



THE

PHOENIX NEWS

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In Partnership with your Students' Union

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NEVER FORGET/ ALREADY FORGOTTEN

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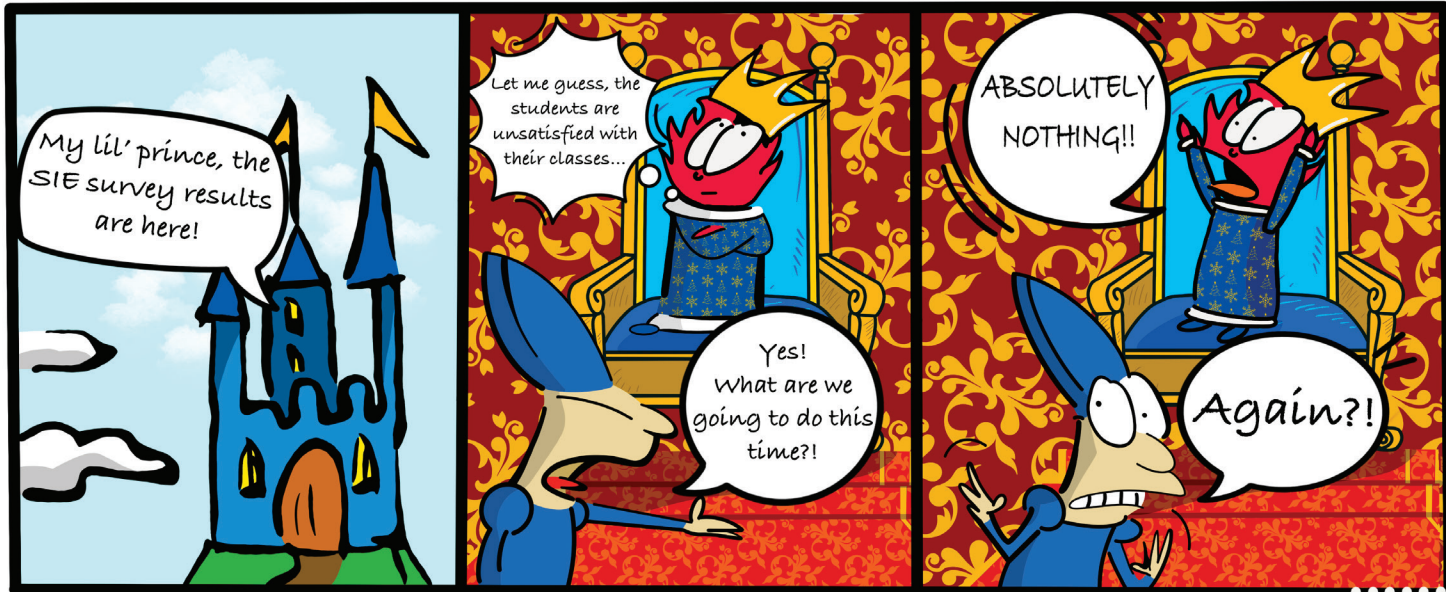


Photo by Krista Carlson, 2023.

"Since the proverbial grind never stops for the Heat student athletes (albeit for a short couple of weeks at the cusp of holidays and new year), there is a lot of hooping, spiking, and gaming to catch up with."

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Comic by Derian Guadarrama, 2023.



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Graphic by Derian Guadarrama, 2023.

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Image sourced from Instagram, @ubcolibrary

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The SUO Resource Centres

by Mashal Narsi

"The Students' Union Okanagan has a total of 5 resource centers for students. These are The Sex Positivity Centre (SPC), Women's Resource Centre (WRC), Pride Resource Centre (PRC), Peer Support Network (PSN), and the Indigenous Peoples Collective (IPC). I interviewed the designated coordinators for each of these centres to share the resources they have to support students."

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The SUO Resource Centres

WORDS BY MASHAL NARSI

The Students' Union at UBCO has a total of 5 resource centres for students. These are The Sex Positivity Centre (SPC), Women's Resource Centre (WRC), Pride Resource Centre (PRC), Peer Support Network (PSN), and the Indigenous Peoples Collective (IPC). I interviewed the designated coordinators for each of these centres to share the resources they have to support students.

For the Sex Positivity Centre, I interviewed Lauren Vernaleken, the Head Coordinator:

Mashal Narsi: What work has the SUO SPC done for the community?

Lauren Vernaleken: The SUO SPC has been working towards creating accessible educational resources for students, as well as creating a sex-positive community on campus by hosting several fun events. We hold safe-space office hours in the UNC resource room, where students can come and ask questions and access peer support in an educational and judgment-free environment. We held an informational workshop about "Inclusive Language and Queer Literacy" with the Living Positive Resource Centre and a Naughty BINGO event with the PRC! We also created an online sex education web series (SexU), which is available through Unicorns Live, as a way to educate students and the broader community about healthy sexual behaviour and relationships. We also participated in SHAG in March 2022. While we are still a new Resource Centre, we have several long-term goals to help improve campus culture and create a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

MN: What future events should the students be on the lookout for?

LV: Our incredible volunteer team has been working on new educational resources, which will be available in the resource centre room soon. We hold office hours for students to come in and ask questions and access support and information. If any students would like to request resources on any specific topics, please don't hesitate to reach out to us! We have some fun events planned for Term 2—all of our events are posted on our Instagram page (@ubcospc),

so stay tuned for more details!

I also had the opportunity to interview Aasya El Sayr, the Pride Resource Centre Head Coordinator:

MN: What work has the SUO Pride Resource Centre done for the LGBTQIA+ community?

Aasya El Sayr: The Pride Resource Centre has provided a safe space for LGBTQIA+ students to come and express themselves and seek advice on any issues they have, and has provided several resources such as gender-affirming wear, information on gender-affirming care and sexual health resources for students. The PRC also hosts events where some of our board members discuss specific gender identities and sexual/romantic orientations for students to learn more about them or to find a community within their specific identities.

MN: Has the SUO been supportive of the cause in terms of funding?

AS: There's been a lot of improvement in support from the SUO compared to last year; it's been a lot easier for myself and board members to facilitate the Pride Resource Centre. With the integration of the Pride Resource Centre into the SUO, we've been able to get priority in our needs whether it be booking and planning events or generally asking for supplies for the physical resource centre room. Funding has been interesting; it's been a lot lower, admittedly, compared to last year, but the SUO has created special budgets for things such as food, drinks, and other resources in the room so it's not taken out of one specific resource centre's budget.

MN: Are there any events and opportunities that the students should be on the lookout for?

AS: Due to the recent tragedy that occurred in Colorado, I just want to make it known that any students who are having a hard time dealing with the news and need extra support can come by the Pride Resource Centre during drop-in hours to get support from other board members or me. On a positive note, there may be a collaborative event with the Peer Support

Network soon...

Khushi Brar, the Peer Support Network Coordinator, was interviewed as well:

MN: What kind of support does SUO PSN offer for the students?

Khushi Barar: The UBCO Peer Support Network (PSN) is a safe space on campus for students to speak with peers about personal hardships they may be facing. The PSN volunteers provide confidential and empathetic support to students and offer on and off-campus resources for corresponding aid needed. Any students struggling with mental health, interpersonal relationships, technology, integrating into the community, housing, finances, and other corresponding issues are free to drop by, share their concerns, and gather some resources to support their student life. Trained volunteers operate the PSN resource centre room. The resource centre room has snacks and de-stressing objects, such as colouring books, fidget objects etc. The majority of the students use the resource centre room as a place to relax from their hectic study schedules and talk about their student life stressors.

MN: What events and activities should the students expect in the future?

KB: The PSN is working to put on events to ease the stressors of student life. As a new initiative, the SUO has made efforts to incorporate the resource centres under their organization and establish a stronger presence on campus. The SUO has allotted the resource centre room for resource centres to operate out of and has given funding to head coordinators in order to support their operations in running the resource centers.

I also had the chance to interview Lindsay Botterill who is the Coordinator for the Women's Resource Centre:

MN: What work has the SUO WRC done for the community?

Lindsay Botterill: The SUO WRC is primarily focused on the UBCO community. This means providing resources for women on

campus. This can range from having free tampons and pregnancy tests in the resource centre room, to events and different giveaways. Primarily, the WRC is a safe space for anyone to come and feel welcome. We are always open to drop-ins and can assist with challenges students may be facing, or even just provide a comfortable room to hang out and study.

MN: What has the support and funding from the SUO been like?

LB: Though I won't go into specifics, our funding allows the WRC to comfortably host various events throughout the year, and support our students as needed!

MN: Are there any events and opportunities that the students should be on the lookout for?

LB: In the coming year, we are hoping to host more of our mindful movement and meditation nights, potentially a wine & paint night, and other fun gatherings!

Unfortunately, we were unable to get in touch with the Indigenous Peoples Collective (IPC). However, according to the SUO website, IPC "is a collective that creates space for Indigenous students, faculty, and community members to come together in a good way to share a safe space, ideas, events, and laughter... [they] hope to establish a solid grounding so that Indigenous peoples will have the resources and support they need in their endeavours and to foster their community connection within and outside of the institution. The events and gatherings created by the Indigenous Peoples Collective are rooted in togetherness and building relationships."

Each resource centre is available for drop-in once a week in UNC 132 from **11am - 4 pm:**

Mondays - Pride Resource Centre (PRC)
Tuesdays - Indigenous Peoples Collective (IPC)
Wednesdays - Sex Positivity Centre (SPC)
Thursdays - Peer Support Network (PSN)
Fridays - Women's Resource Centre (WRC)

THE SUO PANTRY

An attempt to solve the food insecurity problem at UBCO?

WORDS BY MASHAL NARSI



2019. They have also continued to work with the Student Experience Office on the Food Exchange Project which provides students experiencing financial barriers to accessing food with non-repayable funds. I interviewed Stephanie Patterson who is the Food Security and Nutrition Manager at the SUO.

Mashal Narsi: What services does Pantry provide for students? How can students access them?

Stephanie Patterson: Pantry offers open-door access to canned goods, staple

foods, fresh produce, and bread products when available. The pantry is located in the UNC on the first floor (UNC 131) and is open Monday to Friday 10 am – 4 pm. We run a no-barrier system, which means that we do not require any registration or information from students to be able to use the service.

MN: What has the support from SUO been like with regard to funding for fighting food insecurity?

SP: The Students Union has worked hard over the years to provide access to affordable, healthy food. Some initiatives have included free breakfast events, snack giveaways, and, of course, Pantry Food Bank, where most of our efforts are focused. We have also partnered with UBC Campus Wellness and Education on the new Picnic Community Wellness Hub, which includes the Food Hub. In this space, we will provide resources for students facing food insecurity, as well as resources for student wellness in general. This includes food skills workshops, free community meals, and many others.

MN: Has UBC been supportive of the Initiative? Have you received any funding or donations from them?

SP: UBC has partnered with the SUO on Picnic Food Hub. This partnership means both parties have contributed resources to the operation of the initiative to help combat food insecurity.

MN: Do you think another initiative or movement like Pantry should be introduced on campus to further cater to the needs of the community and help battle food insecurity?

SP: Food insecurity is a very large problem and cannot be solved just by food banks. If there were more services on campus

like Pantry, more students would be able to access food when they need it. Several departments have been running food shelves on campus, including Indigenous Programs and Services, and GEO. These programs have been instrumental in providing the resources that students need in environments they feel comfortable accessing. The goal of Pantry is to continue serving students with the resources we have for as long as we can. There is always the potential for expansion to keep up with the needs of the campus community, so growth and change in Pantry are a possibility.

MN: Should students be expecting anything else from the pantry in the future? How can students get involved with Pantry?

SP: Students can participate in Pantry by checking out the website and volunteering! We can always use the help!

Food Insecurity is an ongoing issue that many students face daily. Not having sufficient funds to pay for nutritional meals is challenging. I would encourage students to make use of Pantry and the services they provide along with the Meal Share Program that UBCO launched last year in which students can either get flex dollars or gift cards for grocery stores to help ease the burden.

Image sourced from Instagram @ubcolibrary.

Roughly 40% of students at UBCO face food insecurity on campus. With limited affordable food options and expensive groceries, UBCO has shown little support for students. On the other hand, the SUO has taken steps to support food security by establishing Pantry, a student food bank, which has been operating since

HEY, CITY OF KELOWNA: LET'S SOLVE THE TRANSIT ISSUE!

WORDS BY ANJALI DESAI

Enter group chat

Arlene: "Do you want to go watch a movie at Orchard park right now?"

Sukhleen: "Next bus is in an hour and half. Sorry, can't make it!"

Harsimrat: "Let's goooo. We should also go get pizza after the movie."

Manjot: "There is no bus to get home at 9 after the movie ends. I don't feel like walking in the cold. Can we reschedule, please?"

Jessica: "Let's meet. I can drive you guys there and back!"

Having lived in Kelowna for just over a month and half now, the issues with public transport have been very apparent. If you are not fortunate enough to own a car or are not physically able to drive, planning your day around the current transit system is your only option.

In late November, a group of fellow students – Kristin, Emily, Fabiola, and Sierra – who are part of the Fridays for Future Kelowna climate action group, decided to address this pressing issue by organizing a town hall meeting.

With a great turnout of over 50 people, the team facilitated a dialogue between the transit workers, students, and members of the community. Sierra said that, "We chose the format of a town hall to get everyone involved and brainstorm about what is working and what is not and what their visions for the future look like." Emily added that, "It was a great opportunity to hear the different perspectives and build a more nuanced approach to the transit experience in Kelowna."

The idea of a town hall meeting came



Photo from Fabiola Melchior, 2022.

about from Kristen's interaction with the transit workers and Fridays for Future Kelowna's involvement with the transit strike earlier last year. There were a lot of intersections between what the climate group stands for and the transit situation in Kelowna. It was a collaboration between students and workers who wanted to take action for both the climate and social justice.

Fabiola stated that, "Environmental and social issues are so close to each other that it is important we collaborate with each other." Greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles are one of the largest sources of pollution. An efficient, effective, and affordable transit system can positively contribute towards increasing air quality and reducing emission levels in a city

by allowing commuters to choose more carbon friendly options. The increased reliance on personal vehicles, especially in North America, is not an environmentally and economically sustainable practice.



Photo from Fabiola Melchior, 2022.

At the meeting, an interactive map was provided where the attendees could mark out the major pain points in the current transit system. They then went into groups of 5-6 to discuss smaller details. The main ideas that surfaced were about transit safety, frequency and availability of buses, punctuality of buses, and the places that are not well connected to the transit grid, which creates accessibility issues to everyday places like grocery stores or the university, perhaps. The issues discussed were

not limited to transit, but also extended to the lack of bike and foot paths in Kelowna.

Better transit means different things to different people.

Some participants said that,

"The working hours of the bus 4 up Academy hill is extremely inconvenient. There is not a single bus between 9am to 3 pm and it gets extremely difficult to get back up from the University."

"The city can work towards increasing the frequency of buses in general. At times, commuters have to wait up to 40 mins for the next bus to arrive."

"I was biking through the city the other day and the bike lane came to an abrupt stop at a random spot. It is scary to ride the bike on the busy highways."

The team who hosted the town hall is working towards compiling all the input they have collected, the map, the mind maps and brainstorm, and the reflection cards. They hope to take all the information and come up with a strategy plan which hopefully includes talking to city councillors to identify the infrastructure that may be required to support these changes.

This volunteer led town hall meeting was successfully able to spark conversation and bring community leaders, community members, workers, and students together to build a community movement focused on improving transit.

IS IT REALLY GARBAGE?

WORDS BY ANJALI DESAI

Pizza box. Coffee cups and sleeves. Leftovers. Paper. Plastic wrappers. Soda cans. Plastic bags. Tea bags. Newspapers. Milk cartons. Flowers. Bamboo cutlery. Cloth. Tissue paper. Pens. Cardboard. Juice boxes. Empty product containers. Glass bottles. Sanitary products. Boba tea cups. Cookies.

What bin does it go into? Let's sort it out.

Last month, the Innovate Design and Sustain (IDS) Club at UBCO organized a redesign competition to revamp the visual signage for the on-campus non-residential buildings' garbage disposal stations. With a number of engaging activities organized throughout the span of a week, the team got the students involved and helped them develop both designs and designing skills.

Lakshay Karnwal, who leads the Campus Waste Initiative (CWI) – a focused group dealing with everything waste related on our campus – said that the insights received from the Waste Audit brought to light the shortcomings of the current garbage disposal designs on campus. The confusing and non-relevant images, too much fine print, and multiple tranches of waste segregation was leading to waste stream contamination on campus and called for immediate change. To meet the dual objective of revamping the current imagery and getting the students involved in the process, the team agreed on structuring this initiative in the form of a redesign competition.

The 10 teams and individual participants attended a series of workshops on Design Development, Design Software, "What's your waste problem, Board?", and Design Skill Development in tandem with working on their designs for the competition over the span of a week.

After the final presentations, Alissa

Funk, David Ollech, and Jared Brown emerged as the winners of the competition. Being active members of the CWI, they incorporated the ideas behind the designs throughout the CWI's weekly sessions. Their proposed designs are intuitive, easy to read, use images instead of icons, and narrows the garbage streams to 3 from the existing 4. Remember:

Blue Bin= Mixed Recycling

You can throw out your takeout boxes, tin cans, and plastic bottles here. Make sure to throw absolutely no food in or else it contaminates the entire stream. Containers that have traces of leftover food can be rinsed out or cleaned before being thrown away.

Green Bin= Compost

Things such as leftover vegetables, fruits, bones, meat, seafood shells, fish bones, coffee grounds, tea bags, loose tea, take out cups, milk cartons, paper bags, and paper boxes can be thrown out in these bins.

Grey Bin= Garbage



Image sourced from Lakshay Karnwal, Lead, CWI.

Any plastic, polythene bags, and anything else you are not sure of should go in these bins. When in doubt, throw it out.

The CWI also previously partnered with the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) to promote inclusivity in action and start the conversation about accessibility of waste bins and signage. Keeping the suggestions in mind, the infographics also includes QR codes to make waste segregation easier. In addition to the CWI, a lot of work is being put into the Solar Bench Project, which is primarily composed of students from the school of engineering: mechanical, civil, tech and computer science, and other students from management faculties.

The team also has other pop-up campaigns scheduled for the term to increase awareness about recyclable material like CUP+LID+SLEEVE and promote Environmentally-friendly behavior.

While a lot of us try to do the right thing and throw away garbage in the



Image sourced from Lakshay Karnwal, Lead, CWI.

bins, it is crucial to ensure that we are putting things into the right bin.

Ask yourself: Is this really garbage?

By consciously developing an understanding about recyclable, returnable, and compostable materials, we can do our part in reducing the large waste stream. UBCO announced a climate emergency back in 2019 and is actively trying to build a sustainable community on campus. Let us all be conscious about our actions and strive to live a sustainable life.

Never Forget / Already Forgotten

The Coverage of Tragedies in the West and the Rest

WORDS BY ALEYNA KIRILMIS

Your friend asks you to repost a story on Instagram about a deadly landslide in Brazil to bring attention to the tragedy, and you, of course, do so. You can't help but wonder, however, why have you not heard about this anywhere until your friend brought it to your attention? News outlets make choices every day on whether to include a story on their platform.

When there are 8 billion people on earth, it's certainly not possible to include every story, but there seems to be a pattern in Western media that prioritizes Western tragedies over Eastern and Southern events.

If you're not convinced yet, allow me to tell you a story. You likely remember the *Charlie Hebdo* Shooting that happened in Paris. In 2014, multiple people working for the satirical newspaper, *Charlie Hebdo*, were murdered for their comedic depiction of the prophet Muhammed. It was very inspiring for fourteen-year-old me to see the world come together to support the families of the victims and to see so much support from all countries for journalistic freedom.

Alas, around a year later, when an explosion in the centre of Ankara — the capital of Turkey — killed 37 and wounded 127, the Western media outlets had little to say except to mention it offhandedly. As a Turkish person who followed international news, it felt so confusing to watch Turkish news show the victims' mourning families, while there was nothing mentioned on CNN International.

I didn't understand why the death of 37 people meant nothing to the world when the 37 people were born in a country not in the West.

Today, we see outstanding coverage of the war in Ukraine with news outlets showing personal accounts of the refugees, while other tragedies go unmentioned. For reference, at the time of writing this article, eight million people in Pakistan are still displaced after the floods that happened in June, at least 271 peo-

ple have died in an earthquake that hit Indonesia, and at least 377 thousand people have died in Yemen due to the ongoing civil war.

The reasons behind these biases are multifaceted. William Adams, a professor of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University, argues that for American media, the decisions journalists make about covering events generally rely on the proximity of the U.S. to the affected countries. Additionally, the more American tourists that visit the country in question, the more likely it is for tragedies in that country to make headlines in the U.S.

In a more recent example, an explosion in Istanbul killed 6 people and the New York Times published a tweet saying "Of the tens of millions of tourists ...who visit Turkey... many spend time in the area where Sunday's bombing took place." It's hard to imagine a tragedy such as the *Charlie Hebdo* Shooting being covered as "...happening in Paris, where millions of tourists visit each year."

In contrast, the stories that are "close" to the West are spoken about differently. CBS reporter Charlie D'Agata exemplified this distinction when he commented on the invasion of Ukraine: "This isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilised, relatively European ... city where you wouldn't expect that, or hope that it's going to happen." Making it sound like conflict is a natural part of the Middle East, the offhanded remark shows the reporter's bias.

It's important to account for how the implicit biases in media can be transferred to its audience.

Other than *how* things are covered, *what* is covered in the first place is also worth considering. The decisions that the media sector makes every day on whose pain is newsworthy and whose isn't create opinions that are transferred to readers/ viewers. If many articles highlight the tragedy of Notre Dame burning down while none cover the loss of Damascus to terrorism, then the reader will naturally think that one deserves more attention than the other.

This difference in coverage affects not only the viewers but also the governments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) who have the power to make a difference.

Although there is much more that needs to be done to support the people of Iran, the widespread protests in Canada held this year in honour of the women in Iran pressured government officials to acknowledge it. On November 14, 2022, the Canada Border Services Agency released a press release banning Iranian senior government officials from entering the country.

If no attention was brought to the issue by the media, would there really have been enough pressure to make politicians step up?

The attitude of people towards victims of tragedies can also affect the amount of funding that NGOs receive to support victims. The beginning of the Ukrainian war marked a record amount of fundraising for the refugees, whereas aid for other nations faltered. It was heartwarming to see the widely acknowledged support for Ukrainian refugees, and I hope to see the same attitude towards refugees from other countries in the future.

As you read this article, you have likely formed your own opinion about whether or not such a bias against Eastern tragedies exists in Western media. No matter your opinion, one thing for sure is that this humble article has at least brought the issue to your attention, which is more than what can be said about most tragedies happening in the East and Global South. Whatever position you take, I hope that you are more critical of your sources of information in the future.

Because if I can influence your opinion, the New York Times certainly can too.

'autistic' is not an insult or the funny joke you think it is

WORDS BY NOAH DAVIS

As an autistic person, it's hard for me to understand social cues, sarcasm, and jokes. So, it's understandable that I often misunderstand when students I've met make jokes about being autistic when, in fact, they are not. In reality, they are making fun of the idea of being autistic. There's a tendency among students to joke about having mental illnesses or being neurodivergent. However, I never thought I would have to deal with ableist jokes that demonize or mock autism and autistic individuals here at UBCO — but I've experienced it multiple times on campus.

The first time I experienced it, I was sitting with a new group of study buddies. They were talking about math while I was reading a book for my English class. The individual who made the poorly executed and distasteful "joke" said, "I can't do all this math, I'm so autistic." I automatically turned toward them and made a comment about how I am autistic as well and, because of my autism, I was diagnosed with a math learning disability alongside it. To this they replied, "Oh, uh, no I was just joking. I just mean I'm really dumb when it comes to math."

This comment could have been seen as harmless, and this person may have been uninformed or uneducated. However, it still harms and confuses actual autistic individuals who are listening. Not to mention it's just insulting to joke about being autistic when you use the word 'autistic' as a synonym for dumb or stupid.

When I heard this joke, I didn't know what to say, and I didn't know exactly

how I felt. But thinking back now, I realize that I felt like my disability was being mocked and not taken seriously. Because autism in this context was meant as a synonym for stupid, I felt less valued than everyone in the room.

This is not to say that autism is a horrible thing people can't make jokes about. I myself make jokes about my autism. But when nonautistic individuals make jokes about autism...well it's uncomfortable, insulting, and even confusing, especially within the setting of a study session.

The second time I witnessed autism being the butt of the joke was when a group of students walked past me in the library and one of them was making fun of their friend saying, "You're so autistic!" in which their friend replied, "No I'm not, you are!" This was the kind of thing that I expected middle schoolers to say, but to witness this again from adults at a university such as UBC was a wake up call for me.

Then...as if my worst nightmare had come true, I heard a student say the r slur [retarded] in the elevator, and then again in the library, and again in the Commons. I was so angry. I was asking myself:

What will people say when I tell them I'm autistic? Is this how people will react? Will I even feel safe telling people I'm autistic anymore because of the jokes and the usage of the r-slur?

The lack of autistic community here on campus feels defeating sometimes, especially when these types of jokes are made. As autistic students, we need spaces within the learning environment to talk to each other about our struggles that come with autism, such as sensory overloads and jokes and insults like these. We also need spaces to laugh about autism together, talk about our favourite way to stim, even make fun of social cues that neurotypical students understand so well and we don't.

While writing this article, I've realized there is no autistic community that is being connected and supported on campus. I've had professors and students at UBCO react to me informing them I'm autistic by saying, "Oh, I'm sorry," when in fact I'm very proud to be a part of the autistic community. However, it's hard for students and professors to take autism seriously, and to not demonize or stereotype those on the spectrum, when there is a lack of education on what autism actually is.

It's hard for autistic students on campus to feel valued when we are not connecting with other autistic people in a way that promotes autistic pride. And, it's hard for autistic students to feel welcomed on campus when so many nonautistic students are using part of our identity as a punchline.

So, before you make that joke about autism, or use the r slur, or call your friend 'autistic' when really you just mean stupid, consider learning more about autism — or just don't make those jokes at all. Because, after all, jokes are meant to be funny.



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Is an event really inclusive if it ignores the sensory issues of autistic individuals?

WORDS BY NOAH DAVIS

GRAPHIC BY DERIAN GUADARRAMA

As an autistic transgender man, I struggle to find a sense of community within LGBTQA+ events on campus and in general. My disability – and I say disability because it frequently impedes on my daily life – prevents me from connecting with my community, especially at events with loud music and crowded rooms. This is often not the case with other events. Although events can be overstimulating at times, queer events touch on an even bigger connection based on identity, music, and culture within our community that cannot be confined to a room.

I often have to step outside or leave altogether to avoid having a sensory overload during queer events like Pride Picnic and Queer Orientation.

I should note that, in this article, I touch on my autistic identity and how I, and other autistic individuals I have interviewed, participate or struggle to participate in queer events on campus. In no way am I speaking for all individuals who are part of the neurodivergent community. My goal is to discuss the accommodations autistic individuals need in order to participate in queer events, and the ways in which we struggle to find our autistic community.

If you are more interested in finding a queer community on campus, you can read my other article in print issue #7, “Reflecting on the Transgender Community at UBCO,” where I open up about my struggle with being transgender on campus and how I found a sense of community.

When it comes to queer events and having a disability that affects how I process certain sensory outputs, I only just recently asked myself:

Is it my fault that I go to these events on campus and end up being overstimulated, especially knowing what I might walk into? What makes an event sensory safe? Is a queer event really inclusive if it doesn't account for the sensory issues and accommodations for neurodivergent students?

There are many stereotypes regarding the experience autistic people have within the LGBTQA+ community. For example, the notion that autistic people are asexual and aromantic because of our ‘aversion to physical touch.’ However, this is not everyone’s autistic experience, and autism is not a monolith; neither is any kind of neurodivergence. Queerness isn’t a monolith either, in the sense that all queer people don’t have the same experience related to gender or sexuality.

It is an assumption that autistic individuals are more likely to be transgender or part of the queer community in general. This assumption lumps autistic individuals into a box and fails to address the different experiences within the neurodivergent community.

I sat down with Aasya El Sayr, who is the Head Coordinator for the Pride Resource Center (PRC), to talk about how they plan queer events, and ended up having an insightful conversation surrounding intersectionality and the lack of events centering on this theme. Their experience was also valuable as they are also autistic, which allows them to understand what other autistic individuals might need.

Aasya told me that Equity and Inclusion hosts Queer Orientation and Pride Picnic which helped clear up some of my confusion surrounding who was involved in planning the events I was unsatisfied with. They offered their opinion on Equity and Inclusion’s planning, stating that:

“I feel sometimes Equity and Inclusion can only showcase the surface level of representation. I think Queer Orientation could be held better. But, unfortunately, I don’t run Pride Picnic or Queer Orientation, they do. Even myself, I got sensory overloaded the min-

ute I went in there. Even when I had canceling [headphones], I couldn’t stand it, it was awful. I think it would have been a lot better if they planned for [it to be] outside, or a bigger space, so at least the sound would be spread out.”

Aasya went on to say:

“I feel like they put a good amount of focus on queerness, but I really wish they would also focus on the intersectionalities, like being a POC and queer, being Indigenous and queer, being neurodivergent and queer, being an immigrant or an international student and queer.”

In order to fully understand the struggle autistic individuals have with attending queer events on campus, and how queer events can improve, I sat down with a few other queer autistic individuals on campus and asked them about their experiences attending queer events.

A student named Sivan Austin described his experience with queer events as a person with ADHD and as an autistic individual. When I asked him how autism can affect social interaction and events he chooses to go to, they stated:

“Social interactions are hard because it sort of feels like you don’t know how to swim and someone threw you into a big body of water. It is pretty scary and intimidating because you feel so awkward, like you don’t know how to interact with new people and are overthinking everything you and others say. That anxiety can be overwhelming and is the reason so many autistic people feel isolated.”

Another autistic student expressed their concern for connection at queer events:

“Connecting with other autistic people on campus has been a valuable opportunity when given the chance. Unfortunately, I find it much harder to find spaces that allow a safe space for connection.”

In hopes of finding queer centered spaces on campus that are sensory safe for autistic and other neurodivergent individuals within the community, I continued my conversation with Aasya, who told me what exactly PRC offers:

“We do a lot of collabs with SPC (the Sex Positive Resource Center), so we did naughty bingo, and we did the Rocky Horror Show night. We also do smaller events: we do queer DND, and we have outtalks where the board members will run talks (basically talk about a specific gender, sexual or romantic identity). We also had outtalks done by our previous graphic designer about queer characters and representing queerness in media. We also host a lot of things like the vigil grieving circle for the Colorado shooting and trans day of remembrance with Equity and Inclusion. Overall, we tend to have these fun small events where queer people can come to enjoy themselves.”

They also went into detail about what is considered when planning PRC events, and how sensory safety is being met. They told me,

“We consider the language we use and make sure that prizes we give out don’t contain any outdated language. We also provide the PRC as a safe getaway if individuals do get overstimulated. I personally use it myself since I deal with a lot of sensory issues as an autistic person. We also check in and make sure that people are feeling comfortable.”

I was surprised to hear of these events because I had never seen them advertised enough, however the PRC offers a variety of sensory safe events.

For further comment on the events hosted by Equity and Inclusion that I took issue with, I joined a zoom call with Jenica Frisque, the Equity Education Strategist at Equity and Inclusion. She told me that, currently, she and one other staff member are the only people

working in the Equity and Inclusion office.

She also told me Equity and Inclusion works with the Positive Space Committee and the Disability Affinity group, and that they would be open to consult with students with disabilities to hear more about how they can improve.

When I asked about what goes into consideration when planning queer events on campus, Jenica stated:

“When we plan events for Queer Orientation, for example, we really try to do a variety of events that are accessible for people who might want to attend in different ways. So, for instance, we had some events that were online. It’s important for us that every event is free, and when we have larger events, we follow the checklist for accessible events. So, as you can imagine, even starting with the name of the events, we really try to be as inclusive as possible. From promotion of the event to who’s on the planning committee itself, [we are] making sure there’s a diverse representation. We consider the transportation, how people might access the space, and if its wheelchair accessible... Because Pride Picnic was indoor this year, we had to make sure the sound met the requirements of the university because there were classes in progress.... We had some spaces where people can still participate but not be right where there’s the most people. There were places where you could kind of watch from afar and still enjoy the experience. I think there’s more we can do around sensory safe places, especially for community building events.”

In regards to how Jenica feels Equity and Inclusion can do better, and how she feels about the discussion around sensory safe events and lack thereof, she expressed to me:

“I’m really grateful for this conversation and, in an effort to be inclusive, it can feel overwhelming to think about all the different experiences...I think there’s so much more we can do. Even preparing for this conversation, I had another look at the checklist for accessible event planning and it does say, you know, ‘Final check: consider the experience from the perspective of someone with an auditory disability.’ But, that’s really it when it comes to sensory safe spaces. So, I think there’s more we can do.”

Just looking at the Checklist for Accessible Event Planning, it offered a variety of things to consider when attempting to accommodate individuals. However, I felt sensory issues and autistic accommodations might not have been considered as much.

When I inquired about providing sensory safe equipment like noise canceling headphones, Jenica said that Equity and Inclusion has two grants which could be put towards the equipment. She also told me that Equity and Inclusion is open to working with the Inclusive Technology Lab, or another student group, to be able to provide sensory safe equipment at queer events, with proper sanitation of equipment being considered as well.

When asking if Equity and Inclusion has offered events surrounding intersectionality and neurodivergence, and whether they are interested in hosting more events like these, she stated:

“I would say that yes, we’re really interested and very open to hosting events like that. Each year, Queer Orientation is really like a collaborative collection of events and so it’s quite flexible. Last year we did have a talk around intersections



of disability and queerness. We had two speakers, one was talking more specifically about neurodivergency and the other speaker was talking more about physical disability and queerness. There’s always more to do, so I’d be really open to planning something for the new year around those intersections. It’s so important.”

Being queer AND autistic is a vastly different experience than just being queer, because we live with a disability that affects how we process the world around us, while also struggling to figure out our sexuality or gender identity.

Sivan agrees when I say queer autistic people need to connect in order for us to feel less isolated within the queer community. He stated:

“Meeting [other autistic students] in those ways is a truly freeing and life-changing experience that too many people do not have.”

Many students said that they would like to see queer events being held in bigger areas because smaller rooms can cause cramping, which can cause overstimulation. They also said that they’d love to see events related to being autistic and queer in order for queer autistics to connect in a less overwhelming environment.

For students who desire a more ‘chill’ or calm environment that involves activities with other queer students, the PRC might be what they are looking for. However, this does not mean autistic individuals should not be given the opportunity to attend much bigger queer events similar to Pride Picnic or Queer Orientation.

A student expressed their pride about being autistic and queer, stating:

“I feel proud to be myself and take up space. I think it’s really important to take the years of shame and stigma surrounding these identities and make them something that is unapologetic.”

Despite our needs not being met during bigger queer events, we will continue to advocate for our accommodations so that we can talk about being queer in a space that is TRULY safe.

Holiday Break Hooping and Start of Semester Spiking

WORDS BY CARLOS J. REAL LOPEZ

In terms of eras when the feeling of despair and absolute cheeriness alternate from one day to the other, none is quite as well acknowledged as the winter exams and the holiday break. The stark contrast between the jolly Christmas decorations and the caffeine charged students powering with whatever means possible through their exams is unmatched in the college experience; as unmatched as the Heat teams have been in their last fixtures of the season. It is only comparable, in terms of hype and enthusiasm, to the start of the year momentum that everyone wants to possess at the very least in the first couple of weeks of the year. Since the proverbial grind never stops for the Heat student athletes (albeit for a short couple of weeks at the cusp of holidays and new year), there is a lot of hooping, spiking, and gaming to catch up with.

Basketball

As far as December is concerned, both the men and women teams had a symmetrical outcome distribution. In other words, when one team won, so did the other; with the same logic applying for losses as well. It must have had to do with the ambiance and resilience on display after the tragic events of December 2nd, when both teams lost against the Regina Cougars. The men’s squad lost 81-86 and the women’s side 54-95. However, the weekend was not over and those that went to The Furnace on December 3 probably understand this better than anyone, with both teams getting revenge against the Regina squads; the women’s team won first 89-84 and the men’s squad capped off the calendar year with a 79-75 win.

After that, both teams took a month off of formal competition for the aforementioned exam and holiday break, though I doubt the break was one of complete physical inactivity; in-season shape is to be kept after all. The return to hooping was done in parts, with the men’s team returning first for back to back games on January 3 & 4 against the UFV Cascades. They would lose the first game of the year 82-99 and win the second one 101-87.

Then, on the 6 & 7, both teams travelled to Edmonton, Alberta to face the University of Alberta’s ‘beary’ good teams (the Pan-

das and Golden Bears). Unfortunately, the Heat squads lost both fixtures; the men’s squad lost 71-89 and 88-96, and the women’s team lost 52-79 and 64-79.

Their return home would then occur the following week, which was also coincidentally the first week of classes. As per usual, the games took place at The Furnace on Friday and Saturday evening, that is the 13th & 14th of January; the opponent this time was the Mount Royal Cougars.

Each day saw double digit victories and defeats for the UBCO teams, with each of the squads winning once over the weekend, and unfortunately losing once as well. On the first day, the men’s squad was defeated 85-99, and the women’s team emerged victorious 77-61. On the second day, the men’s squad routed the Cougars 91-79, while the women’s team unfortunately lost 63-83. Hence, it was once again an eventful weekend for the Heat Hoopers.

In the next couple of weeks, both teams will play the role of visitors again. First, on the 20th & 21st, they will visit Langley to face the Trinity Western Spartans, which will be tough no doubt. Then, the rivalry against our Vancouverite family will see another chapter added to its history as the Heat travels to Thunderbird lands to take on the UBC battle. As it stands now, the women’s team is 7-7, while the men’s squad is 5-9. Both teams will need to continue displaying the flashes of brilliance shown against the Cougars, and hopefully – with other results going their way – maybe even qualify for the playoffs. Playoffs or not, what matters is to see a continual improvement in the squad; time will be the judge.

Volleyball

Like their hardwood comrades, the volleyball team finished their 2022 calendar year with a doubleheader against the same opponent, the Saskatchewan Huskies. Unlike their basketball counterparts, they had to play as visitors on December 2 & 3 at the frigid and difficult to win against Saskatoon plains. The first day of the trip was an unfortunate one given both Heat squads lost against the Huskies; the men’s team lost 0-3 (22-25, 20-25, 19-25) and the women’s squad lost by a small margin of 2-3 (25-22, 21-25, 25-21, 19-25, 12-15).



Embed 2. Jade Bussard in action in the match against Vancouver. (Photo by Rich Lam)

On the second day, the men’s team again lost 0-3 (19-25, 20-25, 18-25), while the women’s team picked up an impressive 3-0 victory (25-22, 25-13, 25-20). Hence, there was momentum being carried into the new year by the women’s team, and the men’s team had a lot to look forward to in their first home game of the year.

The first homestead of the year in Kelowna was against the Brandon University Bobcats, with the men’s squad playing first on January 6 & 7. Unfortunately for our Heat and the local crowd, they would not win a set, and thus a game, against the very competitive Bobcat squad. Nonetheless, the women’s squad had a very strong showing, winning both days without allowing the Bobcats to take a single set against them. Therefore, it was a homestead that showcased both the glorious highs of victory and the frustrating yet contemplative lows of defeat for the Heat volleyball teams.

The following week (January 13 & 14) involved a trip to our sibling institution where the winner of the games could claim UBC campus supremacy: the Thunderbird vs Heat derby occurred once again in the rainy city out west. First, a game between the women’s teams, one which was closer than it appeared in the final set’s scoreboard in favour of the home team (0-3; 19-25, 22-25, 24-26). The game after, that of the men’s teams, included our very own Heat showcasing their potential by winning the first set of the rivalry game. It unfortunately would not be enough to overcome Vancouver’s comeback after a couple of rallies in the second set, as our Heat squad fell 3-1 (25-21, 23-25, 15-25, 21-25).

On the 14th, our teams’ scorecards mirrored each other’s previous night; the women’s team won the first set of the match but ultimately lost the game (1-3; 16-25, 25-23, 20-25, 12-25) and the men’s squad lost a closely fought match that did not appear that way in the final scorecard (0-3; 23-25, 13-25, 15-25).

Both teams will no doubt seek to make their fortunes better as they face the Trinity Western Spartans back at The Furnace, within the confines of familiar Kelowna lands. After the traditional weekend doubleheader on the 20th & 21st, they will rest for a couple of weeks and return on the first weekend of Feb-

ruary (3rd & 4th) to face the UFV Cascades at Abbotsford.

As it stands now, the women’s team has an 8-8 record, which speaks volumes about their consistency despite the tough opposition. Conversely, the men’s team has a 4-12 record which unfortunately does not do them much justice given how close some of their losses have been. Regardless of that, both teams are, of course, Kelowna’s finest, and will no doubt bounce back in due time.

Gaming (UBCO ESPORTS)

As for those interested in the burgeoning and high skill affairs of the electronic disposition, the Esports organization too had an interesting start to the year. Given the variety of games in which they compete, it is only natural that they had to parse out the talents of those interested in sporting the virtual blue and yellow.

To start off 2023, the Esports Club carried out tryouts for both the Valorant and Overwatch teams. For those unfamiliar with either of these two esports, Valorant and Overwatch are both team-based hero (that is, players have “hero” like abilities) shooters, with each having different ways to score and win. Generally, though, both games require fast reflexes, precise mouse accuracy and keyboard command, communication with teammates, and flashes of individual brilliance.

Regardless of who makes it, I am sure the new team will continue the rapid improvement from the previous season, and we will be here to cheer them on. If you want to keep up with the Esports Club, make sure to join their discord or follow their instagram @ubcoesports.



Embed 1. Gus Gorenzen vs the Cougars (Photo by Krista Carlson)

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Battle of the Degrees: *A Student Hierarchy*

WORDS BY ANA SALGADO

GRAPHIC BY DERIAN GUADARRAMA

I had never doubted my degree choice until I interacted with my fellow university students.

I cannot express the amount of times I've gotten bashed for my degree, from comments like "So do you wanna be a teacher then?" to "Oh...that's...interesting?"

As a History major, I'm well aware of the misconceptions that surround Arts students, as well as other faculties that have gained a bad reputation at university. What are these reputations even based on? Is it because there's this idea that it's harder for Arts and Fine Arts students to get a job after school? Or is it simply because people deem us less smart, or less capable?

"Science is harder and more important than Arts"

Well, I wanted to find out if this was true. In an Instagram poll we conducted that asked students about whether they believe a hierarchy of degrees exists at university, 90% of students out of a 319 pool said yes. We then asked students to tell us what their degree is and some misconceptions fellow university students have about it. These are some of the things they said:

"People say Management is easy. But try doing group projects and essays all year."

Another student said:

"As a History major, I've had a lot of people from outside the discipline ask me if I'll be able to get any kind of job with it. I think a lot of people think that Arts and Fine Arts are less important/useful than other degrees."



After reading various comments, I noticed that every degree has misconceptions. I believe we simply judge before we even investigate what the degree is about. One student, for example, said:

"A lot of Engineering students don't know what Cultural Studies entails, so it's considered useless. Anything that is not immediately clear is considered useless."

Why can't we just leave everyone's choices alone? If you're judging or trashing a degree, let's see how well you do in one of those classes.

It's not about "not being able to do math" or "not being able to write an essay," it is

simply about every person doing what they want and what they are passionate about.

However, it still seems people continue to have really strong opinions about certain degrees. For example, when we asked students if they thought there were any "useless" degrees offered at UBC, one student noted:

"Philosophy is useless as a degree. I've met people with Philosophy degrees. They suck."

Believe me when I say, I've had to endure many philosophy courses at university. And, if there is something I've learned, it is that without this discipline we wouldn't have any of

the established institutions or ways of thinking that every degree uses.

Not a single degree is useless. Every degree has its difficulties and hardships. And, every single one offers something to this world. Another student said:

"I don't think any degree is useless. I think the university can do more to make students more accepting of other degrees."

As much as I agree, how can the university make students more accepting of other degrees when there are clearly many faculties that are underfunded? How can the university make sure every degree is perceived as equally important if even scholarships and awards are unequally distributed amongst many faculties?

Well, this "degree hierarchy" is even refuted by university events. The Life Raft Debate, happening on January 25th, is an annual event organized by the UBCO Society of Scholars, in which we are invited to imagine that a catastrophic event has wiped out most of humanity and the remaining survivors must sail off and rebuild society. Professors from different faculties will debate why their discipline is the most important area of study that this new civilization will need to survive. Students (the audience) will decide who gets to go.

What an exciting time this will be! Who will win? Will it be English, Engineering, Philosophy? Well, while professors are engaging in this event and debating about whose discipline is literally "better," how can students and even the university believe that every degree is of equal value? I guess we'll find out soon!

Lost within myself: *having an identity crisis at university*

WORDS BY ANA SALGADO

It's a strange feeling I had never felt before; it's almost indescribable. Before coming to university, I was excited. I remember sitting on my highschool lawn court and thinking about how much I wanted to grow up and head out into the world. All my problems then, looking back, were so small compared to the ones I am facing now.

The world seemed impossible, yet exciting. My world comprised of 6 hours' worth of talking with my friends about boys and plans for the next Friday. My "problems" were whether I'd be allowed to go out two days in a row, or anxiously waiting for the boy I liked to text me back. I could not wait to grow up, and naively – as I think it happens so often – I thought everything would stay the same. The only difference was that I would no longer have to sneak in booze when going to my friend's house; I could proudly buy it myself.

I thought I had it all figured out. My degree, career path, even my friends from back home would be the same. But boy did I not expect things to go the way they are going.

I had never felt so alone and clueless until I arrived at university.

It almost feels as if I was thrown into the world all by myself. The "pocket guide" I had with my preconceived notions of what I thought adulthood would be like was ripped apart as soon as I stepped on campus.

No one, and I mean NO ONE, told me this is what it would be like. Making friends seemed like a full on task. And many times they only stuck for a couple of days, weeks, and some even left after having spent many hours and meaningful moments together.

A big part of me thought that once I returned home from the holidays, everything would be exactly as it was when I left. My friends would be the same; nothing eventful would have happened. But life went on without me there. Everyone changed. Compared to them, I had no one back in Canada. I had to learn to do everything by myself because no one was there to tell me otherwise. My friends, who still lived in the same city, were still doing the same things that we were doing when we

were back in school; only going to university, their parents still cooked and cleaned for them. I cannot even remember the last time I properly went out because I am simply too exhausted to do anything.

I feel like I had to grow up instantly. All those fun college moments my friends were experiencing were lost to me.

"What am I doing with my life?" is a sentiment I believe most people ask themselves at least once. Questioning every choice and personal relationship is common, but questioning who I have become is something I had never felt before.

It feels as if I am standing in front of thousands of mirrors and I don't recognise myself in any of them.

What choices have I made that changed entirely how I see myself? Is it my career choice? I have no idea what I want to do

once I graduate and I don't even know if I feel fulfilled with the choice I made. Is it the many bad friend choices I made when starting my university degree that, to this day, continue to hurt me? Or is it the university I chose that simply isn't right for me?

I guess this is what I came to identify as having an identity crisis. Not a single week goes by where I don't stare into oblivion and question my life choices.

"It's okay, you don't have to have it all figured out right now."

That is what everyone around me says. While it has some truth to it, the feeling of not knowing is what continues this internal crisis. How am I supposed to not think about my future?

I guess this article has no conclusion. I have no answers, and probably never will. But all I can say is that even though it is hard, nothing is left except to take it day by day.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you want to contribute to the conversation, email us at management@thephoenixnews.com or send us a dm on Instagram!

A CALL FAR FROM HOME



Figure 1: UBC students showing support for Iranians’ freedom movement. (Alexis, 2022.)

Comic by oceanic_otter on Instagram, 2023.



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THE PHOENIX finds!

Can you find all 10 words?

WORDBANK:

Spike
Pantry
Resource
Transit
Degree
Sustainable
Inclusive
Holiday
Identity

REMEMBER!

Some words can be found spelt backwards and/or diagonally. Don't miss them!