

LINK

BCIT & BEYOND



nehiyawiskwew sohkihtâkosiw

A Cree Woman with a Powerful Voice

Savannah Erasmus talks about her journey toward mental wellness, and how her comedy show, Millennial Line, helps her define herself as an Indigenous storyteller in Vancouver.

Plus:

- What's up with cannabis on campus?
- how to meditate in one breath & more!

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Of Minds and Matter

They say summer is not merely a season, but also a state of mind.

For many BCIT students, however, it's been a sharp pivot away from the pacified state of summertime. One month down in the school year, and many have hit the ground running. Memories of summer may still linger, but the cold had no problem settling in. This time of year is when the uphill battle begins and students brace themselves for an influx of deadlines. It can all get overwhelming, which is why this issue of LINK aims to remind you to be mindful of what matters: your well-being.

October 10th is Mental Health Awareness Day. This month's features will cover mental health from a number of perspectives. Our associate editor, Lauren Edwards, gives us a backgrounder on BCITSA's Speak Up Speak Out campaign, and two students—Savannah Erasmus and Samantha Pasielski—graciously share with us their insights on how they manage mental health, both for themselves and others. Additionally, we dive into matters of cannabis policy at BCIT and the corporate nature of convenience.

This is my first foray into LINK's senior editor position, and it is a lot more running around than I previously thought; this is in addition to all the running around I do for the broadcast journalism program. It's been rewarding in many ways. I've become a sort of sponge that's been absorbing a lot, both in work for myself as well as all kinds of ideas from students and staff at BCIT. If things pile up, philosopher and mathematician René Descartes had a good system going on, where he once advised, "Divide each difficulty into as many parts as is feasible and necessary to resolve it."

The school year just started, and in order to make the best of your time at BCIT, prioritize your mental health.

Ali Pitargue
Senior Editor

LINK

BCIT & BEYOND

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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

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in this issue

GOOGLE THIS

september

at a glance

We've read the newspapers and cut out the headlines for you. From the entertaining to the unfortunate, we have a clipping for each story that we thought you'd want to hear about. Want more than the *CliffsNotes*? Search on Google or your favorite news website to learn more.

01	Anniversary of Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope, his one-legged run across Canada to raise money for cancer research.
06	A Bahamian woman informs the world she has rescued about 100 dogs from Hurricane Dorian.
09	Ontario-based 18-year-old tennis player Bianca Andreescu beats Serena Williams in the US Open.

Robert Mugabe, who ruled Zimbabwe for 37 years, passed away from cancer at 95 years old.

The Testaments, the followup to Margaret Atwood's cult novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, is released. It is set 15 years after the first book ended.

10

Astronomers announced the detection of water on a planet orbiting a star, the first discovery of its kind.

11

Old images surface of Justin Trudeau donning brownface and blackface.

18

The 2019 Rugby Union World Cup is scheduled to be held in Japan, with matches in 12 cities. The opening match will be in the Tokyo district of Chofu, and the final in Yokohama.

20

Elton John stops by Vancouver during his Farewell Yellow Brick Road world tour, his last live tour of his career.

21

A rare video of BC grizzly bears fighting on a highway goes viral.

22

Stella McCartney received the groundbreaking award in Milan, Italy for founding her brand 25 years ago on sustainable principles.

25

Fleabag took home the Emmy for best comedy series, the first British show to do so.

DC Comics superhero Batman turned 80 years old.

24

U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi orders an impeachment inquiry on Donald Trump after he asked the Ukrainian president to investigate Joe Biden's son.

27

Approximately 80,000 participants march in the Global Climate Strike in Downtown Vancouver.

Teen activist Greta Thunberg makes an appearance in Montreal after speaking at the UN.

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

You can tell it's getting colder, because we're all about the music and movies. For reviews of apps, books, and more, check out linkbcit.ca. Would you like to submit a review? Email editor@linkbcit.ca. Read on to learn about what we do (and don't) recommend you checking out this October.

watch this.

Patriot Act

Netflix

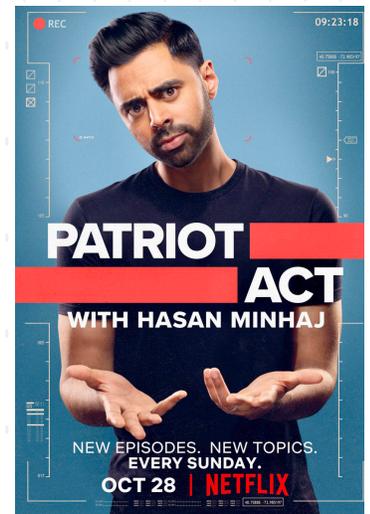
Comedian Hasan Minhaj makes an electrifying entrance to investigative journalism and comedy with his Netflix show *Patriot Act*. The previous *Daily Show* correspondent showcases his on-point humor and wit while delving into topics not commonplace in North American media. Each episode ranges from fun to depressing with topics like Saudi Arabia, Fortnite, slow internet, censorship in China, cricket, and cruise ships. Did you know Supreme works with a company who supplies weapons to Saudi Arabia?

The show releases a new episode every Sunday on Netflix that Minhaj describes as “a Drake concert but you're learning.” According to *Queer Eye's* Tan France, the show packs a “visual punch” with its floor-to-wall screens and graphics. In between takes, Minhaj answers questions, interacts with his audience (ex. What would you do if you were white for a day?), and pulls celebrities onto the stage for humor-powered conversations.

Minhaj is as sharp as he is energetic; his whole dialogue is spoken with his arms so you can't miss him on screen. One of the best characteristics of the show is there is no desk (meaning less risk of getting bored with what you're watching).

All I can say is, my advice is the exact same as one person tweeted: “IF YOU AREN'T LEARNING FROM PATRIOT ACT WHAT'RE YOU DOINNN.”

— lauren edwards



listen to this.

Emotion

One-Hundred Percent Electronica
SURFING

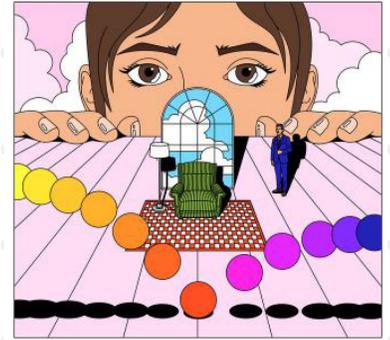
For almost seven years, the adventurous Aussie duo, Surfing, has been releasing music under the niche New York label One-Hundred Percent Electronica. Their discography so far has mostly been sample-based, but their latest release, *Emotion*, proves that the band also has a capacity for original work.

The album's ten tracks present a good mixture of bass, analog synth, and muddy vocals. The second track, titled "Break Up," is something reminiscent of Tame Impala's older work.

Emotion is another contribution to the evolving vaporwave genre—a music movement inspired by retro electronic, jazz, and pop music from '80s and '90s. The movement began exclusively online in 2010.

Surfing came into the picture with *Deep Fantasy* in 2011, a sample-based work, but with additions like bass riffs, vocals replacing the originals, and more compression. With *Emotion*, the band transitions into more lo-fi territory, as opposed to retro samples. The album feels '80s and modern all at once.

— aaron rempel



watch this.

13 Reasons Why: Season 3

Netflix

Season 3 of *13 Reasons Why* welcomes a new yet suspicious character to the diverse Liberty friend-group. As Ani lives in the Walker's guest house, Ani provides insight into Bryce's personal life. We learn of Bryce attempting to change his toxic masculine behaviour into positive energy. Ani's ability to befriend every character within minutes and her very 'nosey' personality makes the viewer skeptical in her intentions.

The series failed to show its viewers the true development of Ani and Clay's relationship as the sacrifices she made for him simply don't make sense. Would you lie in an investigation just to save a 'possible' lover that you've only known for 5 months? Season 3 doesn't just offer a chance to hear Bryce's side of the story, but it also allows viewers to learn about the gullibility of teenagers in this day in age.

Do not watch this show alone. Grab a buddy and take time to reflect on the episodes as this will prevent a negative impact on your mental health.

— daniella pettenon



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



SAVANNAH ERASMUS



words Ali Pitargue
photography Eric J.W. Li



My comedy is honest, and it has opened the door to talk about some things that I never talked about openly before.

Comedians make us laugh, but often a profound story lies underneath a joke's surface. As a stand-up comedian, Savannah Erasmus draws inspiration from her experiences as an Indigenous woman with mental health struggles. Comedy became a space for her to tell her stories out in the open. While many comedians use stand-up as a mental health coping mechanism, Savannah's place in comedy could be also part of a movement. The ability to conceive humour can nurse one's psychological burdens, but Savannah adds to this by using her comedy as platform to unravel her Indigenous identity. Her stages lay bare the difficulties and experiences that come with being an Indigenous woman reclaiming her culture.

Savannah's voice offers an alternative to a field dominated by white males, so she also works to uplift other marginalized voices in the comedy scene. She and her comedy partner, Tin Lorica, started a monthly comedy show called *Millennial Line* at the Red Gate Arts Society. Her and Tin host a live show that lines up diverse, up-and-coming performers.

As a second-year Broadcast Journalism student, she looks to expand her repertoire as an Indigenous storyteller. It has been over a year since I met Savannah, and through these months, I came to know her as honest and bold, especially when impassioned by justice for Indigenous communities. When I asked her to be this month's Student Spotlight, I was eager to talk to her about the issues that mattered to her, and she conversed with the openness and fervor you can expect out of a heartfelt storyteller.

What made you want to pursue stand-up comedy?

I grew up with stand-up, where I've always watched specials and followed comedians on TV. It was something I always thought I could do if I really tried because I've always wanted to be a performer of some kind. Two years ago, I just went for it because I felt I had nothing else to lose. It was a time in my life when I was going through mental health issues with university and other things. So, I've been doing stand-up ever since.

How do you characterize your comedic style?

My comedy is extremely personal, emotional, and raw. I talk about my Indigenous heritage and my life growing up. Every-

thing that I talk about on stage has actually happened. And with me, I'm just awkward, silly, and cute, I guess? I try to talk about racism with a tone of voice that [gives the impression of], 'Okay, you're adorable, but you're also talking about something that is really shocking and uncomfortable.'

How is comedy used as an outlet for your mental health?

My comedy is honest, and it has opened the door to talk about some things that I never talked about openly before. I started comedy when I had to leave university because of my mental health. I was diagnosed with PTSD and depression, so I had nothing to lose doing standup. I wanted to do something for me that will make me feel good, as well as make excited because I was in a very dark place. I do talk about my mental health in my standup, and it's something that's so natural to me—I don't feel uncomfortable about it anymore. I'm just being honest about something I'm going through.

What has been the response to some of your shows?

I do my own show in Vancouver called *Millennial Line* that happens every month. It's where I do most of my experimentation with my material. One show, I did a song about how I'm trying to have it all as a young millennial and how I'm going through 'millennial burnout' because I put so much pressure on myself to be perfect, be professional, and be creative.

One time, I did this whole breakup set. I had just broken up with my partner of five years, and near the end [of the set], I was sort of crying on stage because I couldn't help it. Then, someone came up to me on the next show and said, 'I saw your set last month, and it really helped me with my breakup. You gave me hope and you showed me that you can get over it. Still mourn it, but also move on.' When someone comes up to you after your standup to tell you that you've helped them through something, it's really wild.

As an Indigenous storyteller, how is your comedy different from the rest of the scene?

The reason I describe myself as an Indigenous storyteller is because I'm both facing my identity and making my identity known as an Indigenous person. There was so much shame



associated with my Indigenous identity because of the society we endure. Even saying that, in describing myself and my art—to me, it's radical, but others may not feel that way. History, humour, and comedy is intrinsic to Indigenous culture. Humour has really gotten us through the worst times.

I think Indigenous people are funny. I remember my entire childhood being filled with laughter—all of us sitting around this table, sharing jokes and making jokes. It's what an Indigenous home is like. It's unfortunate because oral history and storytelling has been a part of our culture for millennia, but they were taken away because of the residential school legacy. I am reclaiming that title as a storyteller and as a standup comic. What makes me different from other comedians is my identity and my material. My goal is to make someone think about Indigeneity and our people in a different way, but also for them to realize that we're just human.

How did you start *Millennial Line*?

I started *Millennial Line* with my comedy partner, Tin Lorica, who I met shortly after I started doing standup for the first time. We're two young people of colour and we met at a time when I was feeling uncomfortable. My jokes weren't landing, and I was talking about things that other people aren't laughing at because they can't relate.

I met Tin, and I was blown away by their jokes, their writing, and their material. We started *Millennial Line* because we both wanted a space for marginalized people, especially for emerging artists. It's for people you don't see on stages typically. Our audience and the talent that we showcase is very different from a traditional comedy club. We started [this show] because no one else is going to do that for us. It's become an honest space for us and other marginalized artists. We're not trying to be heroes or anything, but the fact that we're setting a space for people that are not just white men may seem radical. For us, it's natural.

You recently got new tattoos of a phrase in your language. Can you tell us about the personal meaning behind it?

I've gotten new tattoos [on each thigh] that say 'nêhiyawiskwêw sôhkihtâkosiw' [stumbles in pronunciation]. I can't even say it



properly in my own language, but that's the reality. It means 'Cree woman with a powerful voice or sound.'

I've been trying to learn my own language, which is Cree, and I was inspired one day. In the past, I've kind of rejected that part of my identity. It's when you're trying to assimilate because you don't want to be bullied anymore for being different. When I was younger, I was rejected from being immersed in my culture and being immersed in my language.

It makes me emotional to even say it out loud because that's not okay for someone to feel like that. I can't say the words in my tattoos, so if I put it on my body, I'm reclaiming those words. And to be able to showcase that part of my identity after 23 years is just amazing to me. 'Cree woman with a powerful voice' means—obviously, I have a loud voice but that's just one meaning. The other meaning is that I want to continue defining my own voice and use it to create change, especially for proper representation of Indigenous people, their proper treatment and basic rights for nations across the country. It has a lot of different meanings, a lot of emotion, and a lot of pride.

Why is mental health important to you?

So many Indigenous youth are affected by mental health malpractices and suicide. Our communities have declared emergencies because there are young people that are dying. I have

lost people to suicide, so a lot of my work in the past has been fundraising for mental health organizations.

It's about making sure that people know that it's okay to talk about mental health, and that they're not weak. And it's okay to get help, because I had to get help to deal with my depression and my PTSD. It's been four years and I'm still not healthy, but one day I'll get there.

It's so senseless to me that we're losing young people because they can't ask for help. Plus, it's so stigmatized, and I really hope that in the future, we don't have Indigenous communities declaring emergencies to save young people.

I think that we ignore this, and not enough people pay attention. You have campaigns like #BellLetsTalk that are opening up conversations and are "donating" money to communities and people in need. The campaign makes millions of dollars a year, but they only donate less than a hundred-thousand dollars to Indigenous communities across the country. There's a lot more they can do to help. Even for me, as an Indigenous woman talking about mental health,

" ... if that's going to save someone's life or save my family's life, then I'll keep talking."



weeding out EDUCATION

words ALI PITARGUE

illustrations SHEKU NAFISI

How BCIT's Cannabis Policy Was Hashed Out

BCIT's cannabis policy prohibits the use of recreational marijuana across all campus premises. Executives say that cannabis could pose risks to curriculums that operate heavy machinery, but some students are questioning the ban.

October 17th marks one year since the Cannabis Act became law. Marijuana became legal to be consumed, carried, and shared for all persons aged 18 years or above. Leading up to legalization, many expected total reefer madness to dawn upon the country— car accidents going up, grades going down, and the skunky aroma of weed diffusing into the atmosphere.

As it turned out, all this fearmongering was blown out of proportion.

The rollout of weed supply has been tame and minimal so far. The legal cannabis industry has been

evolving at a snail's pace due to shortages and slow distribution.¹ For one, B.C. police have reported zero charges of pot-impaired driving.²

This is even the case for colleges and universities. Sure, post-secondary aged students make up the largest demographic that consumes cannabis,³ but most students still show up to class every day without letting weed thwart their intentions of graduating on time. At BCIT, any recorded incidents of cannabis impairment are kept mum.

Schools like UBC and SFU are allowing designated areas for pot-smoking, but most Canadian insti-

tutions disallow all non-medical marijuana use on campus. BCIT part of the latter.

BCIT's current policy—approved by the Board of Governors in May 2018—strictly prohibits the use, sale, manufacturing, and distribution of cannabis on all campus premises and BCIT-associated events off-campus, including student residences. There is no place for anyone to smoke weed on campus, not even in the semi-private space of a dorm.

Lisa Collins, BCIT's VP for Students, says the primary concern was the 'safety-sensitive' nature of the programs offered at BCIT. Collins explains, "Given that a lot of our students are operating heavy equipment or precision medical devices, [banning cannabis] was determined as the best approach for BCIT."

Is a hardline marijuana ban necessary at BCIT? If the issue is in-class impairment, BCIT's aversion to marijuana is especially harsh compared to their alcohol and tobacco policies. Perhaps it is the novelty of legal cannabis that is preventing them from granting some allowance, but since it's been an uneventful first year of legalization, you'd expect the stigma around weed to dwindle down. When (or possibly if) the policy gets reviewed, making the regulations laxer wouldn't hurt.

Collins says that there was no strong reaction to the initial policy passed in May of last year, and until feedback warrants a change, there are no plans to update it as of now. The initial policy statement specified a review date of May 29th, 2019, but the policy has been put off as a result. "Having said that," assures Collins. "All policies, including this one, they evolve over time to suit changing needs and circumstances."

BCIT's cannabis policy will be revisited at some point, but it is a question of when. Around May of this year, Vasiliy Baryshnikov, the BCIT Board

of Governors' Student Representative, inquired when the policy review could take place. He tells me that he received a response saying the review will likely be conducted closer to the anniversary of the Cannabis Act.

Attention, BCIT potheads. That's this month in October. If you need have any gripes about the ban, now is the time to be blunt.

Smoke Signals

Despite the cannabis ban, stoners do walk among the BCIT student body, but they have to go through lengths to avoid school property. Across Canada, roughly 37% of university students self-reported to marijuana usage, according to Maclean's annual survey.⁴ They do call it 'higher education' after all, and BCIT should be no different.



Jamie Hoenisch, who is finishing his program in mechatronics, says he grew up his whole life smoking weed, but he tries to limit his intake during his studies. He does say, however, that the policy is unfair. Upon hearing more about the policy, he fumed at ban. "What bothers me," proclaims Hoenisch, "Is that it's simply an old man's group of people saying, 'Well, we don't like weed, so we're going to ban it and not allow it to happen.' But where are the people up in arms?"

According to Hoenisch, there is a double standard between BCIT's marijuana and alcohol policies. "If the argument is that there's heavy machinery, why is there a bar allowed on campus?" asks Hoenisch. "People can go to the bar, drink to their hearts' content and then go attend a power lab with heavy machinery. How is that not the same [as marijuana]?"

One key difference is smoke. Lisa Collins says smoke is one of the factors that distinguished their cannabis and alcohol policy. "The thinking was that smoke—or particularly cannabis smoke in student housing—can affect others' safety and comfort on campus," she explains. The committee kept in mind that the distinctive smell of cannabis smoke could permeate the atmosphere, as well as be inhaled second-hand.

That still does not explain why cigarettes are allowed and edibles are banned. Tobacco smoke is allowed in specified areas like building entrances and parkades. The presence of cigarette smoke can also be intrusive and discomforting, but because smokers generally abide by the rules, classrooms remain smoke-free.

This brings us back to the issue of impairment. BCIT is by no means considered a party school. They made a reputation for themselves as a course-heavy grind school with mostly work, very little play. BCIT was not even mentioned when Maclean's surveyed the top post-secondary schools with the most cannabis use.

Still, it would be difficult for BCIT to escape cannabis. Inhaling a few doses can relieve stress, and for a school where it's constantly crunch time, you would expect a number of students to partake in a few puffs.

Robin [who does not wish to be identified] is a student who lives in residence. He says he complies with school regulations and smokes cannabis outside campus. Unlike drinking alcohol in the dorms, smoking can set off fire alarms, so he understands why the ban would also apply to student housing. However, he longs for a space near residence designated for cannabis use. "It actually has been brought up in set rep meetings to provide somewhere, at least for the housing community, to be able to smoke on campus," reveals Robin. "Then we were basically just told, 'Well, why not just focus on your studies?'"

As a small experiment, I went around BCIT to ask a few students about marijuana use on campus. The students I encountered paid no mind to the cannabis ban. Plenty did not spare the policy a second glance, and if they did, they had no intention to engage in battles with the Board of Governors. One student, Tony, is studying mechanical engineering; he is willing to comply with anti-pot regulation. He says, "You've got to follow the rules and it's not too easy to change them just for the select amount of people that want to use it on a daily basis, whether it's medical or not."

No questions asked from Tony, but he does touch upon the precise communication gap between pro-cannabis students and the policy makers: the rules won't be easy to change.

Before the policy's initial review date (May 2019), Lisa Collins says an environmental scan was set forth by BCIT Safety, Security, & Emergency Management. It was a check-in with the policy's stakeholder bodies, including the BCITSA, Housing, and Government Relations. None of the stakeholders were able to



successfully raise major issues in the policy. Hence, the policy review was delayed to an indefinite time. "During that environmental scan, stakeholders responded positively to the current Cannabis policy. And as a result, at this time, we're not recommending any change."

Jamie Hoenisch does not recall any active callouts to be consulted on the marijuana policy, nor does he buy the thoroughness of the environmental scan. "If they talked to any three people," he hypothesizes. "They would have found one person that was not accepting of the policy. And even people who probably don't smoke marijuana probably don't think it's a fair policy."

"I guessed my activism was going to be necessary in this case," he recalls. "I heard about the policy when they were implementing it and I didn't agree with it at the time, but I didn't say anything. I thought there was going to be other people saying something."

What's Next?

Just as my conversation with Jamie Hoenisch was about to end, we just happened to run into Vasily Baryshnikov, the student representative for BCIT's Board of Governors. Baryshnikov's job is to put forth a student perspective in developing policies for the school. Immediately, Hoenisch relays his concerns to Baryshnikov, asking, "They don't want people stoned at the machine shop, but do they want people drunk at the machine shop? Because there's a bar. If that's the case, they should shut down the bar."

Baryshnikov listens intently as Hoenisch questions the ban's enforcement. Baryshnikov says he is in full agreement with banning weed in classes (particularly near heavy equipment and machinery), but he acknowledges that banning cannabis-smoking around the residences is debatable.

Still, he says enforcing the allowance of marijuana would be hard to pull off, especially when it comes to liability and protections.

"Most of the policies that are put in place is there to protect the institute (BCIT) as an organization," informs Baryshnikov. "If something happens and then BCIT gets sued and is held responsible. They can say, 'Well, we had a policy in place.'"

There is also a possibility that BCIT could move to an even harder line—removing smoking of any substance altogether. Kwantlen, Langara, and Douglas are all smoke-free institutions, and BCIT could follow suit.

Whenever the policy gets revisited, whichever direction the policy evolves remains to be seen. Hoenisch would obviously be opposed to the smoke-free solution. Instead, he says a better solution would be a designated cannabis smoking area. He describes, "A little room or a building, maybe a third of the size of the [Habitat] bar where people are allowed to smoke weed inside. Then you're not smoking weed outside and you just have ventilation."

Findings by the Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) support his proposition. In a document they submitted to the UBC Cannabis Development Policy Committee, they say that designated areas would respect the wishes of both cannabis users and those who do not want to be exposed to cannabis smoke. But a vapor lounge, they say, would create the most compromise. CSSDP tells the committee, "Investing in spaces to vaporize cannabis rather than to smoke maintains efforts for a smoke-free campus and encourages a healthier mode of consumption."⁴

At the end of the exchange, Baryshnikov invited Hoenisch to attend the next open meeting for the Board of Governors. At the time we met with him, he had still yet to find out what would be on the agenda, if

the cannabis policy would even be addressed. Making any significant revisions to the policy, to the dismay of Hoenisch and other pro-pot students, would not be a stone's throw away. Baryshnikov explains, "One of my misconceptions at the beginning is that things are getting done at the meetings. No, things are being rubber stamped at the meetings. It's really hard to reverse."

Hoenisch will be graduating this year, so he may not see any changes happen while he is still at BCIT. After he graduates, he says it's not likely he'll look back, so any activism he chooses to engage at the present time will be cut short. His stakes in this cause are low, but he told me that if he were to take any action, it would be for taking a moral stand.

As both men were courteously wrapping their exchange, at one point Hoenisch tells Baryshnikov, "I might show up to that [Board of Governors] open session, and if I do, I will be loud."

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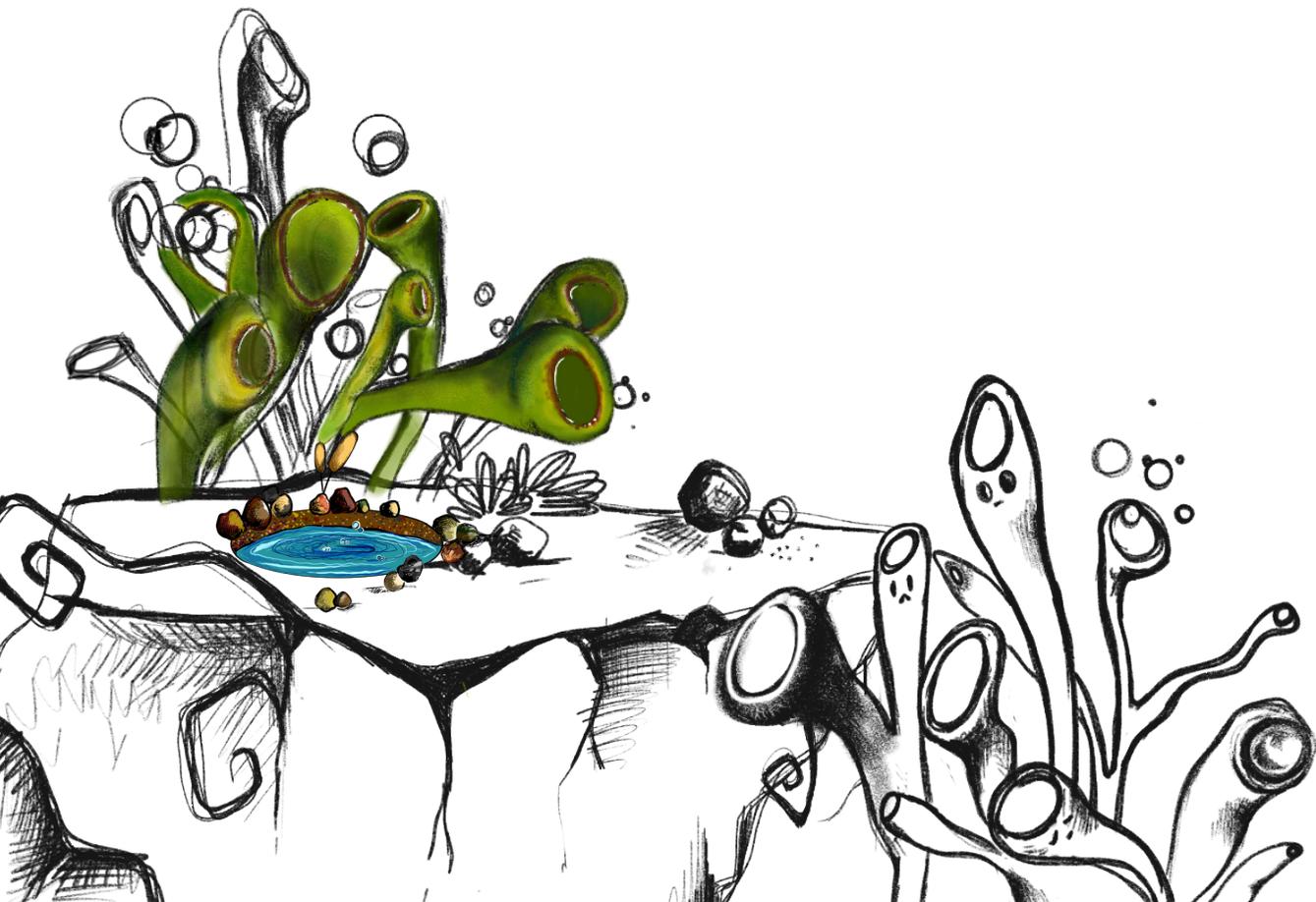
Sheku Nafisi

illustrator & graphic designer

Sheku Nafisi is a multi-disciplinary designer and artist based in Vancouver who specializes in graphic design and Illustration. Her artistic style ranges from abstract minimalism, to photo realism, to conceptual, all the way to detail-oriented decorative.

Her work has been utilized in advertising, children's book illustrations, magazine covers and illustrations, packaging, and logo design.

Like many other illustrators and graphic designers, her approach to a design will change based on the mood of the project, the audience, and other factors. Regardless of the project though, she always starts traditionally, with a pencil sketch on paper. Once she's satisfied with her original concept, she will convert her sketches into a digital artwork, or occasionally finish it by hand.





Title: Wonderland
Acrylic & Marker on Canvas

Title: Green Dragon
Digital Illustration



Title: White Rabbit
Digital Illustration





Acrylic & Marker on Canvas

Plymer Clay →



Mixed Media on Paper

SPEAK UP SPEAK OUT

SUSO Destigmatizes Mental Health

words Lauren Edwards
illustrations Sheku Nafisi

content warning: this article discusses self-harm.

November is the highest-suicide rated month of the academic year for post-secondary students. As we creep closer, consider Speak Up Speak Out (SUSO)'s tagline "don't let mental health be the elephant in the room"

Between October and November, post-secondary students experience the weight of mid-term exams, taking five or more courses, working, and possibly applying for co-op and industry jobs.

These factors automatically eat up time that could be spent with family and friends, getting a good night's sleep, exercising, or making nutritional meals. These are the top tips for staying

mentally healthy according to the Canadian Mental Health Association—specifically the British Columbia division.

From September 30 to October 4, SUSO provides services and resources out of their "mental health toolbox" like Doggy De-Stress, a free suicide prevention training workshop called QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer), social outings, and fitness-oriented activities. The central theme throughout the weeklong event is destigmatizing mental health.

THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

According to SUSO's website "In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experience a significant mental health problem or illness. This means most of us will know someone who has experienced a mental health problem." The mental wellness week strives to "to eliminate stigma, increase awareness and create an inclusive, caring campus." Unfortunately, suicidal thoughts can still be present and can take lives.

Most Canadian universities have extended or added breaks during the school year to alleviate stress for post-secondary students. However, there are still some establishments that don't have a fall reading break, such as the University of British Columbia (UBC), BCIT and McGill University in Quebec. In the past few years, UBC and McGill reported the number of appointments for counselling and other mental health services more than doubled.

Suicides on campus are not usually publicized, with little mention of the actual word 'suicide'. Instead, most institutions avoid speaking about the subject for what is assumed to be liability reasons. Two took students recently took their lives on university campuses—the tragic passing of Spencer Stone at Vancouver Island University, and a student at the University of Toronto (U of T). Their deaths sparked conversations about mental health support on campus.

On November 5, 2018, Vancouver Island University student Spencer Stone fell from the top of the library building. He was 21 years old. Many students were inside the library during his fall, and others (who received counselling) witnessed the impact.

Spencer's parents, who addressed the public shortly after the incident, said "if you're feeling overwhelmed beyond belief and you feel like you have no options, just give yourself an hour, talk to someone on the phone because those moments can pass. Just seek out somebody before you do something that you can't take back."

In March of 2019, a U of T student would take their life on campus, making it the third of its kind in eight months. The event ignited student protests, stating it was due to the school's negligence and "limitations" on counselling appointments.

When the Canadian National College Health Assessment took a survey among students in 2016, the numbers were striking. It showed 59.6% of students felt hopeless, 64.5% reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety, 44.4%

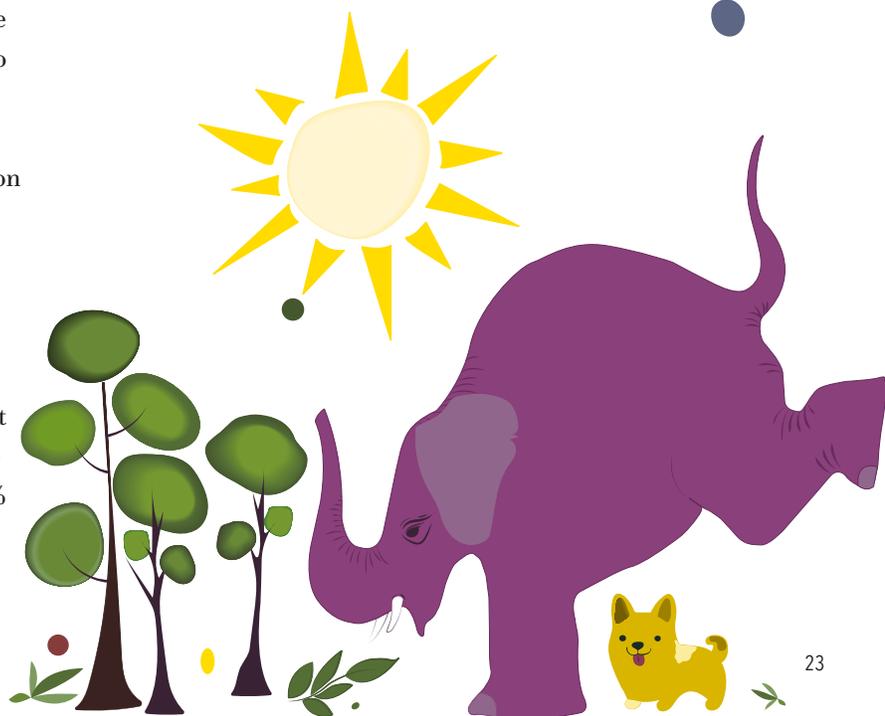
reported feeling so depressed they had difficulty functioning, 13% took taking their life into consideration and 2.1% attempted to do so. The reports of anxiety, depression and hopelessness were the biggest increases since their last survey in 2013.

BCIT students are warned about this school's intense course load from word of mouth and reviews online. With many students striving for greatness and success while carrying seven or eight courses, it's no wonder suicide prevention and mental health awareness programs are in place.

Although the Library's napping pods might not be present during SUSO's mental health fair, utilizing their resources can help ease off some life stressors, essentially putting your mind to rest so your body can too. Also, by opening up and approaching the topic open-mindedly, we can help educate each other. Similar to the Bell Let's Talk day, SUSO invites you to join the movement and actively participate in destigmatizing mental health. This can be achieved by speaking up, speaking out and addressing the elephant in the room.

For the full SUSO schedule, check out bcitsa.ca/suso/.

For sources, please see the online article at linkbcit.ca



Changing Your Narrative

A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE ON MENTAL HEALTH

This Fall, Link had the opportunity to speak with Samantha Pasielski, a BCIT Graphic Design Student. Pasielski opened up to us about her experiences with mental health, and her perspective on helping those struggling with mental health.

ILLUSTRATIONS SAMANTHA PASIELSKI

When people offer to make their support available to those with mental illness, how should they conduct themselves?

I think more often, people want to give “advice,” but telling someone what to do can be harmful. If you genuinely want to support someone struggling with mental health, here are some suggestions:

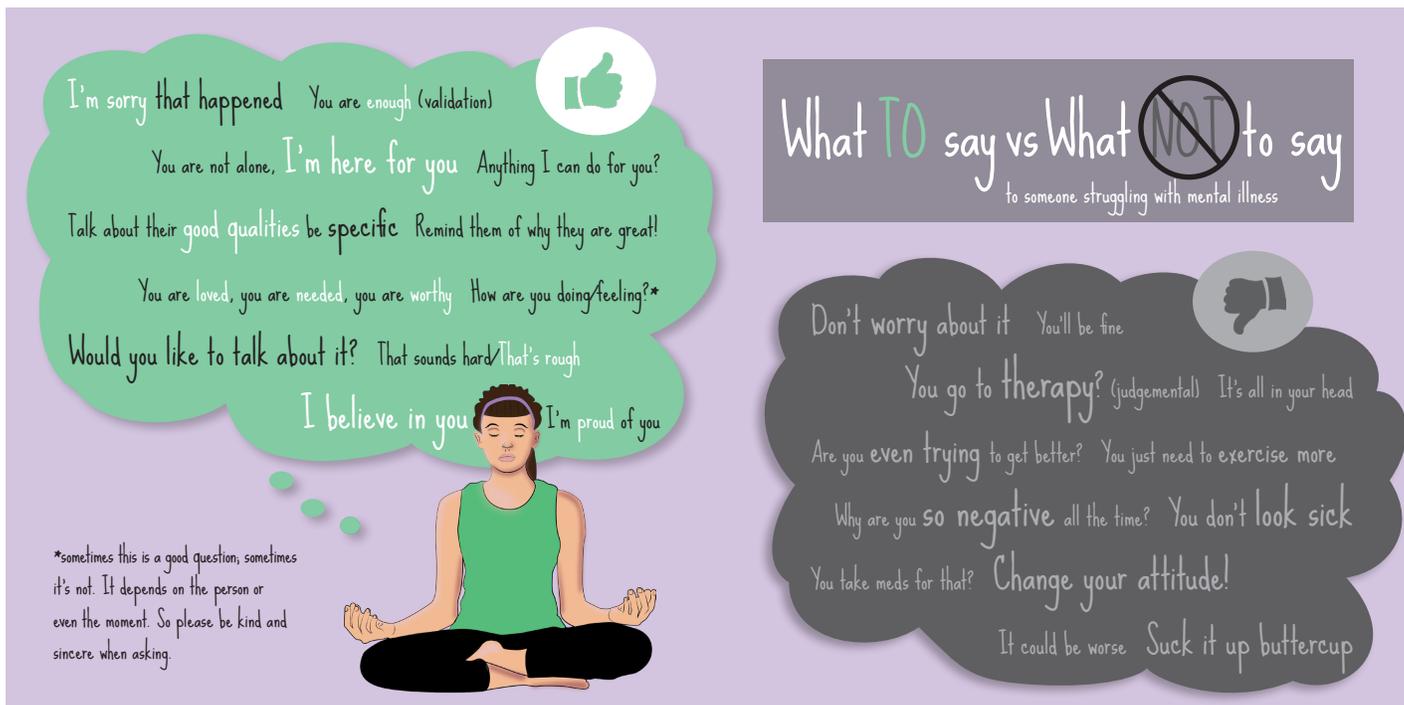
- Check in on them.
- Be an available safe space. Listen to them and respond with empathy, not advice.
- Remind them of their strengths.
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help.
- Encourage them to seek professional help and accompany them if necessary (If you are not trained in counselling, you are not letting your friend down if you suggest professional help.)
- Invite them for a meal, or bring one to them
- Offer to do their dishes or take out their garbage. Depression can leave them extremely fatigued with little motivation.

Knowing someone cared enough to check in on me regularly made a world of difference. It gave me a safe space to say I’m sad for no reason, where I would be accepted as I was in that moment and not judged. Since my mind would always lie to me, it felt important to have my confusing emotions validated.

People experience mental illness differently, so there isn’t a “one size fits all” solution that works for everyone. It’s essential to make sure that the person who is struggling knows that you are there for them. Just sitting with them can mean more than you know.

What impact do micro-aggressions and harmful everyday phrases (“It could be worse,” “Change your attitude,” “You don’t look sick,” etc.) have on you?

You would never tell someone who just cut through their hand and is profusely bleeding that “it could be worse.” Why would you say that to someone who is struggling with mental illness? Just because you can’t see what they are struggling with, doesn’t make it any less real.



TEXT 686868 (CANADA) TO REACH THE CRISIS TEXT LINE. A REAL PERSON WILL CONNECT WITH YOU.

“You don’t look sick” is a very hurtful phrase that invalidates their experience and the way that they are feeling. Just because an illness isn’t seen doesn’t mean it’s not valid. Would you invalidate people who suffer from arthritis, diabetes, IBS, migraines, or infertility? You don’t know what that person has gone through. Some people are highly functioning and are also suffering from depression, anxiety or another form of mental illness. By using micro-aggressions and harmful everyday phrases, they may not feel “sick enough” to get help. This is not true. You can get help at any stage.

Those who struggle with invisible illnesses are incredibly strong. If you are struggling with mental health, I applaud you. You’ve survived all your hardest days and you’re still here. We need you here, you’re the only you there is. I promise you, there is hope.

When others learn that you have a mental illness, how differently do they treat you?

I have had good experiences when I’ve shared my struggles with anxiety and depression. I was blessed with a community who would be there for me when I reached out. A lot of people who were close to me also struggled with some form of mental illness, and they were understanding. It’s hugely important to have someone to talk to that understands what you’re going through.

I know that people aren’t always supportive when you open up. One of my friends bravely told her

parents, but unfortunately, they chose not to believe mental illness exists. Unfortunately, some people seem unaware of how their words could negatively impact those who are struggling.

What work needs to be done to reduce the stigma of mental illness?

We need to remind people that not all illnesses are physical or visible. We don’t know what battles people are fighting. I think we need to talk about mental health to spread awareness and in doing so, normalize it. It’s helpful to learn how to respond to someone who is struggling with mental illness, and to have resources and support available.

We also need to stop using words like depression, OCD, and bipolar so casually in conversation. Saying “oh I’m so depressed,” when you are sad about something is invalidating the actual illness.

By talking about mental health more freely, we are slowly making strides in reducing the stigma. This article is one of those small steps, and I’m proud and thankful for that.

If you are struggling, feel free to reach out to me. You can reach me at spasielski@my.bcit.ca or DM me on Instagram @spasielski.studentdesigns

You are not alone.



ONE-BREATH MEDITATION

Eduardo Basile

Student life is hard. It's filled with assignments, examinations, and projects, and we still have to find time for work, family, and day to day tasks. This pressure can build up into anxiety, weariness, or even depression.

Meditation works wonders as a tool to deal with those feelings. Stopping everything for a moment and being mindful is enough to change your mood and keep you going through the rest of the day. We rarely have time to do all the things we need to, so I'm here to share the one-breath meditation technique, an easy way to connect with your present self and relieve your mind from external pressure.

Sit back in a comfortable position, wherever you are. Close your eyes and clear your mind by taking one slow, deep breath, being mindful of the present moment and nothing else. If you're having a hard time quieting your mind, focus on the air going in and filling your lungs. Hold it for a couple of seconds and release it as slowly as you can. That's it.

You'll see how effective this quick meditation can be, calming down your uneasiness and getting you ready to keep going on with your life, taking almost none of your precious time. You can do it several times a day, if needed. If you ever feel you need to go deeper, just keep breathing.

Overnight Oats

Overnight oats are one of the most diverse healthy breakfast options available. They're naturally gluten free, can be served hot or cold, and can be made in hundreds of different flavours. Once prepared, they can last all week in the fridge (though they will get softer and creamier the longer they sit).

Eating clean healthy food can be beneficial to your mental health, and eating tasty food can make any day better. Make up a few on the weekend, and have a grab-n-go breakfast all week long.

You can alter most of this recipe and still have it work out, so have fun with it, and change it up so you don't get bored.

Basic Recipe

- 1/2 cup Rolled Oats
- 1/2 Cup Milk or Milk Alternative
- 1/4 Cup Yoghurt or Additional Milk
- 1 Tablespoon Nut Butter (optional)
- 1 Teaspoon Seed/Nut (optional)
- 1 Tablespoon Maple Syrup or Honey (optional)
- 1/3 Cup Chopped Fruit, Fresh or Frozen (optional)



Mix all ingredients in a sealed container (glass jar, tupperware, etc) and leave in fridge at least 6 hours. Mix again, and enjoy. If you'd like it warm, microwave (in a microwave safe container) 45-60 seconds.



Mango Raspberry

- 1/2 Cup Rolled Oats
- 3/4 Cup Mango Kefir
- 1 Teaspoon Chia Seeds
- 1 Tablespoon Maple Syrup
- 1/3 Cup Frozen Raspberries

Mix and Serve. We used kefir in place of the yoghurt and milk to add additional probiotics.



Apple Cinnamon

- 1/2 Cup Rolled Oats
- 1/2 Cup Milk
- 1/4 Cup Yoghurt (Vanilla or Plain)
- 1 Teaspoon Sliced Almonds
- 1 Tablespoon Honey
- 1/3 Cup Chopped Apple
- 1 Teaspoon Cinnamon

Mix and serve.
This one is great warm!



CULTURE of CONVENIENCE

words Rozali Telbis



Humankind has long tried to find ways to simplify our lives. It wasn't until the 1960s when the convenience revolution took off. Domestic conveniences like the TV dinner, cake-in-a-box, and the countertop microwave oven began to emerge. In the '60s, these convenience technologies restructured the foundations of social and domestic life.

Educator and professor Ursula Franklin noted, "Technology built the house in which we all live."¹ Today, that house is filled with smart devices to turn off our lights, measure our breathing, track our heart rate, count our steps, monitor our stress levels, announce the weather, and lock our doors. Franklin predicted how technology would fundamentally re-order and restructure social relations and the self.

Today, people see convenience technology as an instrument of liberation and freedom for all. Convenience technologies have delivered us more shortcuts to life's menial tasks, but they are governed by systems of corporate imperialism; they are ironically doing more to enslave than liberate us.

Amazon: The Harbinger of Convenience

Online retailers are “saviours” in today’s fast-paced way of life. As providers of convenience, they have created a new industry of imagined needs the average person would depend on in order to navigate modern life.

Since Amazon’s inception, CEO Jeff Bezos has always been overzealous about convenience. Bezos once said that books were too inconvenient to use, despite having founded the world’s biggest bookstore.

People may write an article or two criticizing Amazon’s poor working conditions,² treatment of staff,³ federal tax avoidance,⁴ or its cozy relationship with the fossil fuel industry,⁵ but any criticism is quickly buried when it’s time to buy something. Amazon’s growing revenue is proof that people don’t want to give up access to convenience – even if it means supporting a company that has a long history of taking shortcuts to make an extra buck (or billion).

Amazon’s annual net income more than tripled⁶ from \$3 billion in 2017 to \$10.1 billion in 2018— a 31% revenue increase in one year. Jeff Bezos’s net worth is around \$137 billion, essentially making his riches by preying on humans’ desire for instant gratification.

Some people strive to consume as a way to improve their lives, and Amazon makes this too convenient. In our quest for instantaneity, we trade out the very things that give our lives meaning: obstacles, roadblocks, and struggles that make the reward so much more gratifying.

Is it possible to resist this rabid consumerism? Let’s consider how one would go about buying a rare book. It would take tremendous time and effort to rummage through mom and pop resellers to obtain a copy. Amazon, on the other hand, would have it shipped and delivered at the click of a button. Most people, understandably, would choose Amazon. Consumers are deprived of access to choices aside from mega corporations.

How did we get to this point of rewarding gargantuan companies instead of supporting the free market? People embrace corporate giants because they make their lives marginally more convenient. Is the convenience worth discarding values like justice, equality, and respect?

People who question these consumerism trends are often seen as cynics, as if they resist for the sake of resisting. They’re told to “get with the times.” It’s evident that technological utopians control the playing field. The first technological revolution was different in the sense that people could still opt-out. Today, that option is gone. People in most western cultures no longer have a choice to opt-out of using products from unethical companies. If they reject technology, it will inevitably impact their lives negatively.

A Predictable State of Living

The Big Four corporations—Google, Facebook, Apple, and Amazon—control the convenience landscape. They rely on data management and algorithms to make recommendations, anticipate desires, and predict what people will buy next. Algorithms gently nudge away independent decision-making and autonomy.

Critical thinking, autonomy and free will are all things that make us human. Without them, we become like the AI products we create: predictable, measured, calculated, and without a sense of humanity or consciousness.

The big four would not be successful if we, the consumers, didn’t embrace them. They figured out the secret formula and realized that we’d more often choose convenience over ethics.

Convenience certainly has its advantages, but if the trade-off is our sense of humanity, then we must question who’s really benefiting here.

Culture of Compliance

Today’s convenience technologies such as smart-phones and GPS’s have fostered a culture of compliance, in that they become a means for ordering and structuring daily life.

While these convenience technologies have raised living standards, they have, in turn, enabled consumers to conform to their dominance. Ursula Franklin describes these technologies as being ‘prescriptive.’ According to Franklin,⁷ “prescriptive technologies eliminate the occasions for decision-making and judgment in general and especially for the making of principled decisions.”

In the 1800s, philosopher Michel Foucault prophesized that the human body would be used as a regime of control for efficient operations: physical activity would be measured; movements were to become efficient; and bodies would be poked and prodded, used to analyze and experiment. He warned that we, as humans, would willingly turn our bodies into human-machine hybrids. He was right. Not only do we purchase devices to simplify our lives, but we've allowed our physical bodies to be controlled by convenience technologies in exchange for the illusion of convenience.

We try to optimize our bodies through gadgets that promise us a better life. These methods of control have been indoctrinated in us for hundreds of years. Today we openly embrace these gadgets, even though many of them have forced us to work faster and harder, with the end result of us being more overworked and mentally anguished than we were before.

Beyond Convenience

Convenience creators always boast about liberating people with their shiny, new gadgets. They spout words like 'user-friendly' and 'progressive' to win over the public. The same thing happened in the '60s with the emergence of industrially processed food, when they marketed it as a way to liberate women.

Every time a new gadget is released, it shapes and reconfigures the way we act. We saw it with the most unassuming of technologies like the dishwasher. Now we see it in smart devices, apps and the Internet of Things.

Our obsession with metrics has gone far beyond embracing convenience. We are now in the throes of creating the optimal human being by monitoring our heart rate, counting our steps, posting modified pictures of ourselves, adjusting our macros, tracking our mindfulness, customizing our workouts, self-diagnosing, and bowing down to the almighty algorithm. In order to live our best life, we must be precise, calculated, and methodical. The promised liberation of convenience has turned into enslavement. We should caution against blindly seeking liberation in technology. If not, we are at risk of losing our humanity.



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TECH STARTUPS

October 22, 2019

5:30 - 7:30pm

RSVP: www.bcitsa.ca/beaboss/events

With the rise of smartphones, apps and social media, tech start-ups are no doubt a growing trend. It's a desirable route, but with increasing competition, good advice early on can be the difference between success and failure. Gain wisdom from the start-ups that have succeeded and gather info on how you can save time, money and energy along the way.

By the end of the session, you will learn:

- If your idea is worth 'betting everything'
- Next steps after developing a Minimum Viable Product
- When to pivot and how to do it well
- Ideas to creating a work culture (Are all tech companies all about ping-pong and Beer Fridays?)

