

HUMBER

# Et Cetera

HUMBER'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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## 'THIS IS A LIFE-SAVING MEASURE'

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# Toronto housing advocate faces legal threats over shelters

**Jennifer Kozak**

NEWS REPORTER

Khaleel Seivwright, the creator of tiny shelters placed throughout homeless encampments across the city, just might qualify as this era's Good Samaritan.

From Monday to Sunday, the 28-year-old housing advocate can be found building shelters to provide temporary housing for those in need. Each shelter costs about \$1,000 and takes Seivwright eight hours to construct. He is supported by a GoFundMe campaign which has raised more than \$150,000 over two months.

But not everyone is impressed.

Seivwright has received numerous threats of legal action from the City of Toronto and has been asked to remove all his building material or face a fine.

"They're bylaws and not criminal offences, so I am not fearful of going to jail," he said. "It's been frustrating, but I am hoping the city realizes that this could be part of a solution for people staying inside this pandemic."

Initially, the city said the wooden structures weren't considered safe because they lacked fire alarms and hadn't been inspected. Seivwright says each structure is equipped with a fire alarm and a carbon monoxide alarm, and the city clarified they were still potentially unsafe because Toronto Fire Services haven't inspected them.

Seivwright received numerous letters from Janie Romoff, general manager of the city's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, urging him to stop.

"The City of Toronto, therefore, demands that you immediately cease the production, distribution, supply and installation of such shelters for place-



JENNIFER KOZAK

Despite receiving legal threats from Toronto to remove his shelters from the park or be faced with a hefty fine, Khaleel Seivwright is continuing to build temporary housing.

ment and use on city property," she wrote in one letter. "Should you fail to do so, the city may, among other remedies, hold you responsible for the costs of removal of such structures."

The idea came to him during a three-year volunteer trip to northern British Columbia, where Seivwright built himself a two-by-four-foot shelter with six windows that he slept in temperatures as cold as -15 C.

When he returned to Toronto, he couldn't believe how many people were sleeping outside and he became motivated to do something about it.

"I was shocked by how many people were sleeping outside in tents in a city like Toronto," he said. "I figured that this was something I could do to help people survive this winter."

"Every time we deliver a shelter

to someone, I hope that if this person isn't getting housing, that at least they have this," he said.

Seivwright, a Scarborough native, sees the shelters as a safe, temporary alternative for people who would otherwise be sleeping in tents or under tarps and blankets.

He started working on construction sites with his father at age 11. In his teens, he pursued carpentry, which he has been doing for the past eight years.

One shelter takes 12 hours to make. While he's working, his girlfriend and dog stop by to check on him and bring food. Seivwright's friends stop by periodically throughout the week to help him load each shelter on a trailer to get downtown.

The "Toronto Tiny Shelters" are insulated like residential homes, have a small window

and a door, and are designed with insulation, plywood, and wrapped in Tyvek. Each shelter's walls are lined with a thick layer of fiberglass insulation generally used in residential construction. There are a door, a small window and spinning wheels at each corner of the base, making it easy to push to new destinations.

Seivwright says his shelters are not a permanent solution.

"There is a problem with the temporary housing and the hotels the city has for homeless people right now. Bylaw officers try to gather people from the tents to bring to their hotels," Seivwright said.

"They feel trapped and can't leave whenever they feel like it," he said. "There are restrictions on everything that they do."

He said the long-term solution

is providing affordable housing for people.

"So far, I've been getting a positive response from those living in encampments. Some even decorate their homes and paint them," he said. "It makes me happy to hear all the success stories."

"They feel safe and warm, which means I did my job," he said.

Housing advocate Cathy Crowe says Seivwright is a "hero," and she was upset to hear he received threatening letters from the city. At first, Crowe was firmly against the tiny shelters because she feared they might not be safe for specific individuals but quickly changed her mind after hearing the many success stories from residents.

"I really feel the city is failing drastically and that this is a life-saving measure," Crowe said.

# International students stuck in Canada due to cancelled flights, COVID

**Erin Leblanc**  
NEWS REPORTER

The holiday season is usually the time of year to spend with family and friends, but for some students this year, taking a trip home will not be easy, if they can make it at all.

"I haven't seen my family in over a year," said Zahrya Musgrove, a recent Humber Business Management graduate.

Because of rising cases of COVID-19 cases, travel restrictions have been put into place across the world. Flights are being reduced, and even cut to some parts of Canada and other countries.

"It was hard to book my flights," Musgrove said. "I booked them and then a week later they both were cancelled. Luckily they rescheduled them, but I'm scared that they could just be cancelled again at any time."

Musgrove, an international student from Turks and Caicos, moved to Toronto alone to attend Humber College but misses her family, who live on the island.

"I'm rather scared, I want to

see my parents but I'm afraid to fly right now, you never know what will happen, I could even go and just not be able to come back," she said.

With more than 6,500 international students attending Humber, Musgrove isn't alone.

"It's the first time I'm not going to be able to spend Christmas with my family. And I'm all alone here too," said Mei-Lynn Yip, a second-year Business Administration student.

Yip is from Mauritius, an island off the coast of Madagascar. She is unable to go home for the holidays, because of high prices and strict quarantine measures.

"You cannot quarantine at home, you have to quarantine in a hotel," she said.

Yip said it can be very expensive, around \$1,000 a night for a good hotel.

"I wouldn't be able to see my family long enough for it to be worth it. I feel very homesick, I'd just like to see my mom," she said.

Humber has services available to support those stuck in Canada, as well as those leaving



REUTERS/LINDSEY WASSON/FILE PHOTO

Grounded Boeing 737 MAX aircraft seen parked at Boeing facilities at Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake, Wash. International students in Canada are unable to book flights home for the holidays due to travel restrictions and cancelled flights.

the country.

"Humber has purchased a 24/7 mental health and wellness service for international students that's available in multiple languages," said Andrew Ness, the International Dean at Humber College.

The service is called keep.meSAFE, and is available online or in a phone app. It's free to use for all Humber international students having difficulties at this time of year and beyond.

Students can also email the international centre, as staff are not on campus to return calls

during the lockdown.

As the college helps students who are going away, Humber also provides services for when they return to Canada.

"We provide students with very detailed information on what is required [to quarantine]," Ness said.

"We provide them with support and we've promised the government we'll check-in, so we phone them four times during the quarantine period," he said.

There are specific regulations that are required by the

Canadian government for a safe place for students to quarantine. Humber can provide help if their home or residency does not meet those requirements.

"We have a quarantine stay option if students need, which we arrange for them," Ness said. "They can be in a hotel room or an Airbnb, and are provided three meals a day and wifi."

he said students can also receive bursaries, which can help cover some of the costs of these services.

"We want to help our students as much as we can," Ness said.

# Rush on flu shots leaves Ontario pharmacies struggling to meet demand

**Cassandra McCalla**  
NEWS REPORTER

High demand and a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic have left Ontario pharmacies with shortages of flu vaccine.

Ian Culbert, a member of the Canadian Public Health Association, said many people booked appointments as early as October for flu shots this year and the demand has depleted vaccine supplies.

"There is some availability but not a large amount, unusually, when we hit our distribution from mid-November to mid-December," he said.

The federal government ordered 15 per cent more vaccine this year than it did in 2019. Culbert said both the federal and provincial governments need to communicate clearly where sup-

plies are available to "reduce the anxiety people feel."

In some quarters, there is still wariness about the vaccine's potential side effects or limited effectiveness, some experts say.

Dr. Mina Tadrous of Women's College Hospital in Toronto said the worry is usually based on a lack of information or full understanding of the benefits of vaccination.

"I think COVID-19 is teaching all of us a lot about how viruses work and how lucky we are to have a vaccine for things," he said.

"The fact that we have a flu shot every year that keeps up to date with the shifts and drifts (of the) virus itself is remarkable," Tadrous said.

Christian Hasse, a spokesperson for the Ontario Ministry of Government Services, said the

flu season puts pressure on the province's health system every year and there is a higher risk this year as a result of COVID-19.

"The province has invested nearly \$70 million to purchase flu vaccines to deliver a robust and expanding campaign this year, prioritizing vulnerable populations in our long-term care homes, hospitals, and other settings," Hasse said in a news release.

The campaign resulted in more Ontarians getting the flu vaccine earlier this year and fewer than usual influenza cases being reported.

"As of Nov. 12, more than 5.2 million doses of the flu vaccine have been distributed, a million more than the same time last year," Hasse said in an email statement.

Hasse said Ontario, like



UNSPLASH/CDC

According to the Ontario Ministry of Government Services, 5.2 million doses of the flu vaccine had been distributed by November, a million more than this time last year.

other provinces and territories, is seeking more doses of the influenza vaccine as part of the national bulk-procurement program.

"We are engaging in conver-

sations with our sector partners regarding additional opportunities to procure supply beyond the historical levels that have been distributed to Ontarians," Hasse said.

# Humber shines spotlight on art from around the world

**Sofia Rusyn.**

NEWS REPORTER

Ital Boganova may not have won the top prize at Humber's International Education Week photo and video showcase, but the third-place entry of her cooking *Syrniki*, a traditional Russian dish similar to a cheese pancake, with her family was still meaningful.

"Basically, food is what allows us to be in touch with our culture," Boganova said. "So that's just our tradition for breakfast every weekend."

Humber has organized events for International Education Week since 2000 to introduce students to the culture and backgrounds of international communities at the college. And with almost 100 students participating, the event celebrates architecture, dance, culture, food, and the notion of home.

Normally, students have the opportunity to try traditional food and see art performances surrounded by their peers. This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything was online during the week of Nov. 23 and students could attend online meetings covering themes related to global experience.

The main event was the photo and video contest and pre-



MICHAEL JOHNSON-FIGUERO

The winning image was taken by Michael Johnson-Figuero. It depicts life on the streets of his home in Havana, Cuba.

sentations, capturing both the routines of life elsewhere and extraordinary events.

Michael Johnson-Figuero won the event, depicting life on the streets of his home in Havana, Cuba.

Other winners announced Nov. 27 were Jazel Dela Paz, who won first place in the "Art of

Everyday" video category with a chronicle of her trip home to the Philippines at Christmas, and Daniela Medeiros, who won with her song about Brazil in the "Performance of Art" video category.

The family of Tanzila Patel, a Bachelor of Journalism student at Humber, is of Indian origin,

but later her family moved to Saudi Arabia. Her work for the competition was about the centuries-old buildings in Jeddah.

"Before it was a monarchy, there used to be a very certain type of architecture," she said about masterpieces now protected by heritage laws.

Ayushi Thakur, a Global Busi-

ness Management student and another participant, might be pursuing a career in business but finds her passion in photography.

She was freelancing at an event when she captured a wonderful dance, called *Nataraja*, by noted performers and sisters Yamini and Bhavana Reddy.

"Every dance in Indian culture has a meaning and tells a story," Thakur said.

"*Nataraja* is about Lord Shiva," she said. "And the way he was trying to be projected — is a very majestic God."

"This photo has a lot of emotions, beautiful expression of life, photography, a lot of light, the whole concept of the show and the proper expression of the jewelry," Thakur said. "And it really represents India, the whole culture."

Since early childhood, she has learned traditions and culture through art, and it has shaped the way she looks at the world. Even in the business program, Thakur tries to bring creativity and individuality to bear.

"I've done four years Indian classical dance," she said. "And my background is related to my family, is into theatre, dancing, acting. So I've had the opportunity to witness all these things while I was a kid."

## Student groups urge feds to extend student loan moratorium

**Eli Ridder.**

NEWS REPORTER

College and university alumni across Canada could catch a break if the federal government acts on a private member's motion passed unanimously in the House of Commons.

Parliament voted unanimously on Nov. 24 in support of a non-binding motion to extend the moratorium on repaying post-secondary student loans from the federal government.

Nicole Brayannis of the Canadian Federation of Students applauded the move as a measure to keep alumni afloat during a worsening coronavirus pandemic.

"Reintroducing the moratorium on student-loan payments means that students and recent graduates have a fighting chance to make it through the

second wave of the pandemic," Brayannis, the federation's national deputy chair, said in a statement.

The motion was introduced by Edmonton Strathcona MP Heather McPherson of the New Democratic Party, who called it "good news that recent graduates needed" after being "devastated by COVID-19."

"Extending the interest-free moratorium on student loan repayments could be the difference recent graduates need to get through the winter," McPherson said in a statement released by the party. Parliament originally delayed repayments in March as lockdowns started coast-to-coast, but students were to resume repaying loans at the end of September. Now the moratorium has been extended to May 31,

2021.

Should the government implement the motion, it could help many students across the country.

For Mohawk College alumnus Allan Sloan, a potential extension means he can "breathe a little lighter for a little longer" as he fights to carry on amid the pandemic.

"I work two part-time jobs, and constantly wonder if I need a third," Sloan said. "Stopping one of my monthly payments helps me out more than I could ever realize. That \$200 a month could go to other things, like food, rent, savings."

He said a loan repayment moratorium should not be only a temporary measure. "I genuinely feel that we're at a crucial turning point, and if we don't react and respond properly,

COVID-19 lockdowns will be the least of our worries," the journalism graduate said.

Policy experts have argued the global pandemic provides an opportunity for paradigm shifts in programs equal to those coming out of the Second World War or the Great Depression.

The pandemic has also revealed systemic social inequities, Canada's Human Rights Commission said.

"We must be fully mindful of how this crisis is amplifying the challenges and disadvantages faced by people living on the margins of society," HRC chief commissioner Marie-Claude Landry said.

Many post-secondary students, who often experience the impacts of inequity, agreed. A November report from Abacus Data found one in two youth



NDP

Alberta NDP MP Heather McPherson.

between 15 and 30 believe the pandemic has only exposed "pre-existing inequalities."

For now, the pause in repaying the price of education will allow alumni such as Sloan a chance to survive the months ahead.

# Women journalists face barrage of abuse, racism, misogyny

**A recent global survey by the International Center for Journalists (IFCJ) found 75 per cent of female reporters are harassed on social media.**

**Makayla Verbruggen**

NEWS REPORTER

When Evelyn Kwong and Jennifer Pagliaro start their workday and check their emails, they almost need personal protective equipment.

The Toronto Star journalists receive hate mail, racial slurs, and death threats. Pagliaro has been called a “crypto-Nazi.” Kwong received a message from someone hoping she be “raped to death.”

For women in journalism, such abuse is far from unusual.

Pagliaro, a Toronto city hall reporter for the Star, recently tweeted out some of the messages she had received from anonymous abusers calling her obscene names and predicting she will die alone.

“I think the more notoriety you get as a journalist, the bigger of a target you become,” she said. “That little blue checkmark (which Twitter issues), I think sometimes gives people the freedom to just say whatever they want to you. But I would say that it’s definitely gotten worse in the last few years.”

This is not just a local problem. A recent global survey of 1,210

people by the International Center for Journalists (IFCJ) and UNESCO found a worrying surge in the number of cases involving online violence against women reporters.

Nearly 75 per cent of women respondents say they experienced online abuse, harassment, threats and attacks. The report found the threats often extended to family members. Further, of the women who responded to the November survey, 20 per cent said they had also been attacked offline.

Pagliaro said she receives more hate online than in person because of the anonymity social media provides. She has experienced some negativity in person, but they tend to be quick encounters.

Posting hateful comments online to make people aware of the abuse women journalists face for doing their jobs is seen as a first step in instigating change, and Pagliaro said she hopes more will come forward and tell their story.

“I think it definitely is comforting in the general sense to have that knowledge and to seek power to that and just feel like, they don’t have ownership over

your day or your week or your life,” she said.

Kwong, a digital producer and breaking news reporter at the Star, said she has received threats along with abuse about her race and gender. Some abusers, their menace implied, wanted to know where she and her family lived.

Those comments scared her to the point where she scrubbed social media of any hint of her residence.

“We got a lot more of the hate mail than a lot of the male counterparts just for doing these crime stories,” she said. “But those messages I got recently were really racist, lots of racial slurs, and also stuff like, I hope you get raped to death, like that kind of stuff.”

Kwong told her superiors at the Star about the abuse she was receiving. She was urged to file a police report, which she did.

Both Pagliaro and Kwong said they’ve had to learn not to let hateful comments get to them.

They will step away from their screen, turn off notifications, spend time with people who care about them, and then brace themselves for what the next day’s inbox might contain.



RICHARD LAUTENS/TORONTO STAR

Jennifer Pagliaro, the Toronto Star city hall reporter, is all too familiar with the vicious comments female journalists receive daily, both online and in person.



COURTESY TORONTO STAR

Evelyn Kwong, a digital producer and breaking news reporter at the Toronto Star, said that she scrubbed social media of any hint of her address after receiving threats.

## ECHL shuts down Northern Division because of COVID-19

**Garrett Thomson**

SPORTS REPORTER

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every professional sport, leading to modified seasons and changes in venue. For the East Coast Hockey League, it has prompted a shutdown of its entire Northern Division.

The ECHL is the third level professional hockey league, an affiliate of the National Hockey League, and runs four divisions across the U.S. with two teams in Canada, the Newfoundland Growlers and the Brampton Beast.

“You need to concern yourself first and foremost with the safety of the fans, of the team, and of the staff,” said Anthony Fusco, commentator and head of public relations for the

Brampton Beast.

The team, located in Peel Region, is in the middle of one of the highest risk zones in the province for COVID-19 cases.

“I think we all knew what was coming, but it still felt like a punch to the gut,” Fusco said.

“As of the shutdown, we had 18 players signed to the team,” he said. “All of them are now free-agents.”

The Growlers are affiliated with the Toronto Maple Leafs of the NHL, and the Beast are linked to the Ottawa Senators.

The cuts were to give the players the opportunity to go play for teams in the Southern, Central, or Mountain Divisions of the league, all of which are going forward with the season.

Players also have the oppor-

tunity to take their talents overseas and sign with a team in one of the European leagues.

For players, it’s been a roller-coaster, signing contracts with teams and now not being able to play out this season or trying to find a team to play for.

“When we signed this year, we already started talking with our agents and the coaches about if there is a shutdown, will there be a place for us to play,” said Cameron Bakker, a defenceman for the Beast.

Bakker joined the team for the 2019-20 season after spending the previous year with the South Carolina Stingrays in the league’s Southern Division.

He will be signing on with the Pensacola Ice Flyers in the Southern Professional Hockey



COURTESY BRAMPTON BEAST

The Brampton Beast will not have the chance to hit their home ice at the CAA Centre.

League for the 2020-21 season and hopes to come back to Brampton next year.

The Beast will retain the rights of the released players for next

year, meaning there’s a chance that Bakker, along with the rest of a strong team that never got to play, will be back in the black, red, and white next season.

## EDITORIAL

# IGNITE Board of Directors vote to keep meetings closed to students

Plenty of Et Cetera's column space has been used in the past to talk about IGNITE, and with good reason.

The non-profit has a budget of more than \$13 million paid into by students and has historically had a tenuous relationship with the media, barring students from attending meetings last year unless they committed to not attending as journalists before closing those meetings entirely.

But with the elections held last year to appoint the new board of directors (an election in which just over 16 per cent of eligible students voted), there was hope this lack of transparency would change.

Eli Ridder, a second-year journalism student and chairman of the board, ran on a message of transparency, and in interviews with Et Cetera leading up to the election, both Anthony Grguric, a director from North Campus and Gabi Hentschke, a director from Lakeshore, said they supported open board meetings.

"Students should know what

is happening, what decisions are being made and why they're being made," Hentschke said in an interview with Et Cetera last March. "Yes, sometimes they're tough decisions, but students should be able to know."

The election of candidates who were vocal about open board meetings was encouraging to the media, hoping we were moving into a new, more transparent era of IGNITE.

This is why it was so disappointing that at the Nov. 18 meeting of the board, it voted to keep meetings closed to the public.

The news was relayed in the meeting's executive summary, a new feature introduced in June and the method of communication the board opted to go with over open meetings.

"The Board of Directors had two options on the table from the Governance Review Committee in regards to changing our policy," the summary said. "Option 1 was to formally establish Executive Summaries after every Board

meeting and Media Days. Option 2 was to formally re-open board meetings with a few limitations.

"The board voted for Option 1," it said. "Four voted in favour, three voted against and one abstained after several rounds of voting and much discussion."

The three who voted against, who wanted their decision noted, were Ridder, Hentschke, and Aashi Jhunjhunwala, the board's vice-chair.

Grguric abstained, citing the need for a circumstantial system which would, in a normal year not plagued by COVID-19, institute open meetings.

This means the four in favour of option one were a combination of Keithtian Green from North campus, Shay Kedroe from North campus, Ryan Stafford from Lakeshore Campus, Megan Roopnarine from Guelph-Humber, and Stefan Thomas from Guelph-Humber.

Kedroe, Stafford and Roopnarine were all vice-presidents of IGNITE in 2019, a position now defunct after the February

by-law changes. The 2019 BOD were the ones who voted to close the meetings, citing uncomfortableness having hard conversations in front of an audience including the press.

The decision brings up a variety of questions. The first is whether Ridder and Jhunjhunwala represent the best choices for chair and vice-chair respectively.

Historically the chair has been the mouthpiece of the board, communicating its message to the students and the media. This decision points to the simple fact that Ridder or his vice-chair may not support that messaging.

The second is what will the IGNITE Media Days look like? Even if we ignore the uncertainty COVID-19 presents, the final media day last year was attended by a single journalist.

The low attendance was for the simple reason that newsroom executives found them ineffective. Journalists were not permitted to record conversations, and television and broadcast students were not permitted to film.

If these events exist in the same form they did previously, students may have to rely entirely on summaries for their information.

Which leads to the final and most pressing question, one this publication has asked before: what does transparency mean to IGNITE?

In Et Cetera's eyes, transparency does not mean a curated list of talking points, or a meeting where an organization attempts to dictate the coverage of it.

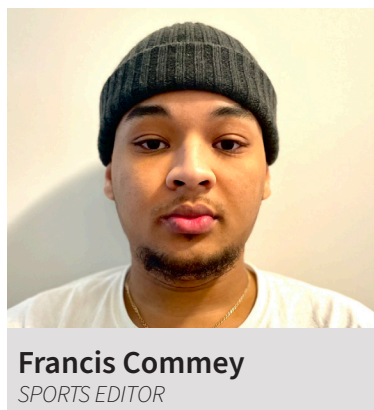
It means being open to answering questions. It means understanding the media is not out to get you, it is out to report the news. It means understanding we decide what we cover in our paper, not the sources.

In a December 2019 editorial, Et Cetera said IGNITE was making it impossible to do our job effectively.

It's incredible that in a year where everything is changing, that still being true seems to be the one thing we can always count on.

## OPINION

# Athlete activism will grow in face of continuing violence in U.S.



Francis Commey  
SPORTS EDITOR

There are people in the world who preach the idea that sports and politics should not be mixed, including so-called experts like Fox News host Laura Ingraham in her 2018 rant against LeBron James.

But this stance is confusing when considering how many great role models there are in the sports world.

It feels like Black athletes' voices have never mattered as much as they do now, breaking from being silenced from having opinions on political issues, silenced from having a voice on social issues.

There are numerous challenges to being a Black athlete in America, and there are even more challenges being Black in everyday life, but a Black athlete's voice gives us hope.

During the summer athletes across the major leagues decided to put Black Americans before themselves, a choice stemming from the shootings of Jacob Blake and George Floyd and the violence against countless other Black men and women across the U.S.

On Nov. 27, the United States women's national soccer team took the pitch for a friendly against the Netherlands with "Black Lives Matter" emblazoned across the front of their jerseys.

This is not the first example in 2020 of messages written on jerseys, sometimes, like in the NBA's case, replacing the athletes' last names, letting everyone know this is bigger than sports.

The problem is that even with these inspiring messages, there will still be some who look down on both the Black Lives Matter

movement and the Black community in general. But in the face of the uneducated, we will continue to persevere.

Sports has the power to change the world, to change a life. Sports has created opportunities for so many across the world and has given a sense of empowerment to young people and athletes who will be the next generation to shape the world.

Sports and politics will continue to mix as long as athletes use their platforms, as they should, to highlight social issues like racial equality and police brutality. This is a fact detractors will have to wrap their heads around because it is not going anywhere.

Marian Anderson, an African-American opera singer and who was a prominent participant in racial politics in the 1950s and '60s, said we're only as strong as our weakest links.

"No matter how big a nation is, it is no stronger than it's weakest people, and as long as you keep a person down, some



REUTERS/CAITLIN OCHS/FILE PHOTO

Demonstrators hold signs depicting George Floyd, who died in Minneapolis police custody, during a protest against police brutality in Brooklyn on June 13.

part of you has to be down there to hold him, down so it means you cannot soar as you might otherwise," she said.

Protests won't ever be enough without action from the white community. Raising fists in solidarity can only do so much, but sadly I know not every community will be behind the Black community in fighting systemic racism, institutionalized racism,

and police brutality.

More names will be added to the seemingly endless list of dead African-Americans, victims of systemic racism, even as we try to shorten it.

As we continue to garner a bit more help, there's still so much work to do, but I believe we'll get there, whether in my lifetime or another.

Say their names.

## TALES FROM HUMBER

### Surviving and escaping the terrible grip of the streets

Jennifer Kozak

NEWS REPORTER

For four months, I slept on buses, in stairwells, on park benches. Until an October night when my cheap tennis shoes and light spring jacket were overpowered by a cold downpour.

Angry and exhausted, I made my way to a place I had avoided for so long. Covenant House. The only shelter I knew, a haven I'd heard about in a Grade 10 civics class.

I pushed the intercom and entered a world I wasn't at all ready to embrace.

New arrivals at shelters put their clothing in a dryer to kill any lice or bed bugs. At the intake, a social worker will want to know what led you there. My story wasn't much different from others who had come before.

I grew up in the custody of the Children's Aid Society. When I turned 17, my first boyfriend became violent and held me against my will at his apartment for two months.

After fleeing, I went back to

my foster mother, who said I was no longer welcome because I was a risk to the other children. With no home, no guidance, no money, the streets were the only place I could turn.

After my intake, a staff member walked me through the shelter's living room and explained rules and meal times. He took me to the girl's floor, where a female social worker led me to my room at the end of a long hall that smelled like a hospital.

"You got lucky with no roommate tonight. Wake up call is at 6:45 in the morning, and you have to be off the floor by 7:30."

She closed the metal door. I looked around the room. One bunk bed and two grey metal dressers with a locker on both. On the bed were a folded sheet, pillow, and quilt that smelled like a basement. I made my bed and sat there, scared, before drifting off to sleep.

I was awakened by a loud knock and yell, "Get up. Get ready to get off the floor." This sentence was repeated every five minutes until the girl's floor

was empty.

I went to the dining hall where breakfast consisted of danishes and what looked like leftovers from last night's dinner.

I took a stale danish and made my way to the living room, now filled with young men and women aged 16 to 25.

Soon, I was welcomed to my new life.

"You're looking to make fast money, baby girl?" a young man asked.

He often lingered outside the shelter doors, looking for vulnerable girls. The staff needed co-operation from victims to have charges laid. But no one was brave enough to go against him and his gang.

Lucky for me, a social worker approached to discuss my next steps to get out of Covenant House.

"I plan on leaving next week," I told her.

Three years and five shelters later proved me wrong.

A life that seemed impossible to escape ended when I finally got hired as a housekeeper at a



JENNIFER KOZAK

An encampment at Lamport Stadium, near King and Dufferin Streets. Toronto's housing crisis forced the creation of more than a dozen encampments in the city.

popular hotel downtown in June 2013 and rented a basement apartment in Parkdale.

I had to cut myself off from every person attached to the streets to move forward. I didn't tell anyone where I was going. I vanished.

The streets have a way of holding on to those who don't have anyone to help pull them free. It loves the sad and lost. Your family becomes those who watch over you when shelters kick you out.

The year before I left the

shelter system, a friend of mine was found in an alleyway dead from an overdose. The police didn't bother to call her parents. I had to.

That was a turning point for me. Why wasn't anybody there to report on this?

I saw a need that needed to be filled. I would go to journalism school. I would tell those stories. I would make a difference for those still on the streets, for those like the cold, wet, frightened desperate girl I was on that October night a lifetime ago.

## TALES FROM HUMBER

### Shaking the family tree with my Grandad

Sofia Rusyn

NEWS REPORTER

ZBARAZH, Ukraine — It wasn't until my grandfather moved in with us after the lockdown began earlier this year that I started to fully appreciate my family history.

My grandfather's stories inspired me to begin researching our family tree. And so far my journey into the past has produced more than 300 relatives I had never heard of before.

My pandemic passion began when my grandfather, Ostap Oleshchuk, who was born in the nearby village of Zaluzhzhia, about 350 kilometres west of Kyiv, moved into our house just after the snow had melted.

Late one evening, when he and I were drinking tea, he started telling me about his family, about adventures he and his sibling had, about his mother's life, and about lost contact with relatives who went abroad.

I wanted to know more. What were his parents' names? Was his father in the army? When and how did his parents die?

After my Grandad answered those questions, I asked him about his own grandparents. He didn't know as much about that generation. But he did know about his paternal grandmother, Tekla.

Tekla had four sons and a daughter. Her sons were rogues who held the village in fear. When there were celebrations, Tekla was always invited, because only she could control the boys. Even so, weddings turned into brawls, and Tekla was often obliged to haul her offspring home.

When my Grandad grew frustrated over the things he didn't know, I decided to take on the challenge of travelling through history to find out.

I spent days searching Soviet archives of war losses and found two brothers who had long been

missing. One wasn't even buried in his own grave, but rather with other officers who didn't make it through a battle. Another of the brothers was buried in the village and I was able to get the coordinates of his grave.

My granddad was so happy he called his friends right away to share what I found.

I then tried to find out more about his mother, Maria, who died shortly after I was born. In my Grandad's stories, his mother was always a hero. Maria was widowed after five years of marriage, left with two little children and expecting another when the Soviet Union was terrorizing Ukraine.

Her land and livestock were confiscated, she worked day and night to give her children the chance for an education.

To track her story, I used online archives, even old maps. I discovered she had been born

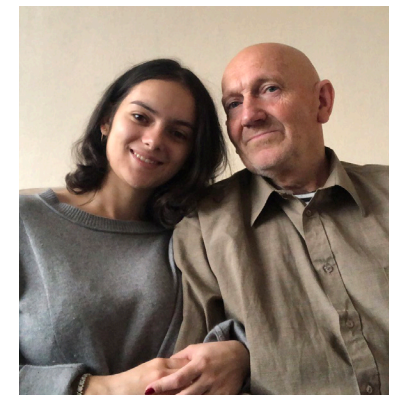
to an affluent family. Her father, Mychaylo, travelled to America, made some money and returned home.

My Grandad remembered how his mother complained about the plant her father opened, how she worked in a flax field, carefully collecting each delicate stem to make linen.

When I found out about Anna, my grandfather's great-great-grandmother, who was born in 1815, he was shocked. He had never heard of her. For days he went around with a big smile. He took me around the village to visit relatives and friends. He was proud of me and wanted everyone to know.

But here's the story that warmed my heart.

At the end of the 1920s, Mychaylo was raising four of his children and another by a sibling, who had died along with their spouse and left six children



COURTESY SOFIA RUSYN

The author and her grandfather Ostap Oleshchuk discovered forgotten family.

orphaned.

Mychaylo and his other siblings had taken responsibility for them, each adopting one of the six into their families. This tale of tragedy and love had been lost until I unearthed it. When I think of it, I know no matter how bad the times were my family took care of each other.

And now, because my grandfather told me stories, and I was able to tell him some in return, we are closer, richer and even prouder of our heritage.

# Local musicians find ways to perform concerts in COVID era

**Christian Collington**

ARTS REPORTER

COVID-19 has forced drummer Isaiah Gibbons and other musicians to find new ways of performing.

"This new way of living was a learning curve in the beginning," said Gibbons, a freelance musician and producer from Mississauga.

During the summer, when COVID-19 restrictions were more relaxed, Gibbons continued doing traditional performances with slight changes.

"My first big show was a drive-in show, it was a cool experience, but it was weird with all the cars as the audience.

We had to wear masks during soundcheck, but got to take it off while playing," Gibbons said.

The graduate from Humber College's Bachelor of Music program started performing at weddings early on in the pandemic.

"I did a couple of weddings up north, it wasn't anything too crazy, we had to wear a mask the entire time," he said.

However, doing performances as intimate as weddings does come with some shortcomings.

"People couldn't get up and

dance, we had to create our own energy. Also, trying to play with a mask on was a learning curve since I'd start to sweat and breathe harder. It was something I had to get used to," Gibbons said.

Gibbons wasn't the only person doing virtual performances. Andre Anthony, a Toronto rapper, has been doing virtual concerts as well.

"I would do Instagram Lives and Zoom concerts, I'd also just perform at home and post it on YouTube," Anthony said.

Anthony preferred to do in-person concerts, but concluded virtual concerts were the closest he could get to normal performance with pandemic restrictions.

Those who attend the concerts tend to show energy through the comments as well as interacting, he said.

"The comments would be flooded with positive comments. It's like a tidal wave of warmth during these weird times," Anthony said.

Curbside Concerts provide the opportunity to book an artist and enjoy a concert socially distanced from their front lawns.

Laurel Tubman, a freelance



Humber grad Isaiah Gibbons, a freelance drummer and producer, is one of many Toronto musicians who is performing online. JACOB SHREF

musician in Toronto, has been on Curbside Concert's roster for anyone to book through their website.

"As a working live musician, COVID-19 really put a damper on everything I do. I had dozens of gigs to date that has been postponed or outright cancelled," Tubman said.

Curbside Concerts were started by a musician who found himself out of work when all concert venues closed.

When she reached out to be a part of Curbside Concerts, Tubman saw the opportunity as a gift.

"The pandemic played a role in my decision to do Curbside Concerts. I miss performing. It's who I am and what I do," Tubman said.

When it comes to in-person shows, Gibbons has noticed options will still be slim in the coming months.

Though he plans to put his

focus elsewhere.

"It's pretty sparse for gigs right now, so I plan to delve into working on my brand and my studio. Also, working with others remotely is what I'm doing," Gibbons said.

Anthony plans to stay with his digital concerts until the pandemic subsides.

Tubman plans to keep doing bookings and said Curbside Concerts is a great first step to providing live music.

# NBC Peacock latest competitor for viewers' streaming dollars

**Nicholas Seles**

ARTS REPORTER

As NBC prepares a wider rollout of its own exclusive streaming service, students' options for watching their favourite shows have become bottle-necked.

Where a single subscription of \$12 to \$15 once covered most entertainment needs, it now costs viewers anywhere from \$30 to \$50 or more just to keep up with new content.

Danyal Somani, a first-year Humber film and television production student, said student budgets don't always allow for such options.

"It is a little difficult, with Netflix I definitely feel like I get my money's worth as they have a lot of cult classics, as well as new content that they release all the time," Somani said.

"Currently, I am subscribed to Netflix and Disney+, but I hon-

estly might just cancel Disney+ as I mostly use Netflix, at least until Disney+ releases more Marvel content," he said.

Peacock, the streaming service from NBCUniversal, will compete with Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime TV.

This means shows will now become even more exclusive due to their respective rights.

After seven years *The Office* will be leaving Netflix to return to NBC and stream exclusively on Peacock.

Similarly, Amazon Prime TV will lose *Parks and Recreation* since it too was an NBC production.

Netflix faced a similar issue in late 2019 when it was announced that the sitcom *Friends* would be leaving the platform in order to take permanent residence on HBO Max, the Warner Bros. and AT&T-run streaming service.

After backlash from the fans

and viewers, Netflix agreed to pay between \$80 million and \$100 million to retain the show for a little longer.

A study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2019 showed 59 per cent of those surveyed had an interest in Disney+'s original content, with 49 per cent interested in its exclusive content which includes Marvel, Star Wars, PIXAR and more. Of the people surveyed by PWC, 64 per cent expected to pay more for their streaming services with each year that passes.

On Oct. 31, 2020, CNBC reported that Netflix was planning to raise its subscription prices yet again for customers.

Even as Netflix continues to lead the way for the plethora of streaming services, subscribers, such as Humber early childhood education student Aneesia Small, are starting to see the downside and resort to other options.



As of January 2021 *The Office* will return to NBC's streaming service Peacock. REUTERS

"I do think that further price increases make people turn to illegal sites because, over time, the price is costly and people don't feel like what they are paying for is worth the price, especially with content being

removed each month," Small said.

Humber student Khaleel Benoit from the child and youth care diploma program agrees, saying, "people would rather subscribe to something free."



# Autistic women underrepresented in Canadian media, say experts

**Hannah Clarke**

NEWS REPORTER

Minni Ang, an ambassador with Autism Canada, would like to see something closer to her own reflection in media portrayals of girls and women on the autism spectrum.

"They always focus on the negative stuff about us, and not on the positive," Ang said in an interview with Humber Et Cetera.

"There's lots of positive stuff and I think we should focus more on that."

Katherine Gallagher, also an ambassador with Autism Canada, said the media only show savant traits, referring to individuals who show particularly high intelligence or skills within a certain area of expertise.

While some autistic individuals demonstrate such behaviour, it is certainly not typical. According to the National Institute of Mental Health,

"Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disorder that affects communication and

behaviour."

It is characterized by difficulty communicating and interacting with people and repetitive behaviours.

Severity in autism varies, with some people requiring considerable assistance and others whose symptoms are barely visible.

Though autism isn't always easy to diagnose, a 2018 study by the Public Health Agency of Canada found one in 42 boys and one in 165 girls had been diagnosed with autism.

Sarah Keelan-Bishop, a registered psychologist who specializes in autism, said the disorder is both less common and harder to diagnose in girls.

The diagnosis ratio might explain why autistic women are so seldom portrayed in major media in the way men are in major projects like *Rain Man* or *The Good Doctor*.

In fact, Ang said the term "autism" was created in the early 1940s from studying only young boys. Gallagher said autism is not well understood "and the

way that they portray us in the media, it doesn't serve us in a good way.

"It just becomes so much more real when you meet the actual person, versus somebody being portrayed," she said.

"There is a conceptual difference there and you know right away that that person is genuinely autistic, versus them just pretending they're autistic."

This problem came up recently for music artist Sia, who used dancer Maddie Ziegler from the show *Dance Moms* to play a non-verbal autistic character in the video for her song *Music*, from the upcoming film with the same title.

Both Ang and Keelan-Bishop say along with media companies needing to be open to hiring more autistic women to act, there needs to be more autistic writers, directors and producers showcasing more genuine autistic women.

"It's like a two-way street," Gallagher said.

"It would help the actor, help the director, and they would be



COURTESY MINNI ANG

Minni Ang, an ambassador for Autism Canada, said that Canadian media should focus less on negative stereotypes about autistic people, especially girls.

helping the media."

Ang and Gallagher said Canadians should also spend more time with autistic individuals to better understand them.

Autism Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Association,

is preparing a submission to the federal government on how it can support autism research so Canadians understand and know more about the disorder.

"Hopefully, the government will then form their new policies based on our input," Ang said.

# Vinyl record sales spinning downward because of COVID-19

**Christian Collington**

ARTS REPORTER

Elizabeth Mborah always thought of vinyl records as more than just something with aesthetic appeal.

However, she says the downward trend hasn't bothered her one bit.

"A lot of people just like vinyl for the clout it carries," said Mborah, a Humber College Media Communications student.

"The fact that it's lost its appeal during COVID-19 has motivated me to expand my collection." The sales of vinyl in Canada have been in freefall for months.

Doug Putman, the owner and CEO of Sunrise Records, has noticed the sharp decline in vinyl sales.

"Having our stores closed for a good portion of the pandemic was a reason, the cancellation of Record Store Day was another significant hit," Putman said.

Record Store Day is an event that happens every April, celebrating the culture of inde-

pendently owned record stores.

Usually, it would include live performances, limited edition music releases, and store-wide discounts.

Mborah would have attended Record Store Day, but the cancellation quashed that. "I was looking forward to buying some records for my collection. That would've been the perfect opportunity but COVID-19 really put a wrench in it," she said.

Mborah's love for vinyl blossomed throughout her childhood.

Her mother always had records playing on Saturdays, normally be a day for cleaning in her family.

"Growing up, I've always heard music from vinyl records, chore day always became more fun when I'd hear the music from the record player. I actually started to look forward to Saturdays," she said.

Jocelyn Gould, head of the Guitars Department at Humber College, loves vinyl but at the same time knows the COVID-19

pandemic took a deep toll on the industry itself.

"I love vinyl, I wish I had a vinyl collection. Though I understand why vinyl has dropped.

With people going to record stores less during the pandemic, no one has a reason to buy records," Gould said.

Ben Callegari, a Humber Radio Broadcasting student, used to like vinyl, but his perspective changed when looking for records online.

"I find vinyl really expensive nowadays, I'd be paying at least \$45 for a new record," he said.

"I think that's what's keeping people from buying vinyl. "The price is too steep," Callegari said.

Putman recognizes some vinyl records are more expensive than others, but reassures not all vinyl is priced the same.

"Obviously the biggest misconception is that vinyl is ridiculously expensive, it pretty much depends on the artist and the record. If it's a popular artist then their vinyl will be a bit pricier. If the record is a limited



CLAY BANKS

Although vinyl's are not as popular as they used to be, they still hold their value to long time fans like Elizabeth Mborah, who would still pay top dollar for a record.

edition then it will be priced higher than regular editions," Putman said.

Mborah has thought about giving up on vinyl based on the downward trend of the industry as of late.

"The thought of giving up on vinyl has materialized once or twice. I think what keeps me committed is the thought of my childhood. There's just so many fun memories for me in vinyl

records," she said.

Mborah hopes for others to view vinyl records as more than just shelf space and that the medium gains more appreciation,

"I think having a record player can make people view vinyl differently," she said.

"Vinyl is more than something that collects dust on your shelf. It's a way to view music in a different light."

## INTERNATIONAL

# Ukrainian president at war with constitutional court over corruption

**Sofiia Rusyn**

NEWS REPORTER

ZBARAZH, Ukraine — President Volodymyr Zelensky came to power in Ukraine after a career as a TV celebrity and rose to international fame as an extortion target of outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump.

So Zelensky is no stranger to the spotlight or the hot seat, and these days he is occupying both.

Ukraine is embroiled in a constitutional crisis triggered by Zelensky's anti-corruption campaign.

The constitutional court in Kyiv, long accused of corruption and with some members under criminal investigation, scrapped in October anti-corruption measures requiring disclosure by public-sector workers of salary and assets such as houses or cars.

The disclosures seemed to suggest judges were living in a style far beyond what their salaries would be expected to support, even though, at \$7,500 a month, they are paid 20 times the average

monthly income in Ukraine.

The push for such judicial action also came chiefly from Ukrainian politicians aligned with Russia.

One of them was Victor Medvedchuk, whose family owns a \$200-million yacht, acres of land on Bulgaria's coast, and dozens of properties in Ukraine.

Zelensky immediately denounced the decision and ordered new anti-corruption provisions to be drafted and said the judges' decision, which weakened the national anti-corruption agency, was a threat to national security.

In the days following the judges' decision, Zelensky convened a meeting of the National Security and Defence Council, which suggested the judges be fired.

Since then, the debate has raged and protests mounted about the competing arguments between personal privacy and the government crackdown on corruption.

Zelensky has said "catastrophic consequences" could flow from the judges' decision,



REUTERS/VALENTYN OGIRENKO

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky speaking to the media after meeting the Polish President Andrzej Duda in Oct. 12, 2020.

including suspension of much-needed Western financial assistance to Ukraine and visa-free access for Ukrainians to the European Union.

During the investigation, the European Union has stopped the visa-free privileges in Ukraine and plans to renew them after the situation is resolved.

Constitutional Court Judge Ihor Slidenko threatened Zelensky with prison over the standoff on Nov. 2.

Zelensky released last week with a three-part plan to end the crisis, rein in the court, and restore the anti-corruption tools it threw out.

Ivan Sorokolit, the mayor of

the Ternopil region, about 420 kilometres east of the capital Kyiv, said "there is a threat of losing democracy" as a result of the standoff.

"There is also a growing threat of losing the country or a significant part of it as a result of increasing Russian influence," Sorokolit said.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Brazilian state of Amapá suffers a power blackout for days

**Julia Alevato**

NEWS REPORTER

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil — A fire at the main electricity station in northern Brazil's Amapá state has caused four days of blackouts, affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. The outage began on Nov. 3 after an explosion caused by a fire in the main energy substation from the Spanish-based transnational, Isolux Corsán. The fire occurred in the state's capital Macapá and caused a blackout in 13 of the state's 16 municipalities.

The Amazonian state of Amapá is located on the Brazilian border with Suriname and French Guiana and has a total of 850,000 residents. About 90 per cent of the population was affected by the first blackout that lasted four days and by another one which occurred on Nov. 17 and lasted four hours.

The Ministry of Mines and Energy created a crisis office

and sent an entourage to Amapá. Governor Waldez Góes declared a 90-day state of emergency across the state on Nov. 6.

The energy crisis has led to protests against the government. Municipal elections scheduled for Nov. 15 were rescheduled for Dec. 13 and 27.

"We spent five consecutive days without electricity," said Gabriel Yared, a writer from Macapá. "We lost our frozen food and ran out of running water for that entire period. The nights were hot and muggy, and we also suffered from the presence of mosquitoes."

Yared, 20, has a delivery restaurant at home and has lost most of the refrigerated items from the stock during the blackout.

"The national media only reported what happened three days after we were in the dark, showing the lack of interest in the cities on the margins of the territory, which is where most of the national wealth is produced,"

Yared said.

"Amapá has four hydroelectric plants, which produce three times the consumption of the population itself and feeds the electric grid of the whole country," he said. "The media should have a greater interest in this (area) to pressure the federal government to act more effectively to solve the crisis."

The power outage affected the state's hydraulic system. There was a lack of running water. Without power, most internet and telephone services also stopped working.

Thainá Rodrigues, 25, an illustrator who lives in Macapá, said the financial damage wasn't the only loss. She spent days without sleeping due to her anxiety during the blackout.

"The first five days, without electricity, without water, without any news... There was chaos all around the city. That's when I realized how abandoned we are," Rodrigues said.



RUDJA SANTOS

Protests in front of a government building over the lack of action for the blackouts

Adrielle Aragão, 24, a public servant from Macapá, had to buy ready-made meals because there was nowhere to store food.

"The government should have been prepared for this," she said.

"There was no backup, cops have also used violence to stop protests, and the energy rotation wasn't fair. Wealthier neighbourhoods had more energy than poor areas."