



# LINK

BCIT & BEYOND



JANUARY 2019

A CLOSER LOOK AT OPHELIA BAR-LEV-WISE  
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- green roofs are cooling down the world | page 16
- nature can fix your problems | page 26
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ELIMINATE INTEREST  
ON STUDENT LOANS**

Aran Armutlu, Chairperson, BC Federation of Students

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# LINK



photo spencer watson  
*Dog Mountain*



## A MONTH WITH TWO FACES

# JANUS

January has begun, and the fog of a new semester is settling over campus. There is a duality that sits on everyone as 2018 quietly ends, and the new year is noisily thrust upon us. January doesn't truly bring abrupt change but a slow transition. The dates on cell phones and computer monitors read 2019, but we'll all spend weeks scratching out 2018 while we become present in this new year.

January gives us the opportunity to settle, pause, and look to the past and the future.

In November, we bode farewell to our Publications Manager, Dan Post. He took *Link* from a sleepy campus newspaper to the glossy slick you're holding now. Creative and tactful, he actively sought out glimmers of good news in the small corners of classrooms and quads and spread it around campus. He was always open to new contributors and new stories. We're grateful for his long and fruitful tenure and wish him the best in his new role. From all of us at *Link*, Dan, thank you and good luck!

And as we sadly say goodbye to Dan, we welcome our new Publications Manager, Shaleeta Harrison. This is her first edition with *Link*, and we're looking forward to seeing what we can accomplish together.

Turning to the issue at hand, it's a new year, a new term—a new magazine. It's only fitting that we reflect on the symbolism of January, that wonderful month which takes its name from the two-headed Roman deity, Janus, god of doorways and, figuratively, of beginnings and ends. This issue has a special focus on changing environments—this is a transition for you, too, reader. Whether you're starting your second term, going into your last, or reading this waiting for your part-time course to start, we're happy you're here with us, and we're excited to see what ~~2018~~ 2019 has in store.

— *LINK* magazine



# LINK

MAGAZINE

LINK is published eight times annually by students at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). We feature exceptional people in our community, big ideas in a changing world, and evolving social dialogue. We welcome writers, photographers and artists of all backgrounds and abilities. Our purpose is to provide a collaborative platform for student expression, and to connect you with one another's stories and experiences. Printed editions are distributed to all five BCIT campuses and additional content is published online at [LINKBCIT.CA](http://LINKBCIT.CA)

Have an idea?  
Contact us!

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Link Magazine would like to respectfully acknowledge that it is printed and distributed on the traditional and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples.

supported by:



annual sponsors:



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Cole Sorenson is currently studying Broadcast & Online Journalism at BCIT. From April to September Cole is also the public address announcer at Western Speedway in Victoria BC.

Ali Pitargue

Ali Pitargue considers herself an adventurer, a storyteller, and a constant learner. Having a special interest in social justice, she is eager to unearth fresh perspectives to showcase with her journalism. If she is not writing, she is either watching Star Trek, reading high fantasy novels, or doing self-study on Baroque and Renaissance art.

## additional contributors

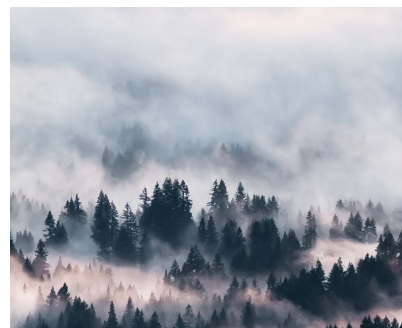
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The BCIT Baja Formula SAE team shows off the current vehicle, and plans for the next challenge.

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## RASTA COMICS

Rasta Comics founder Rayon Morris is infusing authentic Caribbean culture into the comic book landscape.



# GOOD NEWS

## UBER • You Excited?

It's official, Uber is coming to Vancouver next fall. British Columbia legislature passed the bill early in November, but it's still unclear if ride-sharing will be substantially cheaper than Vancouver taxi services. Additionally, ICBC is yet to create an insurance plan to deal with ride-share liability. What we do know is that all Uber drivers will be required to possess a Class 4 commercial licence and undergo a criminal record check. This means that Vancouver will have some of the most restrictive legislation for Uber and Lyft in North America—but that's a good thing. Most metropolitan cities (including Toronto) have had several sexual assault cases involving Uber drivers. Who wouldn't mind paying a few extra dollars to feel safe?

## PUBLICLY FUNDED

## GENDER AFFIRMATION

SURGERIES WILL SOON BE PROVIDED IN BC

British Columbia's Health Minister, Adrian Dix, has recently announced that the Province will provide gender-affirmation surgeries as well as breast and chest surgeries to transgendered people beginning in 2019. Dix explained in a widely publicised news conference that the move was aimed at making these procedures available locally, precluding the long and potentially dangerous trek trans people living in Western Canada have been making after gender-affirmation surgeries in Eastern Canada and the United States. Surely, it's a moral victory that trans folk will now have access to the health services they need at home.



# KOI VS OTTER

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden has been the subject of intense media scrutiny and a viral twitter debate this past month. An otter has now eaten ten of the garden's fourteen koi fish. There are still no leads on how the otter ended up in the garden pond but photos have surfaced of the river otter at an intersection on Carroll street. The garden staff has managed to save the remaining four koi and move them to the aquarium but the otter still eludes capture. Are you #TeamKoi or #TeamOtter?

Vancouver Public Library Unveils a New

## ROOFTOP HIDEAWAY

Bookworms will delight in the stellar view from the newly-finished green roof atop the Vancouver Public Library's central

branch. The roof and attached viewing gallery took more than two years to build and cost over sixteen-million dollars! Despite the massive price-tag, it's worth highlighting that library-goers got some decidedly prime real estate in the deal. This high-top sanctum fills an area in excess of seven-thousand square meters, filling what had been the library's eighth and ninth floors—a space reserved for the Province in a special twenty-year lease which lapsed in 2015. Check it out! It'll be so exhilarating, you'll feel like you're trespassing.

# don't take our word for it.

Fall is a great time to post up inside a cozy coffee shop, or hole up in your basement with a new video game or show to binge. Whether you're in the mood for something serious, or you just want to boogie down in the comfort of your own bean bag chair, we've got you covered.

## eat this.

**PappaRoti**  
Unit 100 – 1196  
Pinetree Way  
Coquitlam, BC

Originally from Malaysia, PappaRoti has multiple locations throughout the lower mainland, all easily accessible via transit. Their famous coffee buns are baked in-house, filling the café with a delicious, caramelly aroma. The best part is, you can order the buns filled with ice cream and candy toppings. PappaRoti seems to attract a younger crowd, with tons of students taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi and late business hours. The funky light fixtures and multiple plants situated around the café give off a warm-yet-modern vibe. For those seeking the aesthetic, the baristas have mastered classic latte art, making it Instagram-worthy too!

— tiana mohebi



## play this.

**The Long Dark**  
XBOX 1, PS4, PC  
(Hinterland Games)

Welcome to the Quiet Apocalypse. You play the character of Will Mackenzie and—after crashing your plane—have to survive in the Canadian wilderness with nothing but the clothes on your back. You find hints of your passenger (ex-wife Astrid Greenwood) as you fight off starvation, hypothermia, and whatever else the frozen wild throws at you. Wolves will actively sniff you out, and it's really difficult to come out of those fights without losing a lot of your health or belongings.

The Long Dark features the episodic storyline play mode called Wintermute and a sandbox survival mode. Wintermute's third episode is planned for 2019. For fans of: Firewatch, Oxenfree and Gone Home.

— sean murphy





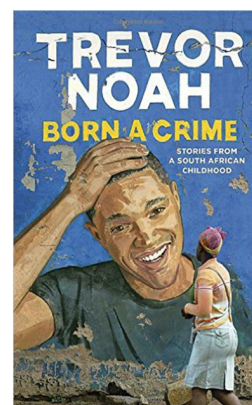
# read this.

## **Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood.**

Trevor Noah  
(Spiegel & Grau)

Trevor Noah is set to release his new Netflix special on November 20th so its a good time to finally get around to reading his autobiography. Originally published in 2016 it was a #1 *New York Times* Bestseller. Noah's mother is black and his father is white, and at the time of his birth, all mixed-race relationships were illegal in South Africa. He was literally born a crime. Noah takes a light hearted approach to writing about a lot of serious issues like colonialism, apartheid, religion, education, and gender roles.

— rajita dang

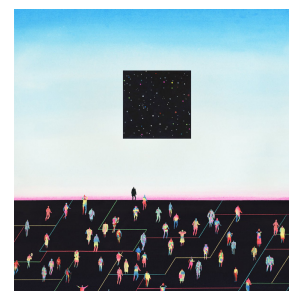


# hear this.

## **Young the Giant** Mirror Master (Elektra Records)

California-based alternative rock band Young the Giant have returned with their fourth full-length titled *Mirror Master*. “Superposition” and “Simplify” display a blissful energy and are two of the best songs the band has ever written. “Heat of the Summer” is a warm track for a cold autumn night, while “Oblivion” uses a friendly beat to embrace uncertainty. “Brother’s Keeper” is an absolute stand out, with vocalist Sameer Gadhia showing off his range. The songs do seem to slip towards the end of the album (“Panoramic Girl”, “You + I”) but the title track caps off the album on a high note.

— will cook



# watch this.

## **Suspiria** Luca Guadagnino (Amazon Studios)

The technicolor nightmare of Dario Argento’s original *Suspiria* (1977) is considered one of horror’s greatest stylistic triumphs. The 2018 remake, however, tones down the ‘70s neon and relies more on non-atmospheric elements to scare the audience—namely dysmorphic dance rituals and three different Tilda Swintons (even one where she rocks old-man prosthetics). This re-imagining follows the original story of a young American woman joining a German dance academy run by a coven of witches, although this time director Luca Guadagnino (*Call Me By Your Name*) expands upon the plot with more complex, politically-charged twists.

Disclaimer: *Suspiria* is filled with grotesque visual horrors not meant for the easily-repulsed.

— ali pitargue







student spotlight



# Ophelia Bar-Lev-Wise

Former Soldier // Volunteer // Leader

words **Rajita Dang**  
photos **Dayna Weststeyn**

*This article is a student spotlight much like any other, but it does acknowledge the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The BCITSA and Link Magazine do not hold a position in regards to this matter. While a certain position may be perceived through this publication, it is not done so intentionally. The conflict is extremely complicated with loss on both sides of the border.*

On a rainy afternoon, Ophelia Bar-Lev-Wise and I met at the Rix. It's not every day that you meet a combat veteran. I was nervously fiddling with my pen, waiting for the meeting to begin. I wasn't sure what to expect, and there were quite a few soldier stereotypes running through my mind. When Ms Bar-Lev-Wise walked in, she had a commanding presence, a wide smile, and perfect posture. I wasn't expecting her to be so young, or so warm. On the surface, Ophelia Bar-Lev-Wise is your typical BCIT student. Most evenings, you would find her at the library preparing presentations for her Business Management classes or attending BCITSA Council meetings where she serves as an elected Councillor. However, there is much more to Ms. Bar-Lev-Wise than meets the eye. In another life, she was a Staff Sergeant Commander of a Combat Search and Rescue Unit in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

Following are some excerpts from our conversation.

**LINK: As a born and raised Vancouverite, what made you decide to join the Israeli Defense Forces?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: I wasn't sure what I wanted to study after high school, so in grade eleven, I began looking into the army. I flew to Toronto four times to attend seminars, where I learned about the history of Israel, the religion,

and the process of enlistment. People came from all over Canada to attend these seminars. Usually, Canadians would go off into the American-Israeli units, but the year I enlisted was the first year they gave Canadians their own section. At the seminars, I met the people I would live with in Israel.

Once I decided, there was no turning back. On my last day of high school, on my prom night, I flew to Israel. I graduated and shipped off at the age of seventeen to join the Israeli army. It was very difficult to leave my family and friends. I was very close to my family. I'd visited Israel five to six times before, but I'd never lived there. I didn't speak Hebrew, and so I couldn't communicate with my Israeli family members.

**LINK: How long were you stationed in Israel?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: I lived there for four years and I served in the military for three years. As a rule, conscripted non-combat female soldiers only serve two years. I wanted to join the Search and Rescue Combat Unit. For women, it's mandatory to sign up for an extra year of combat training.

**LINK: What did being a Search and Rescue Combat Commander entail?**



Bar-Lev-Wise: I was a lifeguard before I joined the IDF. I took paramedic training in Canada which helped me excel as a Search and Rescue Combat Commander. I enjoyed the field, and I rose up the ranks. I became an acting officer, and then I was put in charge of a group of 120 soldiers. Working with the team was a struggle at first because of the language barrier. I was in training for ten months, and I struggled to learn Hebrew. A lot of people don't learn the language at all, but I set this goal for myself and I'm now fluent in Hebrew.

**LINK: You were in charge of a mixed unit. Were there any times you faced adversity because of your gender?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: Both men and women serve in the military in Israel, so traditional gender roles aren't adhered

to. In my unit, you get certain profiles\* and my profile was the highest, it was like the perfect profile. Some of the guys that were in my unit didn't have a perfect profile. There were still a lot of rude comments but because I grew up with two younger brothers, I knew how to deal with it. I brushed it off. A lot of girls don't know how to deal with backhanded comments and would explode, but I knew that it wouldn't help, that it would escalate the situation instead of de-escalating it. I proved myself. I knew as a woman I had to work ten times harder than a man to make it. If you work hard, you'll get the respect you deserve.

**LINK: Coming from Canada, did you feel like you were more critical of your landscape?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: Being Canadian helped my position a lot. My upbringing was

very multicultural. A lot of Americans and Israelis are very narrow-minded, the blinders are on. I'm not like that. I was in the position where I was the in-between because I saw the bigger picture; I could see both sides of things. So that was a big advantage for me. They trusted me.

**LINK: What were your favourite parts of the four years you were there?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: The people that I met. My closest friends are now scattered across the globe. One is from Sweden, one is traveling in France, one lives in Montreal and one is currently in Hawaii. You learn about so many different cultures. I interacted with 57 different languages while I was living in Israel. The military was very difficult, it's not like what you see on TV. It's still prescription based and its mandatory for

---

*\*editor's note: The medical profile is a system of numbers the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) uses to indicate the medical suitability of a person in order to serve in various positions in the IDF. The profiles range between 21 (which automatically dismisses the subject from serving in the IDF) and 97 (which allows a subject to apply to every unit in the IDF). The profile is determined for the first time after passing the screening process and may vary during the entire military service.*



# // BCIT IS JUST AS INTENSE AS THE MILITARY //

Israelis. I wasn't training and waiting for something to happen, I participated in a war in 2014. I've lost friends in that conflict. I've seen a lot. I've dealt with a lot. You learn a lot about yourself and you make a lot of good friends for life because of those experiences.

**LINK: What was it like coming back to your life in Vancouver? Would you ever go back to live in Israel?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: I had reverse culture shock. I knew that I was going to have that. The summer before I started BCIT was hard. Coming back to a place where I grew up and where people's mindsets were so different was difficult. There [in Israel], everything was ripped away from me and here everyone was so privileged. That was hard.

I don't plan on living there in the future. I went back there this summer for three weeks and I don't think I could live there. You're fighting for a lot of things every day. After being at BCIT and being home for the past year and a half, I've decided to stay here. Although I am still enlisted in reserves, that chapter of my life is over. I am less than six months away from graduating. I want to grow in my life, do new things and have new experiences. I see myself excelling in business management.

**LINK: What was the process of coming back and applying to BCIT?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: I always wanted to go to BCIT—BCIT was like my Harvard.

I am super biased towards it. I looked at a lot of different programs at BCIT and I heard a lot of good things about Business Management. I wanted to be a manager. I'm good at managing people and leading a team towards a common goal. When I came back to Vancouver, I applied to the program and I didn't expect to get in. After I got in, I realized business was appealing to me because I'm very good with people. All my different past experiences have helped me to develop great interpersonal skills. I can go into so many different fields with business management.

**LINK: How are you balancing your leadership roles and schoolwork? Has your military background helped with that?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: BCIT is as intense as the military, to be honest—but in a different way. Military training was more about strategic thinking, BCIT is a lot of learning new skills and programs. I was never that great in school before, because I didn't care that much. Now, I'm very interested in what I'm learning and I'm doing a lot better in school. I was a Set Rep last year.

The army taught me how important adaptability and cross-functional collaboration are to be successful at anything. While in the army, I dealt with so many different people with different issues. I learned to live with my unit, sleep with them, shower with them—everything. I learned a lot about different personalities. Coming to BCIT is very similar: You have so many people of different ages and backgrounds. Group project work requires so much

collaboration. Adaptability helps me at BCIT. Most people don't experience [...] this early on in life, so I have that to my advantage.

Cross-functional collaboration is also important in good leadership. I was always organizing events on campus and focusing on collaboration. Being able to tap into other people's strengths is so important. You're going to need all your group members. This is how it works with any business or company that you work in. You're going to need all these people. You can't work alone. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses and being able to tap into a cross-functional mindset is huge.

**LINK: How important do you think it is to have strong leaders today? What advice do you have to others that don't know how to take on leadership roles?**

Bar-Lev-Wise: It's very important. Many people are leaders but don't realize it. To be a good leader, you have to be a good follower too. You have to go into the field, take initiative, meet people and join clubs. I was never a club person—not even in school, just sports. Now I'm in clubs, and I'm in the library every day, studying, and getting involved in so many different things. If you're in BCIT, get involved in a club or volunteer. Volunteering is a great way to get your face out there and you're not committing too much of your time. A couple of hours is a great way to start and people notice you for it. Be a role model. Don't just talk about things, do them.





# The Lady in Red

Her lips are cracked, her hair is knotted, and her heart is burnt  
She lurks in the shadows, smoking—a habit recently learnt  
She has no place to call home  
Her family and origins left back in Rome  
She was once happy, loved, and cared for  
Diamonds, velvet, and suede she once wore  
Now, in her eyes you can see the entire shore  
She is humble and of good character  
She'll deeply smile when your eyes suddenly meet  
So very kind, but she still lives on the street  
That makes her “unwanted,” “unneeded,” “unworthy,”  
She's not worth helping they say, “I hope she sees a better day.”  
Drugs ruined her life they believe  
Yet the only one she's ever taken is 'Aleve'  
She roams the street without a penny to spare  
Dating a boy that just doesn't care  
She wears a long red sweatshirt  
Not showing that she's been hurt  
Boy, what a time to live  
Too caught up—they forget to give  
I notice her fingernails painted a smooth red  
It's the color of the devil my mother once said  
Yet, I think she looks more like J-Lo  
Just yesterday, I swear I saw her halo  
I know damn well she can play a beautiful song  
She has a musician's fingers—bony and long  
I look at her and can't help but wonder, where did it all go wrong?  
There's something each of us can do  
But you don't care—thankful it's not you  
I pass by stores and catch my reflection  
Smash!—I'm hit with a perception  
Things really happen in a flash  
Stay awak— your life too could crash  
We all wish for things to get better  
For the good things to just stay forever  
If that was you ...your ideal, people scurry and flee?  
Walk right by, pretend they didn't see?  
The lady in red,  
She's quite a sight to see  
Look. Just take a look.  
“Oh she has no more importance than the scab on my knee!”  
But— isn't she just like you and me?

words **Breah Zaman**

illustration **Sheku Nafisi**

# Power of NATURE

words **laurie tritschler**

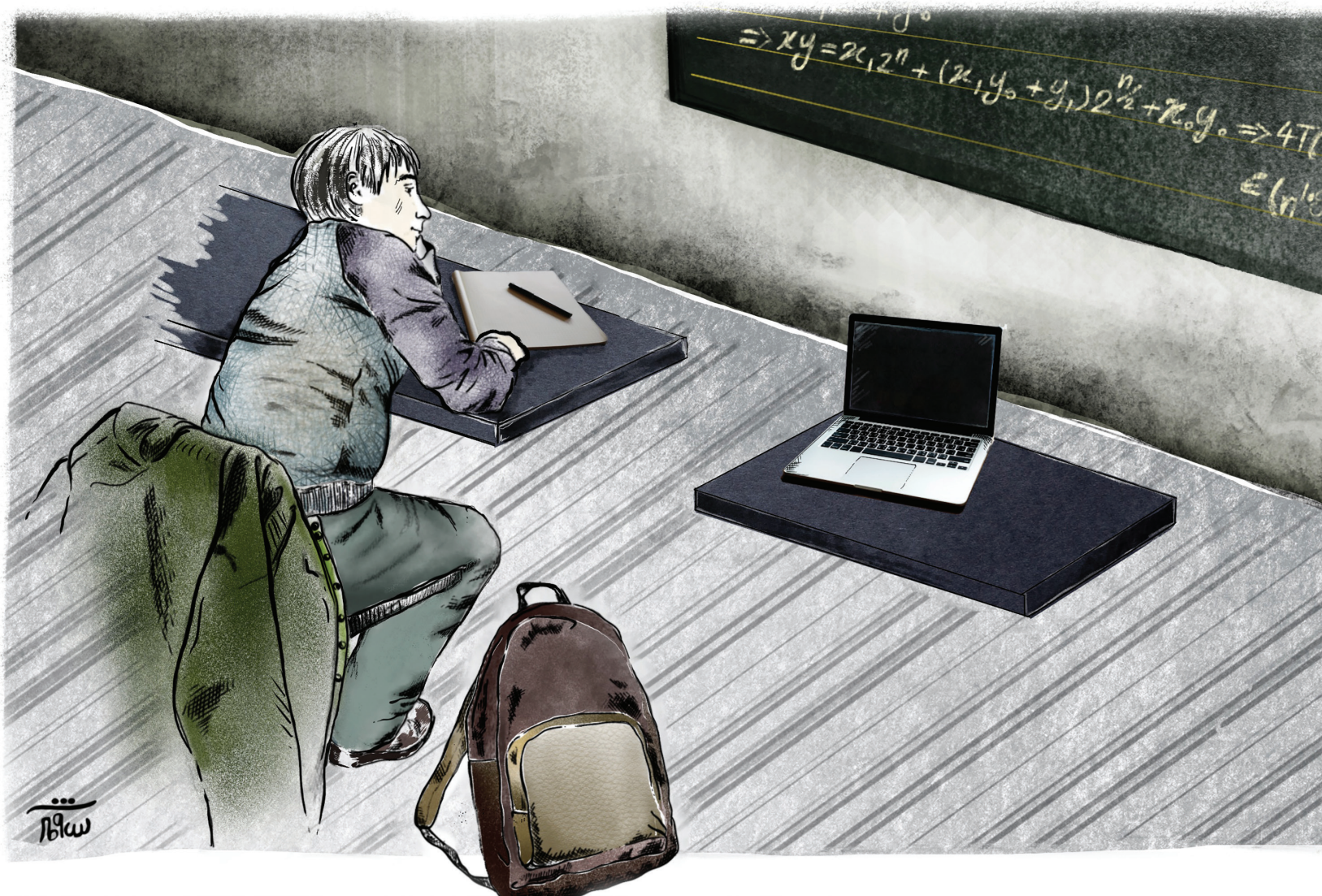
Good ol' Mother Nature—giver of life; cradle of civilizations; muse to poets, and discrete host to lovers' trysts. Her summer radiance may have fallen dim, but She remains our best hope as we kick off the Winter Semester. This is a story of campus life and urban sprawl. It's about our brains' struggle to hold out against the mentally and emotionally deadening environment we've made for ourselves, and how a return to Nature can stave off student burnout. Along the way, we'll meet scientists, learn about "Blue Mind" and neuroplasticity, and we'll walk through a new exhibit at the Museum of Vancouver that showcases the power of nature in our lives. By the end, you will feel refreshed and enlightened, trust me.











*illustration sheku nafisi*

First, let's face a hard truth: Surely as day follows night, and night follows day, winter in Metro Vancouver has the power to break us like so many dried-up Christmas trees. Consider how I'll be spending an average week, if you think I'm exaggerating. If history is to be any guide, I'll log about twenty-three hours in classrooms, another thirty hours working on various group projects, and even more time studying online. The rest of my "free" time will be spent bussing to and from campus, eating, and sleeping, though I'm sure I'll cut back on the latter two just to get out from under a hailstorm of deadlines.

Of course, that's an easy week compared to those of us who have families or who put in work at low-paying, soul-draining jobs outside of school—or both. Many will succumb to that unending cycle of head colds and mouth sores that, sooner or later, will lay hold of us all. At this point in the grind, Spring Break can't come soon enough. If only science would point to a safe, reliable way to salve our stress-addled minds...

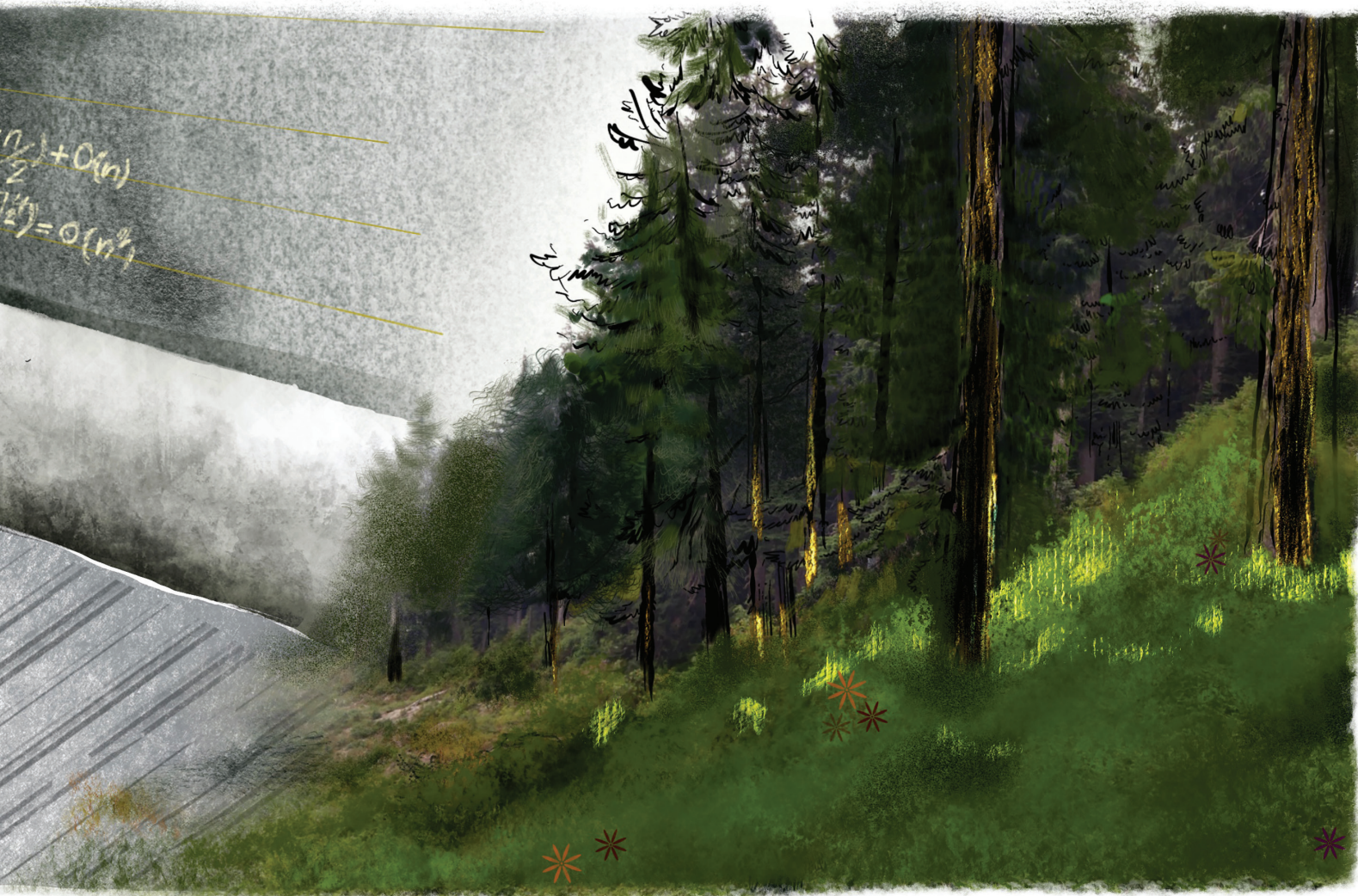
But, how did we get here? What is it about students' busy, always-on-the-go, never-have-enough-time routine that wears us down, makes us sick, and keeps us from the ones we love?

The short answer is that campus is slowly polluting our minds. Picture a typical classroom at BCIT. Feel yourself squirm in your plastic chair as you

stare, unblinkingly, at the whiteboard in front of you, your feet rooting into the concrete floor as your instructor piles on the work. You're immured in cold, steely walls that seem to close in on you from every direction. You feel your brain melting under the hum of fluorescent lights riveted into the ceiling like glowing ice-cube trays. There is no escape: You can make a break for your car, assuming you can find it in that asphalt desert of parking lots. Or, you can put yourself at the ass-end of the lineup at the bus-stop. Either way, you'll be back tomorrow.

Humans simply aren't meant to live like this. That's according to environmental psychologist Ming Kuo, who recently talked to NPR's Hidden Brain podcast about the hidden health hazards posed by what she calls "the dark side of the environment." To be clear, Kuo's





gloomy description reflects her research at the University of Illinois and not the lifeless aesthetic at BCIT. Still, Kuo's early work with animals in captivity shows the way forward if we want to understand how campus contributes to student burnout.

Kuo's furry subjects fared poorly behind bars. They exhibited more psychological distress and were statistically likely to die younger than their wild cousins. What explained these results is something called "habitat selection theory," which holds that animal species are cognitively and emotionally honed by the same environmental factors that shape their psychical traits through natural selection. Think of it as a meme showing Darwin 'on the couch,' with the Origin of Species author telling his shrink, "The unhappy corollary is, Kuo's animals were never going to thrive outside their ecological niche."

Highlighting the clinical implications for humans, Kuo recited the famous biologist Edward O. Wilson's warning that, "organisms, when housed in unfit habitats, undergo social, psychological, and physical breakdown," to which she added, "We are seeing precisely that in people." Kuo is among a growing number of scientists carrying on the insights of her mentors Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, whose seminal work on the neuro-psychological phenomenon "directed-attention fatigue" laid the basis of current neurological understandings of how urban living—and, by extrapolation, campus life—affects the human brain. It turns out, Kuo's "habitat selection theory" also explains the stress students battle on campus: We won't thrive outside our natural environment, either.

For more on the Darwinian side of

this discussion, I turned to evolutionary biologist Wallace J. Nichols' book *Blue Mind*. In these pages, Nichols' combines his passion for oceanology and environmental conservation with clinical uses of brain-imaging technologies to show our innermost reactions to the outside world. With much of the book given over to how our brains preternaturally favor aquatic settings, the takeaway for students is the author's practical observation that, "where we are affects how we feel." Apply this to how students process campus and it's clear we're fighting an uphill neurological battle from September through May. Just as in Kuo's zoo study, it comes down as much to evolutionary biology as environmental psychology.

Unlike the African savannah our species walked out of a couple hundred-thousand semesters ago, our

campus environs unceasingly bombard us with a host of attention-sapping stimuli our brains must instantly decipher and assimilate into experiential reality—if we are to stay sane, that is. It's bad enough that prolonged concentration on complex tasks like crunching numbers or running CAD software steadily wear out the seat of cognition (and free will) in the frontal lobe. These mental operations are under our conscious control, and we can at least pump the breaks, so to speak, by tearing ourselves from our work long enough to pop an Advil.

Meanwhile, it's the blaring car horns and flashing lights, the line-up at Tim Horton's and other people's noisy library conversations—to name but a few day-to-day aspects we can't control—that draw most heavily not just on our thinking minds, but also on the emotional and threat-detection centres respectively in the hippocampus and amygdala. Unlike our conscious faculties, there's no 'turning off' these neural regions. Nor can we ignore them. They operate perpetually, beneath our conscious control, because they evolved to alert our simian ancestors to environmental hazards before these could be registered consciously.

The problem for students is that our less-evolved 'monkey brains' can't always discern between perceived dangers in the form of deadline anxiety and early morning traffic jams, and actual threats like a sabre-toothed tiger crouching in the high grass. When the brain can't separate the things that keep us up at night and make us late for class from prehistoric predators wanting to eat us where we stand, exams loom over our angst-ridden minds as if tests were killer cats. It hardly matters neurologically if our urban environment is safer than the proving grounds of our Cro-Magnon past; not when our technical training here at BCIT is so mentally exhausting and our campus so luridly busy that our brains are pushed beyond capacity.

The Kaplans' "directed-attention fatigue" sets in when we literally think and worry ourselves to near breaking-point. The result can be what Nichols calls "Red Mind." In layman's terms, Red Mind is that agitated panic that sets in as you scramble to put together a project the night before you present it in class. Neuroscientist Catherine Franssen offers a more clinical description of this florid mindset as: "an edgy

high, characterized by stress, anxiety, fear, and maybe a little bit of anger and despair." It's bad enough for students that acute exposure to this kind of stress impedes learning and memory-retention. Worse, Nichols warns chronic Red Mind sufferers are statistically likely to manifest symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. These run from impaired cognition to severe depression and crippling social anxiety—even a tendency to self-harm.

The solution to all of this is to get outside.

Regularly spending time in nature doesn't simply palliate our withering minds, it actually reverses the damage brought on by our post-industrial environment. That's because natural environments seem to have the effect of turning off the parts of our brains that think and engaging those that feel.

Creatives have been telling us this for centuries. One thinks here of those prolific skeptics of modernity, the Romantics, who rebelled against the cold reasoning of Enlightenment science. Seeking inspiration in Nature while steam power and the pendulum clock were brutalizing ancient ways of relating to the land, poets like John Keats and Lord Byron exalted the realm of lived experience above sheer intellect.

There's a certain reassurance in the words of these long dead poets—one that speaks to our postmodern campus woes. As Byron famously rhymed in his narrative poem, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage":

There is pleasure in the pathless woods,  
there is rapture in the lonely shore  
there is society where none intrudes,  
by the deep sea, and music in its roar;  
I love not Man the less, but Nature more.

Keats, who famously pined  
"O for a life of sensations rather than of  
thoughts," also insisted "[t]he poetry of the  
earth is never dead."

The irony is that for all the Romantics' devotion to the sublime, scientific evidence supports their nature-worship better than highfalutin prosody ever could. To that end, our experience of nature soothes the brain by engaging what the Kaplans dubbed as our "involuntary attention." Think of it like this: Because the



features of natural landscapes remain more or less constant, nature's beauty draws on our attention in short, random spurts our minds don't need to process at the level of conscious (or "voluntary") thought.

If you're unsure why this should be relaxing, consider that you don't think about what's happening when you see trees fluttering in the breeze. Instead, the visual disruption is so slight and so gradual, you 'read' the unfolding scene with little or no involvement from the parts of the brain involved in decision-making or predicting outcomes. Compare that to the high-speed symphony of on-road calculations you orchestrate just to survive your campus commute and it's not hard to appreciate Nichols' observation in *Blue Mind* that it's the "high degree of statistical predictability" our brains crave in Nature.

So, what's happening to our brains here? And how does it help us as students? The answer is twofold. First, with so much less for our brains to compute in the stillness of a forest for example, or in the lull of waves breaking on shore, the hippocampus and amygdala quickly gear down. Levels of the stress-hormone cortisol drop in the bloodstream as, breathing deeply, we start to let go of our conscious thoughts. Next, we're able to shift out of Red Mind because our brains are plastic, meaning they can be reshaped (reprogrammed, so to speak) through sustained changes in behavior and environment. We enter Nichols' titular "*Blue Mind*" after we get outside frequently enough to achieve what the author promises is, "an internal state of calm in which a person becomes more aware of their immediate embodied experience of the world and less concerned with events occurring 'out there.'"

Whether this is a case of Nature returning us to ourselves, or of us returning to Nature, at some point Romantics and neurologists agree Nature replenishes the brain by untethering our embodied experience.

Better yet, Nichols recommends we take to the waves. "The mind on Nature" is said to be blue in light of Nichols' claim that nature's restorative effects on the mind are amplified by spending time in and around water. It doesn't matter if it's the ocean, a lake, a river, or a stream; as

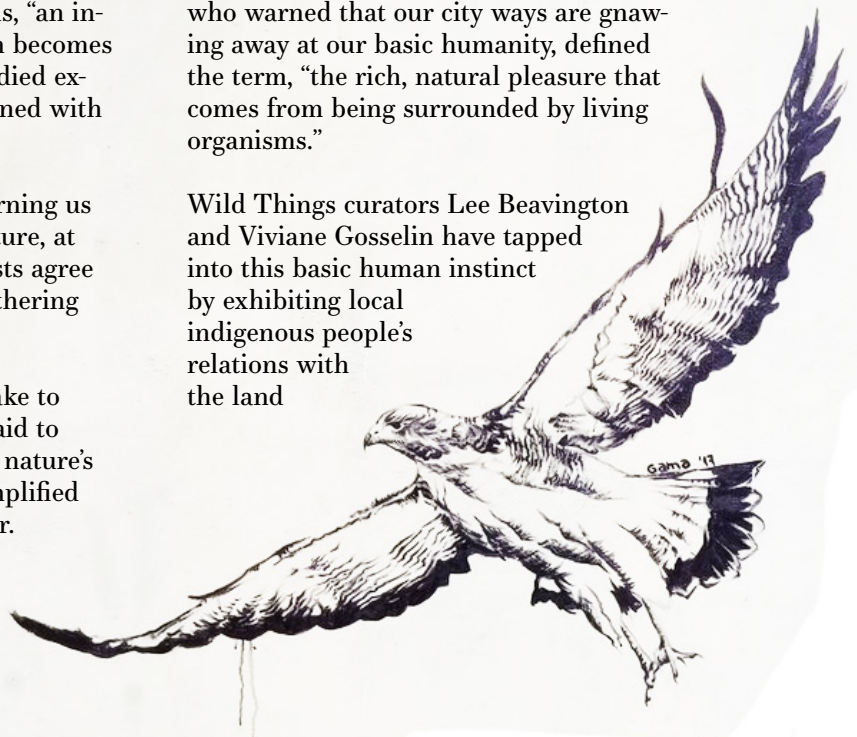
long as we can play in it—or even look at it—we're more likely to thrive near water.

This follows from the same evolutionary principle that informs Ming Kuo's "habitat selection theory," the same neurological transformation as when we spend enough time outside—only faster. And this is only natural, Nichols argues, given that we're surrounded by water even before we're born, our bodies having formed suspended in the amniotic fluid of our mothers' wombs. After that, our bodies are mostly water—our brains even more so. What's more, the consensus among scientists who study human evolution has it that our earliest ancestors depended on animal protein harvested both from the sea and fresh water not merely to survive, but also to develop ever larger brains which gradually flourished into higher consciousness. Our species started on the African savannah, yes. But it was water that made us human.

Perhaps that's why half a billion people worldwide annually vacation near water; why amorous couples steal away to the water's edge when they want to be alone, and why, glued to computer screens at home and on campus, we can bring down our stress levels just by looking onto a desktop seascape.

But from a meta perspective, our yearning for nature can't be reduced to the mental-health benefits that come from more outside-time. It's actually an overarching phenomenon that scientists explain using biologist Ed Wilson's concept of "biophilia," or 'love of life.' Wilson, who warned that our city ways are gnawing away at our basic humanity, defined the term, "the rich, natural pleasure that comes from being surrounded by living organisms."

Wild Things curators Lee Beavington and Viviane Gosselin have tapped into this basic human instinct by exhibiting local indigenous people's relations with the land



// THE SOLUTION TO  
ALL OF THIS IS  
TO GET OUTSIDE //







against a backdrop of ecological colonialism. Taking a page from *Blue Mind*, it's the ways Vancouver is swallowing its own waterways that whet the viewer's curiosity. Sounds of rain are piped in through large speakers in a way that prompts museum-goers to think about where all that water drains once skies clear overhead. Most area tributaries, creeks, and streams now run under Vancouver's streets, and the blue squiggles on a hydrological map of the city move one to reflect on how city planners have spoiled the traditional, sovereign, and unceded territories of the Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), Úxwumixw (Squamish), and (Musqueam) First Nations.

There is a way back from this. Guests are asked to pinpoint wildlife sightings on a giant satellite photo of the Lower Mainland, and the tiny raccoons, coyotes, and even bears on so many tiny flags stuck into pixelated downtown intersections. Rainy suburban sprawl reminds us that we share these spaces with the creatures in our midst. Meanwhile, museum walls display info-blurbs reminding us that we can 'daylight' (a clever euphemism for digging up and uncovering) our creeks and streams long after they've been paved over, with others encouraging us to reintroduce native plant species to our backyard gardens. If you're curious to know more, these and other home-grown solutions will be on display at this exhibit until next September.

After having taken all this in, I find myself carving out time for strolls along Burnaby Campus' Guichon Creek between classes. There's still enough sunlight filtering through the canopy of weeping willows that line the creek (recently daylit, itself) that the scenery is redolent of a surrealist painting. It isn't exactly Monet, and I'm not sure if I'm running a "blue mind," but I will say I think more clearly in this headspace. "Spring is coming," I remind myself. Spring is coming.

Best of luck this semester, dear reader. Don't stress so much.



# raising the roof

Across from NE1, students are on a roof, frantically planting as many ferns as they can. There's a deadline to be met today and Dr. Christine Thuring has been racing it from the beginning. As she leads them, she quizzes them to keep their spirits up.

"How many species of bees do you think there are in BC?" she asks to no one in particular, but everyone is clinging to it.

"I don't know... 39?" says a voice.

She smiles.

"No, over 400!"

And another plant's been potted.

Why the deadline?

We'll have to back up a bit first, and talk about what green roofs are, what they're used for, and why, as students, we should be pretty excited about them. I'm sure we're all on the same page when we hear the phrase "green roof" – a rooftop garden. And it kind of is. But not really. A garden, you have to water and tend to. Green roofs are installed on a "waterproofing membrane" that protects the building it sits on from water damage. Insulation, drainage and filter fabric are stacked on that. Then the growing soil.

Now that we know what these are,





let's talk about why we'd want to install one on a building. We're going to look into three main benefits—energy conservation, water management and ecological benefits. These save a lot of energy—they reduce the cost of heating giant buildings via evapotranspiration; the combination of plant transpiration and evaporation. They can also reduce the cost of cooling in the summer via evaporative cooling; the cooling of air through the evaporation of water. A 2005 report from Ryerson University found that adding green roofs to 50 percent of the available surfaces in downtown Toronto would cool the entire city by up to 0.8 degrees celsius. How does this work?

As you get warmer. As

closer to the city, it gets much as ten degrees.

All the concrete and asphalt absorb heat during the day and releases it at night—so the city never really cools down. There's lots of side effects from that; plants and urban organisms have slightly different life cycles than their rural counterparts. Cherry blossoms, for example, will flower sooner than they do in the country. It can even change weather patterns.

Green roofs offset those urban changes.

They manage water by reusing rain—you know, the stuff that clogs up our roads and floods our commutes after dripping off of our roofs. It all gets evaporated back anyway, so we're just losing the potential of floods.

**words** Sean Murphy

**photos** Eric Li





Green roofs can act as hosts for native species of plants and animals. Those bees Dr. Christine Thuring mentioned can find new homes on green roofs. Birds can use them as pit stops on their migratory pattern. If you're getting excited about the idea of urban wilderness, I recommend George Monbiot's *Feral: Rewilding The Land The Sea And Human Life*.

These sound great, right? But everything comes at a price, and that's the biggest barrier for green roofs. The initial start-up cost. Canadian Contractor says the costs can vary from \$12 to \$50 per square foot. So who's got the budget to actively invest in these?

We usually only hear about the Convention Centre whenever Comic Con or Fan Expo are in town. But over queues of cosplayers and pop-culture enthusiasts is Canada's largest green roof.

The Vancouver Public Library has just unveiled the expansion to their rooftop garden—they've had a functioning green roof since '95. The same year the Fairmont Waterfront hotel installed theirs—they grow herbs and produce that is then served in the restaurant.

Green roofs were identified as a possible direction for Vancouver's Rain City Strategy, which aims to effectively manage rainwater utilizing green infrastructure. A motion put forward by The Green Party's Adrienne Carr unanimously supports a motion to impose mandatory green roofs on large buildings.

"Mandatory green roofs on commercial, institutional and multi-family buildings would help alleviate the run-off to our aging sewage system by retaining close to 30 percent of the rainfall it receives annually, by slowing its flow and purifying it in the process," says Vancouver Parks Board Vice Chair, Commissioner Dave Demers, whom has worked in landscape and botany for 20 years. "Green roofs create an insulation layer that translates into savings for residents on cooling and heating fees, and significantly re-



duces tax dollars spent on maintaining and replacing infrastructure. They also provide much-needed islands of habitat for our urban wildlife. With forecasts for warmer and wetter winters and hotter and drier summers, such green roofs are essential tools to prepare for tomorrow."

With green roofs possibly being mandatory on large buildings in Vancouver, there's a lot of money involved in the installation of them. There'll be jobs opening up in the field—and education is available now. We're going to focus on BCIT because you already go here, but I fully encourage you to do your own research and reach your own conclusions. There's a lot of cool stuff happening at The Centre for Architectural Ecology in this field, and over 200 BCIT students from over 10 other technologies aided in the construction of this Green Roof Research Facility.

Looking specifically at courses related to Green Roofs, there are three nighttime courses that sound really exciting. We've got *GROW 1000 Green Roofs: Details, Installation and Maintenance*, *GROW 2000 Green Roofs: Planting in the Pacific Northwest* and *GROW 3000 Green Infrastructure and Urban Ecology: Designing for Nature in the*

*City*. Students get first-hand experience of working on the green roof at the Elevated Lab.

Back to where we came in—the reason Dr. Thuring was in a hurry to get the roof seeded?

"The reason for the urgency to get done is because it's sunny. The days are getting colder and the next day was scheduled for rain. Once they're in the ground, they can get irrigated. Also I just wanted to have it done. Because it is a research project, you want to reduce your 'noise'—the variation that can skew results."

*Dr. Christine Thuring spoke at the Vancouver Green Roof Symposium on December 5th about Green Roof Research and Benefits.*







# BCIT RACING

## BAJA FORMULA SAE RACERS PREPARING FOR 2019 CHALLENGE

Cole Sorensen

Since 2014, BCIT's Formula Baja SAE team has been competing at various racing events across North America. In 2019 the team plans to compete against several U.S. and international teams at a Formula SAE event in Rochester New York. I sat down with some of the team members to discuss more about the team, the vehicle, and what normally happens in a typical race weekend.

**LINK:** Hey guys, thanks for talking with us, I'll start by asking you: How did you get started in the BCIT Baja Formula SAE team?

Al Pachevskiy, Project Manager: "Well there was an introduction event on the first day when I started school, and they told us that there's a Baja club and they have a car, and I was like this is exactly what I want to do! So I was pretty much in from day one."

Riley Waldbower, Crew Member: "I heard about it through school events and Reddit."

Stirling Anderson, Crew Member: "I knew some people who were in the program already. If you go to the mechanical engineering Reddit there's stuff about it all over there, and there's a club day as well where I found out about it."

**LINK:** For those who don't know what Baja Formula SAE is, do you want to give us a brief description of what the

club is all about?

Al: We build an off road vehicle, and we have limitations, there's rule books, such as what we can do with the frame, the engine, and suspension. There's still free space for people to design and do different things to their car, so there's still a lot of variety that people come up with.

**LINK:** Now obviously you're competing against other teams in the competition itself, what are some of the other schools that take part in the event?

Al: We compete against any school that enters the competition. Most of the schools are from the United States, as well as a bunch of schools from around the world, such as Mexico and India.

**LINK:** So this year the competition is in Rochester, New York, how are you guys getting the funding to travel there?

Stirling: We've got some sponsorship

from the school itself, since it is one of the school's clubs, and we also do some fundraisers throughout the year to help raise money.

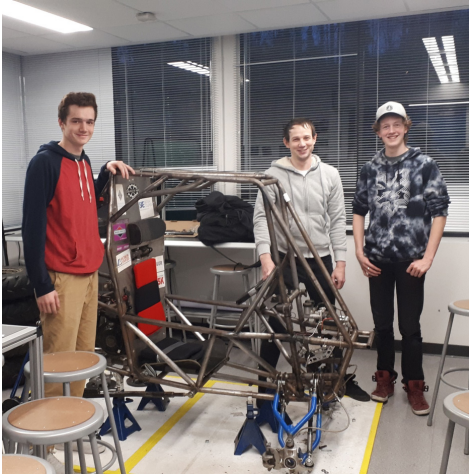
Al: That is another thing that people don't realize, it's not just engineering students that are part of the team, there's some marketing kids as well who come up with proposals for sponsors to help raise money as well.

**LINK:** On the race weekend itself what kind of events does the car have to compete in?

Al: Well there's an endurance event that is four hours long, it takes place on a big specially made track, so it takes a while to complete it. We also have rock climbing and maneuverability events, as well as a presentation where you talk about your car and its design.

**LINK:** So you were all on the team last year for the event in Oregon, what were some of the problems that you faced?





above: BCIT Baja Formula SAE team members, Al Pachevskiy, Riley Waldbower, Stirling Anderson

right: photo of the BCIT Baja Formula vehicle from a 2016/2017 Baja Race



Stirling: Well we didn't get to finish the suspension, and we had to do some weird modifications to get the old suspension to work on the new car, which wasn't ideal, it messed up all of our stats that we had.

Riley: Yeah, it was a really big struggle, we got the car done on the fifth day, and only got to do eight laps in the endurance event, but it was pretty cool to see it running. We ended up placing 85th out of 90 cars, but it was still cool to go down there.

**LINK:** How hard is it to balance a full course load with all of your duties with the Baja club?

Al: It definitely gets hard around exam time. We struggled to get everyone together to meet up, which is understandable with the importance of exams, but it's starting to get better with exams ending.

Riley: I'm in the mechanical engineering program, and it's sometimes hard to balance a full course load and all the Baja stuff, but it's a really good experience and a great thing to be a part of.

Stirling: I have to agree with the other guys, but I found that it helped me out on my mid-term, there was a question about a truss that was pretty much the same thing as the suspension work I did on the car.

**LINK:** What are your goals entering the 2019 event at Rochester?

Stirling: Hopefully we'll have a fully finished car this time, maybe something that we've actually tried before so that we know what's going to let us down and we can fix it before it does break.

**LINK:** One last question, what are some of the benefits of being a part of this club?

Al: It's really fun, there's good comradery, and you get to make something that's cool and see it work.

Riley: It's definitely worth all the time that you put in, I've definitely had a good experience with it. Getting to know the guys and seeing how everything works has been neat.

Stirling: There's a lot of hands on experience that you get, a lot of the simulations that we do seem like they come right out of the courses, so you actually get to apply what you've learned on the car.

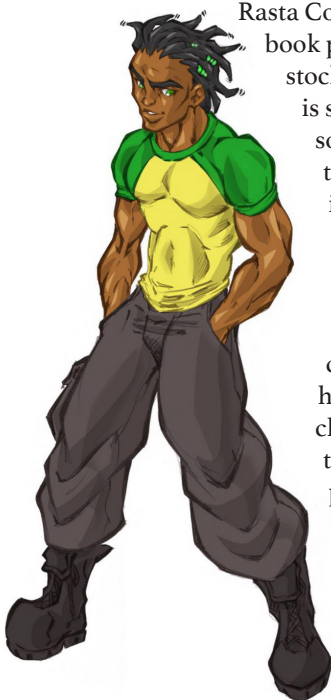
**LINK:** Thanks for your time guys, and good luck with the competition!

*The BCIT Baja Formula SAE team is welcoming new members. To find out more about the club and Baja Formula SAE racing head to [bcitracing.com](http://bcitracing.com), like their Facebook page, and follow them on Instagram (@bcit\_racing). The team also runs several fun events throughout the year, as well as several fundraiser where you can meet the team and find out more information about the club. The team will travel to Rochester New York and compete against post-secondary institutions from around the world from June 6th to the 9th.*

# EVOLVING THE CARIBBEAN SUPERHERO

RASTA COMICS FOUNDER RAYON MORRIS WANTS TO INFUSE AUTHENTIC CARIBBEAN CULTURE INTO THE COMIC BOOK LANDSCAPE.

Ali Pitargue



Rasta Comics creator Rayon Morris makes it a goal to release at least one comic book per month. Yet, his publication's reach does not stop in BC. He also ships a stock of several hundred copies to his motherland of Jamaica. The shipment is sent to his hometown of Tangle River—a small, mountainous village southwest of Montego Bay. His sister receives the books, which she sells them at a wooden stand by her house. As far as Morris knows, this stand is the only comic book outlet in Tangle River.

“In a poor place, you don’t have money to buy comic books,” explains Morris. “When you wake up, the first thing you think of is not to go out and buy a comic.” Morris’ writing specializes in Jamaican and African-themed fantasy. This allows him to be an envoy for his people, where he gets to introduce them to superhero narratives. He delights in picturing children back home reading his work. They also go to school sporting Rasta Comics hoodies. It only makes him more eager to develop the Jamaican presence in the comic book scene.

Morris asserts that Jamaican folklore translates splendidly into graphic novels. For his stories, he uses Jamaican voodoo and obeah to mythologize his settings. “I want to take these kinds of stories and bring them to life here [in Canada]. Kids in Jamaica know about [the stories] to this day, but nobody ever did comics or movies about it.”

Caribbean and African representation in the comic book world is sparse. According to Morris, this goes especially for giant publishers like Marvel and DC. Caribbean characters lose authenticity as they become ornamental to these Eurocentric narratives. And to Morris, it does his culture a disservice. “They look at Jamaican people as if the only thing we could do is run and do



reggae music.” Marvel and DC, in his opinion, tend to short-serve black characters such as Luke Cage. This is especially in comparison to their top-tier heroes. “Superman looks cool, Spiderman looks cool, and you have that one black character that looks like garbage. Those are things that made me feel like I’ve got to pump this [type of Caribbean content] out.”

Rayon Morris has been a resident of Canada since the early 1990s. To this day, he wields his Jamaican identity with pride. Speaking with a crisp Jamaican dialect, he is animated both in his language and his words. He infects those around him with the enthusiasm and liveliness known of his culture. This charm worked on his creative partner and artistic director, Basel Abdoullah. Hailing from Syria, Abdoullah is also an expat to BC.

The duo met circa 2015 when Abdoullah was working as a freelancer. He agreed to undertake the artwork for Rasta Comics. In accepting the job, he was immediately taken to the lore of the source material. From voodoo-based mythology to authentically-Caribbean characterizations, his art bonded to Morris’ imagination.

“It’s amazing,” Abdoullah says of Rasta Comics’ content. “The culture—everything about it. I always tell Rayon that I wish that I met him before [earlier in Morris’ career], so I could’ve worked with him on his [previous] works, too.” They collaborate on one of Rasta Comics’ most staple series, *Black Starr Lion*. The series follows a Jamaican ex-soldier in Vancouver who is haunted by his supernatural past.

Alongside the mythology, Abdoullah was also drawn to Morris’ backstory. He recalls, “We would always talk about the stuff that happens in his neighbourhood back home, and I tell him that it should be in the next *Black Starr Lion*.”

“I know the realness of [Morris’] stories,” says Abdoullah. Morris often draws inspiration from his memories of Jamaica. In his concepts, Morris combines his real-life experiences with Caribbean and African lore. He boasts an extensive knowledge of his culture’s most notorious fables and myths. Yet, he makes it a point to underscore these fantasy elements with humane themes. The topic of bullying in schools, for

example, is an issue that the duo are eager to explore. “In the next few books, we’re trying to shed a light on this topic,” says Abdoullah. “It’s not always fun stuff and fighting, it’s also real stories.”

Another creative routine for Morris is recording memos of his experiences. He likes to put his smartphone on record as he ventures around the city. As he witnesses what transpires around him, he would dictate what he sees to his voice recorder. He says that his recordings are especially reliable whenever he gets writer’s block.

After Morris conceptualizes an idea, he and Abdoullah meet at a Vancouver Blenz Coffee branch at Nelson and Granville. They engage in many back-and-forth discussions to polish Morris’ ideas. They would also consult each other through phone calls that tend to veer into late nights. Creative clashes are inevitable, but Morris remains thankful for Abdoullah’s engagement. He admits that he still wrestles with the steep learning curve of comic book publishing.



“I’m still learning more about it, but I came a long way from just scratching on paper,” says Morris. Getting *Rasta Comics* off the ground entailed comprehensive research on his part. He learned all about the publishing process, finding distributors, and even binding books.

Morris gets blunt about the bleak realities of comic publishing. The greatest challenge for *Rasta Comics* has been the barriers to entry. Here, he advises aspiring comic book creatives to get ready to play games with retailers. Having a portfolio that specializes in Jamaican culture made it especially difficult. The challenge lies in persuading distributors to even give his content the time of day. “[The distributors] didn’t really care to look at a book or not. They just want three-grand right up front. Pay me three-grand, and we’ll

get you distribution.” Morris recalls that once readers give his work a chance, his books garner a positive response. Yet most are hard-pressed to give it a chance in the first place. “They look at it and go, ‘oh, it’s black guy stuff, I ain’t taking it’ and they’re gone.”

Morris finds solace in the impact he made on his former hometown of Tangle River. His old village is still economically-disadvantaged, but he is willing to help all he can. He continues to work on introducing his people to comic books, especially as a dynamic way to tell stories of their land. “That’s one thing my book is good for: making them use their imagination in-

stead of always being stuck in reality.”

Nonetheless, Rasta Comics has been Morris’ passion project for almost two decades. He runs a tight ship of five staff members who operate in his Delta home. Rasta Comics is a self-publishing company built from the ground-up. It continues to be an uphill battle. Yet, his creative instruments are still armed with plenty of Caribbean-inspired content to tell. He will not stop combatting the industry’s racial prejudices. In order to do this, he and Abdoullah cannot further emphasize how important it is to focus on one’s craft. Morris advises marginalized writers to trust in

themselves to tell their own story. He recalls what his father once told him: “You can read other people’s books, or you could make books that other people read.”

Rasta Comics is hiring artists! Please send a resume and portfolio to [mighty\\_dred@hotmail.com](mailto:mighty_dred@hotmail.com)



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