeks," James said.

Davis, who led the team with four blocks, said his performance

helped the team reach the finish line.

"Any time I step on the floor, I know I'm the anchor of the defence," he said. "Giving guys the freedom to press up and get some ball pressure and if they get beat, I'm there at the rim to alter the shot or block it. But that's my job," he said.

James said Davis has meant everything to his career, especially in its later years.

"To be able to get a young, hungry alpha male to go out there and just do the things that he does," James said. "It's definitely giving me an opportunity to be able to not only watch as he con-

tinues to grow but also be able to try to inspire him as well as he continues to grow in his career and vice versa."

James said the return of shooting guard Cam Reddish helped them significantly.

"Not too many people talk about it but one of the biggest shots of tonight's game was, they made they run, they cut it to three, and Cam hits that big-time three in front of our bench to put it up six. And we didn't go back after that," James said.

Because of their overall performance in the tournament, James was voted the most valuable player (MVP) of the event.

Indiana Pacers point guard Tyrese Haliburton had a chance to play against his childhood idol, James. Haliburton chuckled and said James was like the "final boss" of a video game.

"To be able to compete against him in the championship, it's kind of like a storybook a little bit, and it's gonna be a lot of fun," Haliburton told reporters in a pre-game interview.

"But that's the great part about being in the NBA is getting to compete against your idols on a nightly basis, so I really look forward to that,"

Haliburton said nobody expected his team to make the championship game, and that they were "not supposed to be here."

He said this tournament has been a "storybook run" for the team.

"We've been probably looked at to lose the majority of our tournament games. The Philly game, we weren't supposed to win, the Boston game, we definitely weren't supposed to win, Milwaukee, we definitely weren't supposed to win," Haliburton said.

According to Sports Illustrated, Haliburton was named to the All-Tournament Team for In-Season Tournament performance.

This was alongside James, Davis, Kevin Durant, and Giannis Antetokounmpo, all among the NBA's best stat-wise.

ANALYSIS

Ohtani's signing with the Dodgers leaves Jays fans in disarray

Nicholas Rego
Sports Reporter

The Shohei Ohtani sweepstakes came to an end on Saturday as he and the Los Angeles Dodgers came to an agreement on contract terms.

He signed a 10-year, US\$700 million deal, making that contract the richest in North American sports history.

Blue Jays fans were devastated when the news came out. They and the Dodgers seemed to be the two finalists in signing Ohtani.

The possibility of signing a once-in-a-lifetime player has come crashing down.

One of the main reasons why Blue Jays fans are upset is because of the social media rumour mill causing chaos.

Blue Jays fan Jacob Carinci said he feels betrayed by sports insiders and will have difficulty trusting them in the future.

"The thing I learned was to never trust any sports insider ever again until a deal is final," Carinci said.

There is one sports insider that he is referencing: John Morosi of MLB Network.

Morosi reported Dec. 8 that Ohtani was on his way to Toronto to visit with the team.

The report sent shockwaves through the entire city of Toronto.

Fans were waiting at Toronto Pearson International Airport for the supposed arrival of Ohtani. They and the media were stalking different hotels, and probably the most insane thing, people were tracking of planes from Anaheim, home of the Los Angeles Angels, to Toronto.

A reputable source like Morosi made fans believe there was more than a chance Ohtani would sign with the Blue Jays, but that obviously turned out to be not real.

Blue Jays fans were receiving some hate from social media for

getting their hopes up for something that seemed inevitable since the beginning of free agency.

It has been known for about one year now that Ohtani's free agency destination would be the Dodgers and when Blue Jays fans thought that might not be true, they went all-out crazy in hopes of him signing.

Blue Jays star pitcher Kevin Gausman went on X (formally known as Twitter) to defend the city of Toronto and its fans from American media that dissed the Six.

"I hate seeing people talk bad about Toronto like they know it," Gausman said.

"If you live in Toronto, you know how special of a place it is and how passionate the people are."

This situation brings to question how you can trust what is being said if it hasn't been confirmed yet. Social media can start crazy

rumours and have vulnerable people believe in those rumours.

Blue Jays fans are still one of the most passionate fan bases, after being heartbroken by the news of Ohtani.

Carinci said he and the Blue

Jays would never forget Dec. 8, 2023, and how much buzz was around the city.

"No Blue Jays fan will ever forget what happened on Friday, December 8, 2023, and how excited Blue Jays fans were for a couple of hours," he said.



AP PHOTO/EUGENE HOSHIKO

Tokyo sports store selling Shohei Ohtani's LA Dodgers merchandise.



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P.16**

