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Seventy-Seven Years Later

Content warning: genocide.

As of tomorrow, Israel's genocide in Gaza will have entered its second year. The confirmed death toll currently stands at over 66,000 according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, though the true casualty count is likely to be far higher. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spoken at the United Nations and unveiled a new twenty-point "peace" plan in conjunction with US President Donald Trump, all while having publicly endorsed the "Greater Israel" vision — the expansion of Israel across the northern Arabian peninsula — on Israeli television just one month prior. New illegal settlements have been greenlit by Israel in the West Bank. Last Thursday, the Global Sumud Flotilla was hijacked by Israeli naval forces in international waters while on its way to break Israel's siege on Gaza. Israel has launched an air attack on Qatar and repeated air attacks against Yemen, in addition to engaging in a brutal 12-day war with Iran this summer. Israel's war of aggression is quickly spilling into West Asia.

But this escalatory pattern is not one that started just two years ago. The "two years" timeline, the narrative that Western discourse has and is continuing to peddle, is profoundly ahistorical. To say that Israel's crimes began two years ago is a whitewashed starting point, a rescaling of the timeline that ignores how this spiral of escalation began in the first place. It is a retelling of history that allows Western nations to scrub away the inconvenient truths behind the Palestinian struggle: namely, that the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians from their lands since the Nakba seventy-seven years ago is the very continuation of the West's colonial history.

Israel's genocide in Gaza is the culmination of a century-long colonial project: one that began with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, with Britain becoming the first Western power to declare support for the Zionist project in Palestine. It started implementation in 1948 with the wave of ethnic cleansing known as the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic). This violent expulsion of Palestinians was conducted not by rogue factions but by mainstream Zionist groups like the Irgun paramilitary: the very Irgun which would later be absorbed into the Israeli Defence Forces and become the ideological predecessors of Israel's ruling Likud party. The indiscriminate killing of Palestinians in Gaza is not solely the policy of the current ruling party, but the core of Israeli policy from its foundation to the present day.

The settler-colonial logic behind Israel's actions is a direct echo of the genocide of Indigenous peoples in North America by European settlers. Just one week ago, on September 30, we observed the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation here in Canada. It is a day meant for us to remember the bloody foundations on which Canada was built: to recognize that the land we now stand on was violently wrested from the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island by European settlers, and that the systems of oppression used to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their rights and dignity still exist to this day.

But can we say that we have learned, here at McGill, when this university has yet to divest from companies involved in Israel's military-industrial complex? Can we say that that Canada has learned, when this nation is still selling weapons to Israel despite having pledged to cease arms exports because of the genocide?

If these last two years, and the preceding seventy-seven, have been any indication, the answer is a clear "no."

What have Western media institutions done, when faced with the blatant hypocrisy of their actions? Double down on lies and silence the

truth. Basic reporting on Gaza has been suppressed in Western newsrooms, to the point that media organizations have become little more than stenographers for Israeli propaganda. An open letter from BBC journalists to the agency's Board of Governors notes how "it has felt that the BBC has been performing PR for the Israeli government and military." Social media is also coming under siege, having been identified by Netanyahu himself as "the most important weapon ... to secure [Israel's] base in the US" and beyond. All this comes with Israel's relentless targeting of journalists in the Gaza Strip, and escalating repression against Palestinian journalists in Western nations.

If accurate coverage of the very news from Gaza has been dwindling, then objective analysis of Palestine, Israel, and their role in Western imperial policy has been next to nonexistent to begin with. To consider the Palestinian cause in isolation is to ignore its central role in European, and now American, foreign doctrine in West Asia. Israel is not an outlier but a lynchpin of the West's settler-colonial project in the Arabian peninsula and beyond. In the 1956 Suez Crisis, France and Britain enlisted Israel in a military attack on Egypt to seize the Suez Canal and depose then-Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Netanyahu, after his first term as Israel's PM, testified to Congress in 2002 in support of an American aggression against Iraq — one that would be launched in the following year. Former NATO Commander Wesley Clark revealed in 2003 that after Iraq, the Bush administration was preparing to launch military assaults against Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia, and Sudan. Twenty-two years later, all these countries have now been directly attacked by the US, Israel, and/or their proxies.

Even peace plans have been weaponized in the name of settler colonialism. One can go back as far as the 1993 Oslo Accords, with promises to former Palestinian President Yasser Arafat of eventual Palestinian statehood having now faded into three decades of escalating oppression. In March of this year, the ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups was unilaterally broken by Israel to continue its annihilation of Gaza. The Trump administration's signature Abraham Accords has seen Arab nations normalize relations with Israel to undermine resistance against Israel. Jordan and Saudi Arabia have notably aided Israel in intercepting missiles from Iran and Yemen, and the UAE has been supporting Israel's economy through trade. In early September, declarations of ceasefire talks were used by Israel to attempt to assassinate Hamas leaders in an airstrike on Qatar. Trump's twenty-point peace plan, endorsed by Netanyahu and drawing inspiration from the leaked "Gaza Riviera" plan, would see the establishment of a transitional governing body for Gaza led by such 'peace-loving' politicians as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the co-architect of the Iraq War.

Western governments are not just complicit in Israel's atrocities. The genocide in Gaza is a full-throated continuation of the violence enacted by European settlers against Indigenous peoples worldwide. This inconvenient truth — that to this day, Western nations are continuing to pursue the same colonial agenda they have for centuries — is one the mainstream narrative is attempting to sweep under the rug. A narrative where genocide is normalized, war is peace, bombs and bullets and famine are the status quo. Where being born is reason enough to be killed in the name of imperial greed.

It is a narrative that we the students, we the generations of tomorrow, must do our utmost to fight. Keep your eyes on Gaza. Keep yourself informed. Reject this world that would have us support genocide. Remember the actions of those in power, and never forget their crimes.

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Flying High: Global Aviation Endeavours From Singapore to Montreal

Inside Singapore's role in International Diplomacy & the ICAO

Isabelle Lim
Culture Editor

As your average McGill international student, it's truly not every day that I'm invited to meet my country's Transport Minister, let alone in the country where I chose to study almost 15,000 kilometres away from home.

On September 25, under a gloomy gray sky, I arrived at the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Reception organized by Singapore at the Grand Quay in Montreal. I was greeted by beautiful Peranakan-style decor, a sumptuous feast including some of my local favourites (chendol bar, anyone?), and a massive crowd of people with United Nations (UN) pins on their blazers. It all felt a little bit surreal.

Since its founding in 1944, the ICAO has been a specialized UN agency dedicated to helping its 193 member states diplomatically and technically realize a dependable, shared network of global air mobility. Every three years, ICAO delegations from all over the world convene in Montreal, the site of ICAO's Head Quarters. There, they re-elect the ICAO Council, made up of 36 States selected to speak for all 193 member states in triannual Council sessions. The members of Council are chosen from three criteria:

Part I: States of chief importance in air transport.

Part II: States which make the largest contribution to the provision of facilities for international civil air navigation.

Part III: States ensuring geographic representation.

Next year marks the official start of the ICAO 2026-2050 Strategic Plan, under the theme "Safe Skies, Sustainable Future". The Strategic Plan for the next 25 years has three main aspirations: to achieve net-zero carbon pathways; to have zero fatalities from aviation accidents and acts of unlawful interference; and to position aviation as part of an accessible, inclusive, and affordable global transport network, ensuring that no country is left behind. The ICAO aims to attain these goals by 2050.

All these objectives have been wholly supported and furthered by Singapore, a small island-state in South-East Asia. Singapore has been a member of the ICAO Council since it was first elected following the

council's three-seat expansion in 2003, and has been fully committed to serving the aviation space ever since. The Singapore Aviation Academy (SAA). In the last year, the CAAS has also signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Arab

"When you speak as one, you might be considered small, but when you speak as a hundred: wow, suddenly your collective voice is much louder."

nation serves the ICAO Council under Part II of its criteria. Compared to its larger counterparts on the ICAO Council, Singapore is a much smaller state, but it is nonetheless considered to have made some of the largest contributions to civil aviation. Singapore's Changi Airport, which was voted the world's best airport in 2025, saw 67.7 million visitors in 2024 — more than ten times the Singapore population of 6.11 million. The Civil Aviation Authority Singapore (CAAS) also participates actively in regional and international working groups beyond the ICAO, such as the ASEAN Air Transport Working Group, and the recently established Asia Pacific Sustainable Aviation Centre (APSAC), among many others.

In pursuit of ICAO's net-zero emissions goal, Singapore launched the Singapore Sustainable Air Hub Blueprint in February 2024. The Blueprint outlines 12 initiatives in an effort to decarbonize the aviation space in Singapore, with an emphasis on promoting the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) through self-imposed levies, aiming for a one per cent target in 2026 and growing to between three and five per cent by 2030. The use of SAFs is thought to be able to contribute to 65 per cent of reduced carbon emissions by 2050.

Regarding matters of inclusivity and in alignment with the ICAO's "No Country Left Behind (NCLB)" initiative, Singapore established the Singapore-ICAO Developing Countries Training Programme (DCTP) in 2001, which sponsors 330 fellowships and ten scholarships yearly to aviation specialists from eligible developing ICAO member nations. These include room and board, as well as exclusive on-the-ground training and mentorship opportunities with

Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), which represent 22 and 54 member states respectively, to deepen and augment collaboration in civil aviation training. These underpin objectives of supporting growing aviation markets and meeting global demands for air travel, through not only the aforementioned fellowships, but also in-region training across key fields like aviation safety and security, accident investigation, and sustainability, among others.

Considering Singapore's accomplishments in civil aviation and air travel sustainability, it comes as no surprise that this year, Singapore was re-elected to the council as a Part II nation with a record 176 of 184 votes. "We were anticipating a particular number of votes and I think it exceeded our expectations," says Tavis Tan, Technical Expert for the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the ICAO, during an online interview with the *Daily*. "It was quite a euphoric moment."

Tan, who graciously extended me an invitation to Singapore's Reception, is adamant that a nation's size does not determine its destiny. When asked about Singapore's position as a smaller state within the intricate nexus of international diplomacy, he says: "It's a common theory in International Relations that bigger states will do what they want and smaller states will suffer what they must. However, in today's international geopolitical environment, there's a bit more room for smaller states to navigate ... The better question is: how [does a nation] define [its] role in the larger international ecosystem?"

As an example, he cites Singapore's establishment of the Forum Of Small States (FOSS) in 1992, which now comprises 108 countries. The FOSS is a



Photo from @siow.jeffrey via Instagram

voluntary, non-ideological group of small states that convene to discuss respective issues of concern, which are sometimes overshadowed by the interests of their larger counterparts. "When you speak as one, you might be considered small, but when you speak as a hundred: wow, suddenly your collective voice is much louder."

International diplomacy is an extremely delicate affair — especially in today's increasingly polarized political climate, where intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the UN come under fire for their lack of concrete action and inability to keep international peace.

"[When] I was a political science and international affairs student, I remember feeling the same way [about the effectiveness of IGOs]," ponders Tan, "but I think it's very easy to make these remarks from the outside. When I joined the UN, [I realized that] people worked very hard and spent weeks trying to amend, replace, or omit one word in a paper to ensure there was consensus. This was important because if the paper didn't go through, then there would be no progress ... The UN is complex, and I think 'complex' is already simplifying it."

It is precisely these growing rifts and dichotomies in world politics that make the job of UN diplomats that much harder, especially when questions of morality hang so precariously in the balance of international diplomacy and competing national priorities.

"As a practitioner of international relations and international diplomacy," Tan continues, "I can begin to appreciate how difficult it is, managing [the] different interests of different countries

but also managing interpersonal relationships. [...] When we play this role on the international stage, we navigate these conversations very carefully. There are many things happening that we don't see."

When asked about Singapore's future in the ICAO, Tan emphasizes the idea of Singapore "earning its place." "Every day, we try to show that we are on it. We pore over papers, spend many hours [in the office]; we collaborate, and we nitpick over things. It's important to show that we care enough because we don't take our seat lightly, and we need to be a deserving member of the Council."

Permanent Secretary of the Singapore Ministry of Transport, Peet Meng Lau, puts it best in a LinkedIn post shared on September 28: "[Singapore] may have only one major international airport and one airline on [its] tiny island, but [it] can still do [its] bit for the world." When one takes into account Singapore's immense contributions to and involvement in the global aviation space, its small size begins to mean little. In fact, it serves to make its achievements all the more impressive. For Singapore, it seems the sky is the limit from here on out.

SSMU Cuts Midnight Kitchen

Student government enacts austerity measures against long-running service

Evelyn Logan
News Contributor

On October 1, five Midnight Kitchen (MK) employees were laid off by the SSMU Board of Directors (BoD) without notice. This action came as a shock to the MK employees, the SSMU union, their labour union, and McGill students who use the service. Following the employees dismissal, all SSMU members were informed of the BoD's decision via a mass email titled "Reorganization of the Midnight Kitchen Service."

The email has become a point of contention between MK supporters and those in favour of the reorganization. The email cites that the primary reason for reorganization came from a review of MK's "operations and finances," which revealed that only a "small portion" of the budget went towards food. The BoD states the reorganization will be to create more "paid and volunteer" opportunities for students, and also will "no longer be limited to exclusively vegan options." Though in the email, which includes no concrete plan for how meat will be included in the service in the future, the BoD cites their inclusion of meat as a part of their goal to make "food services more accessible and responsive to all." The inclusion of meat in the service would not necessarily cater to students who have vegan, vegetarian, dairy-free, halal, or kosher diets; however, the vegan and nut-free meals previously provided by MK made their service accessible to a diverse range of people with different diets. To "ensure transparency," the BoD included MK's fiscal budgets from 2022 to 2025 in the notice. These budgets were not accompanied by additional context detailing how MK operates, notably excluding

@save.mk.coalition asks the SSMU for "democracy, accountability, and representation that protects us from austerity."

how the service receives many donations from food security groups and farms to sustain their operations, outlined in an FAQ posted to the Instagram account @save.mk.coalition. The email also omitted the BoD's plan for MK's future and dates where members could expect the service to return.

From this email, many were driven to @save.mk.coalition's comment section, an account created in solidarity with MK, to share their opinions on MK's restructuring. Several arguments ensued in the comments of their first post. These responses demonstrated a roughly even split between those for and against the MK's restructuring. One user left a comment beginning with "It is very disheartening to see the SSMU board-glazers in here celebrating the shutdown of this campus institution." Others left comments such as "me when 75% of their budget goes towards salaries (crying emoji) but remember they're a 'non-profit, volunteer run' service."

The comment section under the post has become a microcosm for students' reaction to MK's restructuring. Students expressed their inability to understand how MK operated with the organization's budget reports due to the lack of context in the email sent by SSMU. To combat misinformation, the account posted an FAQ which directly addresses the commenters' questions. This post draws comparisons between MK and the People's Potato, their Concordia University counterpart, who is able to serve free lunch four times a week, but primarily due to the fact that they have "a much larger kitchen space and a significantly larger team of staff."

Nonetheless, there is still ambiguity for what the future of MK will be like. One of the primary concerns of those who utilize MK's meal services is when they will return. In an email to the *McGill Daily*, SSMU's president Dymetri Taylor, stated that the "best case scenario" is that five weekly servings will be undertaken starting the first week of January 2026; however, our more realistic estimate is that it'll be three servings per week, starting in the first week of January, with an escalation to five servings starting in mid-February." Despite his announcement, there remains uncertainty on whether or not MK's new structure will be able to achieve this "best case scenario." Taylor further estimated that weekly lunches would return by mid-November, leaving students without the service for over a month.



Photo courtesy of Evelyn Logan

In addition, Taylor clarified what MK would look like after undergoing reorganization. The role of the new Food Services and Hospitality Manager, would be to "manage and guide the service while also serving as a mentor to students," a role which he compared to the "Gerts Bar Manager and the Gerts Cafe Manager" in his correspondence with the *Daily*. Though these positions have worked for Gerts Bar and Cafe, Orion, one of the recent MK hires who never received a contract from SSMU to make their position official, doesn't believe it will work for MK.

In a verbal statement to the *McGill Daily*, Orion mentions how the format of a singular person overseeing student labor "simply will not work in the MK kitchen." They, similar to other recent hires, believed that since they were offered a job in September, MK would continue to operate smoothly. Unfortunately, Orion states that they and the other new hires were not given their contracts before learning of MK's restructuring, despite "a direct promise from Dymetri Taylor during the most recent General Assembly." Cecelia Callaghan, a U2 student, also mentioned hearing Taylor promise to send the contracts during her speech at the rally following the announcement of the reorganization. Though the BoD claimed the restructuring would afford students "a range of paid and volunteer opportunities," Cece and the other student hires,

as of now, have not been given a role in the reorganized MK.

On October 2, a rally in solidarity of MK took place featuring speakers from SSMU union, the Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM), People's Potato, and two of MK's recent hires that were never given their contracts. This rally follows directly on the heels of the October 1 inter-union rally held by AGSEM, as well as the Association of McGill University Support Employees (AMUSE) and the Association of McGill and Professors of the Faculty of Arts (AMPFA), that called out the McGill Administration for their austerity practices in light of the recent budget cuts. In their FAQ post, @save.mk.coalition asks the SSMU for "democracy, accountability, and representation that protects us from austerity."

In its 22 years of operation, MK has made inroads within the greater Montreal area and among the radical community. Beyond their weekly lunch service, MK has formed relationships with community organizations like QPIRG McGill and Happy Belly, hosted workshops, and maintained a community garden. They have pledged solidarity with Palestine, Sudan, and Congo, and have catered at many different events like QPIRG McGill's Rad Frosh. These kinds of relationships are extremely important, and caused many commenters to lament the loss of this iteration of the service. One user who ended their comment

with "MK provides an invaluable service to the community" sums up the sentiment.

The five laid-off MK employees have been most impacted from this reorganization. Many of these employees had been working at MK for more than five years. Yet, per the budgets attached to email and as mentioned by Orion, they were being paid below the livable wage according to *l'Institut de recherche et d'information socioéconomique*.

Beyond MK, Queer McGill has also undergone upheavals, such as the emptying of their library room on the fourth floor of the SSMU building. In a statement sent to the *Daily* from Juno Cinq-Mars, U2 student, and the rest of the coordinators on the Queer McGill team, it was revealed that even after filling out an Office Relocation Proposal, their request for a new library space was "denied," while the space "appears to be empty and is not bookable on VEMS." They also point out how these changes "have not benefited us as students, especially queer students, whatsoever. We are constantly being swept under the rug."

Quebec Turns Down Federal Funding Designated to Target Systemic Racism in the Criminal Justice System

Sonia Berman
News Contributor

On August 13, 2021, David Lametti — Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada — announced the investment of \$6.64 million in expanding the accessibility of Impact of Race and Culture Assessments (IRCAs) in Canada, beginning on April 1, 2021. Between 2021 and 2024, the federal government increased the funding for legal aid programs from \$6.64 million to \$16 million. The Quebec government has declined the use of this federal funding from Ottawa, which is designated to target systemic racism in the criminal justice system.

These funds would be allocated towards provincial and territorial legal aid clinics, civil rights organizations that produce IRCAs, and national training efforts and awareness campaigns.

Marie-Hélène Mercier, a representative for the Quebec Justice Department, elucidates Quebec's reasoning, that the government is "not party to any funding agreement involving Impact of Race and Culture Assessments, as Quebec doesn't subscribe to the approach on which the funding program is based, namely systemic racism."

Dr. Marie Manikis, an associate professor and William Dawson Scholar at the McGill Faculty of Law, clarifies to the *Daily*: "The Quebec government does not recognize that there is such a reality of systemic racism and therefore does not think this consideration should have a role in sentencing," despite the fact that,

"several studies, particularly in the context of criminalization have made clear that this phenomenon exists and contributes to substantive inequalities."

According to findings published by the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety (CCJCS), Black people were found 24 per cent more likely to serve time in jail after arrest or sentencing between 2005–2016. Additionally, a CCJCS study from the same time period shows that Black Canadians are 36 per cent more likely than white Canadians to be sentenced to 2 years or more. Additionally, a 2021 Statistics Canada report shows that Black people are nearly six times more likely to be accused of homicide. Despite the utility of such statistics, cohesive racialized data regarding alleged offenders of the criminal justice system is limited and underreported.

As of now, Quebec residents must pay out of pocket for IRCAs.

IRCAs have been used in Canada for over ten years to address the overrepresentation of Black people in the criminal justice system by assessing how the accused's experience with systemic racism has influenced their current circumstances.

In an interview with CBC, Michael Tshimanga, a board member of the Viola Desmond Justice Institute, a pro-bono group which fights against anti-Black racism in Montreal's criminal justice system, described IRCAs as "a clinical forensic assessment done by a masters level mental health clinician." He elaborated on the factors considered by IRCAs: physical disability, history of systemic racism and anti-Black

racism within the particular region the IRCA is conducted, education, family history, and a collateral interview with acquaintances of the accused — such as former employers, family members, and community members.

According to Dr. Jeffrey Kennedy, an Assistant Professor in the McGill Faculty of Law, in an interview with the *Daily*, "As a general point, we might note that having more and better information makes for better decisions. This is also true for sentencing, which involves complex moral and practical assessments about complex people and situations."

Dr. Kennedy also referenced a statement made by Justice Campbell in the 2017 *R. v. Gabriel* case, where the IRCA was used to contextualize the crime through the lens of cultural and racial factors: "Sentencing judges struggle to understand the context of the crime and person being sentenced. To do that, judges rely on [their] own common sense and understanding of human nature. Sometimes that isn't enough. Our common sense and our understanding of human nature are products of our own background[s] and experiences. An individual judge's common sense and understanding of human nature may offer little insight into the actions of a young African Nova Scotian male. [IRCAs] serves as a reminder of the fallibility of some assumptions based on an entirely different life experience."

"The state's failure in various institutional aspects of life to provide equal opportunities and the reality of discrimination give rise to

various phenomena documented in research, including more limited potential for choices, greater incentives for offending in certain contexts, and reduced stakes [to comply] with the law — all these dimensions are relevant to the level of blameworthiness of an offender, which sentencing law recognizes as an important consideration," states Dr. Manikis.

Dr. Manikis continues, "For these reasons, taking into account the person's social context, which includes their background and discrimination results in a sentence that is more tailored to the person's degree of responsibility for the offence...and their motivations for offending, which can play an important role [in] eventual crime reduction/or social safety."

"Importantly, the relevance of IRCAs is not limited to decisions about more or less punishment. IRCAs might also help judges choose strategies that may more effectively address the issues underpinning criminalized behaviour," stresses Dr. Kennedy. "For example, in the [2021] case of Anderson" — regarding the use of IRCAs in sentencing Rakeem Rayshon Anderson, an African Nova Scotian, for being found with a loaded gun at random motor vehicle checkpoint — "the kind of information provided helped choose between two different kinds of programming, one of which was thought to be more effective for the person being sentenced. In this way, IRCAs hold the potential to help achieve practical aims like reducing crime," he stated to the *Daily*.

"The state has an important role to reduce its criminogenic role and

therefore any response or sentence needs to also provide adequate resources that address the substantive inequalities that often [are] the root cause of offending," added Dr. Manikis.

Kwame Bonsu, a representative for the Federal Justice Department, told CBC that, "Canada remains ready to work with Quebec and other interested provinces and territories to support the implementation of IRCAs in their respective jurisdictions."

Ultimately, provinces and territories decide how and if these funds are used. Currently, the provinces and territories without such funding include Prince Edward Island, where the representative for the justice minister says they are considering it; Saskatchewan, where progress is challenged by a lack of professionals, though discussions with the federal government are being facilitated; Alberta, where an agreement made in December of 2024 has been suspended; Nunavut, which cannot respond for the present moment; and the Northwest Territories, which are ready for the legal aid office to reach out.

As Dr. Kennedy stated to the *Daily*, "Having a bit of humility means acknowledging the limits of one's own understanding and allowing others to help provide information and perspectives that begin to bridge the gaps. This applies to sentencing judges too, and IRCAs help with that."

An End to Gender-Inclusive Writing in Quebec Public Communications

Bill leads to questions regarding the respect of trans and non-binary peoples' rights and lives

Aurelien Léchantre
Staff Writer

On September 24, Quebec's French Language Minister Jean-François Roberge announced that the government was putting an end to the use of gender-inclusive writing in all public communications of the Quebec Government. Thus, the policy would ban words like 'iel', the French equivalent to they/them; other options such as 'toustes' or 'celleux' that had begun to be used in government communications; and abbreviated doublets like 'étudiant.e.s.' that encompassed multiple gender identities. These words provided an alternative to the French general masculine, thus acting as an inclusive, gender neutral option in the gendered language. For Roberge, the absence of one general rule meant the administration and its different offices used various,

sometimes inconsistent terms in official provincial communications. For Roberge, "there was a lot of confusion" about gender-inclusive writing. Hence, his solution to this was to outright ban its use.

Roberge then claimed that using gender-inclusive writing led to the employment of words "that pose significant problems for the French language." While languages evolve and change in accordance with their social context or even to advance social progress, the Office Québécois de la langue Française — or the Quebec Ministry of the French Language — seems to take a conservative approach towards the practice of the French language, preferring an unchanging Quebecois French to a dynamic language. Correspondingly, the ban of gender-inclusive writing can be viewed as the grammatical manifestation of the increasingly conservative turn of the Legault government since the last ministry

shuffle on September 11. Widely unpopular in public opinion, Legault promised drastic change and announced a new government to illustrate this change..

However, banning the use of gender-inclusive language from official documents by far exceeds grammatical conservatism: it has a real life impact on non-binary and trans communities. The government has announced a plan to ultimately extend this stance to gender-inclusive writing in schools and the healthcare system. but this stance also shows the lack of consideration Legault's Government and Jean-François Roberge have for trans and non-binary communities, who are Quebec citizens as much as any other person. Celeste Trianon, a trans activist, says, "It's a kind of policy which serves absolutely no purpose except to exclude people." For Victoria Legault, director for Aide aux Trans du Québec (ATQ), the

decision came in the context of increasing polarization: "We're seeing a rise in hatred, intolerance and violence toward trans and nonbinary people here and everywhere," she stated to the *Montreal Gazette*. "Quebec's decision just encourages or supports this."

Gender-inclusive language, even if it only appears as something that "doesn't make sense" for Roberge, has a tangible impact on LGBTQIA+ communities in Canada and elsewhere. The Edgewood Health Network (EHN) testifies that using inclusive language contributes to the mental health of those concerned. It allows transgender or non-binary people not only to be seen, but to be respected, whether it be in a conversation, via text message, or a government document.

Inclusive language and writing practices allow for citizens of Quebec to feel seen, as well as allow them to receive the same sense of



Eva Mariott-Fabre
Visuals Editor

inclusion and respect as cisgender peoples. Banning it leaves queer communities susceptible to exclusion, despite the Ministry's claims to protect them.

White Coats On Hold

What is Bill 106 and why does it matter?

Lucia Shi
News Contributor

On September 23, medical students from all four schools in Quebec (McGill University, Université de Montréal, Université de Laval and Université de Sherbrooke) gathered in front of McGill's campus to rally against the new Bill 106 and oppose the teaching strike from medical specialists. The event was organized by the *Fédération médicale étudiante du Québec* (FMEQ).

On Monday, September 15, the *Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec* (FMSQ) instructed members to suspend teaching and supervision of medical students as part of the ongoing dispute with the government over Bill 106.

Presented during Quebec's National Assembly in May 2025, Bill 106 is a government initiative aimed at improving access to family doctors. The bill introduces a capitation model, in which physicians' compensations are partly based on the number of patients they care for and the complexity or vulnerability of those patients, rather than solely on fees for individual visits or procedures. Doctors could still be paid through other methods, such as hourly rates or per-service fees, with the government regulating the mix of payment types. The legislation encourages physicians to see more patients by setting appointment goals and introduces performance targets that can influence physicians' compensation. Health Minister Christian Dubé has indicated that up to 15 per cent of doctors' incomes could be linked to meeting these performance benchmarks.

What does this mean for the general public? Many physicians have voiced concerns that Bill 106

Many physicians have voiced concerns that Bill 106 could affect access to care.

could affect access to care. Patients with less urgent and more minor medical needs might face longer waits for appointments, which are already difficult to secure, while doctors prioritize more complex or high-risk cases that are weighted in performance calculations. As doctors are expected to see more patients to meet performance targets, the bill could lead to shorter, more rushed appointments, reducing the time doctors spend addressing complex or chronic conditions. Increased pressure on physicians could also lead to increased stress and burnout, which could further compromise patient care. Overall, these changes may have a direct impact on both the availability and quality of healthcare for the public.

The primary concern for the FMSQ was that the government had established conditions without engaging in negotiations. The association disagreed with several aspects of the legislation and sought to have these points reconsidered. As a result, 91 per cent of FMSQ members voted to suspend medical school teaching as a means of pressuring the government to open discussions. The *Fédération des médecins omnipraticiens du Québec* (FMOQ) has stated that its members will participate in the FMSQ's teaching strike beginning on October 4.

While medical students support the FMSQ and FMOQ's demands, the teaching suspension has had adverse effects on their education and training. First- and second-year students have to rely on recorded lectures to learn, and some can only virtually access anatomy labs via Zoom. This limits hands-on experience due to the absence of in-person supervision.

Ryan Kara, the president of the McGill Medical Society, mentioned in an interview with CBC that third and fourth-year medical students are the most affected by the strike. They are currently in their clinical rotations, seeing patients in hospitals under the supervision of specialists.

With the strike, they do not have, "any clinical exposure at the moment. This means a risk of delayed graduation. As of July 2026, a new cohort of doctors are going to start in the hospital [...] These doctors may not start in July 2026 if the negotiations continue and graduation is delayed."

Such delays could increase staffing shortages and place additional

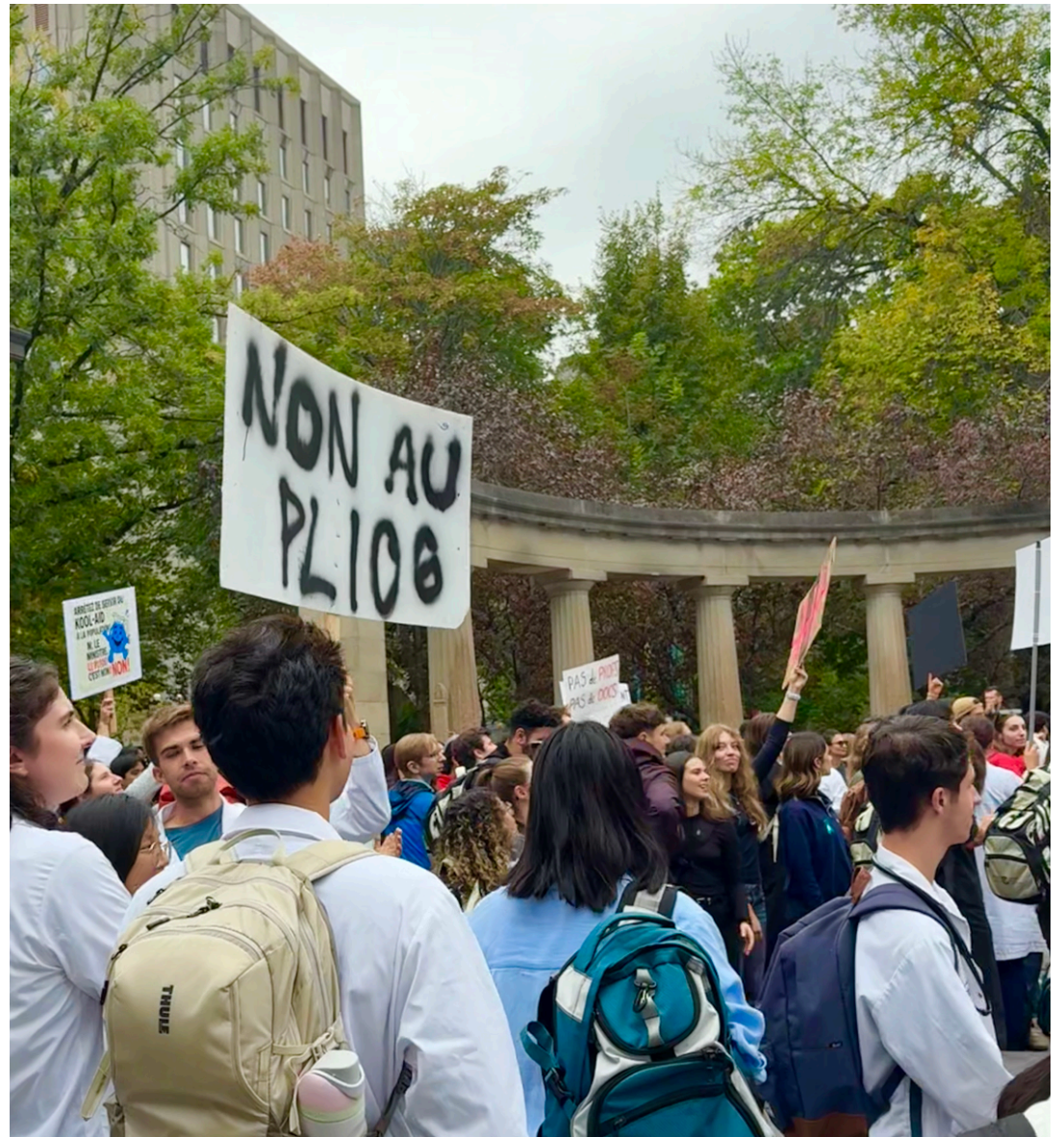


Image courtesy of Lucia Shi

pressure on current physicians.

Medical students spend time in hospitals across different specialties to explore which field they want to pursue and eventually apply for in residency programs after medical school. With teaching and clinical training disrupted by the strike, students risk losing valuable hands-on experience that helps them make these decisions. This not only leaves them less certain about which specialty to choose, but could also weaken their applications for the Canadian Residency Matching Service (CaRMS), the system that assigns students to residency positions.

Disruptions in clinical training may leave future residents less prepared for hands-on patient care. In addition, this reduced exposure to practical experience can affect the skills and confidence of upcoming doctors, potentially impacting the overall quality of care they provide and placing additional strain on the current healthcare system.

Kara also clarified that although the FMEQ supports the FMSQ and FMOQ, they cannot support an unlimited teaching strike. The potential consequences on graduation timelines, CaRMS eligibility, and clinical training are significant. While students express strong support for the FMSQ's position and urge the government to resume negotiations, they oppose any indefinite strike that would compromise their education.

To further highlight their

concerns, medical students from across Quebec held another protest outside the National Assembly on October 1. According to Robin White, a first-year medical student at McGill, around a hundred students participated in the protest in Quebec City. Shuttle buses were arranged by the FMEQ to allow Montreal students to take part in the demonstration.

"We were chanting and some cars supported us by honking," White said. "I think we definitely had a bigger impact at the parliament than in Montreal. One of the school's presidents also mentioned that he was meeting with some people from the parliament in the afternoon to negotiate."

"What worries me the most with Bill 106 is how it will affect the treatment of patients," explained White. "From what I've seen, twenty minutes is already not enough time for most patients, so I can't even imagine what would happen if physicians have less time than that. I also can't imagine how the protest is affecting upper years who are doing their clerkship. I want to support them and help as much as I can."

"I agree with the demands of the physicians, because you can't offer treatments based on quotas," said a medical student who chose to remain anonymous. "As first-year medical students, we are not as affected by the teaching strike because our lectures are recorded, yet I understand the stress that

upper-level students feel with the ongoing strike."

As of recently, the FMSQ and are in mediation with the government, but it remains unclear how the situation will develop. University officials are preparing for various possible outcomes. One scenario sees the current pressure measures lifted, allowing medical teaching to continue as usual. Another scenario anticipates that the FMSQ's pressure tactics will persist, with the possibility that the FMOQ could direct its members to suspend teaching and supervision of medical students for an indefinite amount of time. As the suspension of teaching activities persists, upper-year medical students face growing anxieties regarding their futures. The clock is ticking.

"The healthcare system is already challenging to navigate. Putting additional pressure on doctors won't help patients, it will only make things harder to access," said an anonymous protester. "I hope the government and physicians can reach a fair compromise on Bill 106. It's important that doctors have the opportunity to make their concerns heard, but I also hope that medical students won't be forced to suffer the consequences of this dispute any longer than they have to. We need a solution that addresses the issues without compromising our education."



Photo by Eva Marriott-Fabre

The Word Celebrates 50 Years at the Heart of Milton-Parc

An interview with owner and co-founder, McGill alumnus Adrian King-Edwards

Eva Marriott-Fabre
Visuals Editor

Nestled among several blocks of student apartments is The Word at 469 Rue Milton, a small independent bookstore home to a considerable collection of secondhand academic books. For what The Word lacks in size, it makes up for with its charm; its tangible impact on the McGill community is evident. Students can be seen throughout the day browsing bookshelves devoted to philosophy, literature, and more. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the bookstore's

establishment in the heart of Milton-Parc, where founder and McGill alumnus Adrian King-Edwards first began selling books from his apartment, which at the time was marked to passers-by with a photograph of George Bernard Shaw.

The *Daily* had the opportunity to interview King-Edwards and his wife, Donna Jean-Louis, for this occasion in their own home, whose shelves of collector's editions and snug armchairs are merely an extension of The Word's cozy interior. Read further to learn about King-Edwards' city-wide adventures in sourcing books, stand-out interactions with customers, and,

ultimately, his love for the McGill and Milton-Parc community.

This interview has been edited for clarity and conciseness. For the extended interview including an exclusive Q&A with Donna Jean-Louis, The Word's Art and Children's Books specialist, former university instructor, and wife of King-Edwards, visit www.mcgilldaily.com.

Eva Marriott-Fabre for The McGill Daily (MD): Tell me, what started your lifelong love of books? At what age did you become interested in reading, and who were your earliest influences?

Adrian King-Edwards (AKE): I'm sure it came from my mother reading to me. I can remember her reading David Copperfield — that's a very strong memory — and she read *Black Beauty* to me. So definitely, my love of books came from my mother. I can't remember ever thinking about it. I mean, it was just what I was interested in. So, I mean, I did well in high school in literature, and I really enjoyed it, and I can remember being close with the English teacher in high school. And then, of course, when I came to McGill, I studied literature.

MD: How did you decide you wanted to study at McGill

specifically? What brought you to Quebec and Montreal?

AKE: The bright lights of Montreal...you know, from outside, it appears like an exciting city. It is an exciting city. Also, growing up in northern Ontario, you have a huge prejudice against Toronto. I really, really enjoyed being at McGill and studying literature. It was a great experience.

MD: How did you foster your love of reading throughout your degree?

AKE: There were several things I

was very keen on. We did one whole term on *Ulysses* by Joyce, and I was very keen on Faulkner. I was so keen on Faulkner that I wanted to go and see his home in Mississippi. I didn't have any money, and in those days, people would often hitchhike. So I hitchhiked from here to Mississippi.

Another professor, Professor Malik, did *Paradise Lost* with us. It was a very intense class on *Paradise Lost*. And then we did Chaucer with Professor Williams, and he would read to us in Middle English. And that, again, was fantastic. It was a great department. I really, really enjoyed being there.

MD: I read that *The Word* was not your first endeavour in selling books, and you started by selling books in the back of a Volkswagen in British Columbia. So what got you there?

AKE: I had this idea, as I was going along, that I would be a writer as well, and I also sort of started writing short stories, and that kind of thing, towards my third and fourth year. I went on a cycling trip after I graduated, and then I came back, pursuing my desire to write. I was going to write about my cycling trip — I cycled from London to Lagos, Nigeria. It took me about six months to do the whole thing and I've still got the bike in my garage.

My first wife and I had really close friends in BC, in Belcarra Park near Vancouver, and we went out to visit them for the summer. We would leave here in April, and we would be gone all summer. The municipal law was that you could only sell books in unincorporated areas — places that weren't towns. We'd go to lumbering camps, mining camps, and little hamlets which weren't incorporated. We'd put out a blanket on the ground and put our books out, face up, and we would sell books like that, and we'd get to know a lot of people. People would tell us, "you know, there's this guy who lives in a cabin on the lake about ten miles that way, and he's got a big collection of science fiction." We would go and knock on his door, and we'd trade books with him, and inevitably, he would feed us. We were working hand to mouth, so sometimes we'd have to wait a little longer to sell more books before we could buy gas. It was really fun...my first wife had a child who was four years old when we were doing this, and in northern BC people would come by on horseback and take them for a ride.

MD: So what brought you back to Milton-Parc?

AKE: I've lived on Lorne, Hutchison, Milton and Aylmer ... this area is a wonderfully exciting

neighbourhood to be in because of all the students. And at the end of August, I really look forward to the students coming back, because there's all that life and excitement and energy back in the neighbourhood.

MD: How were you able to establish such close ties with McGill and why was it important for you to develop these relationships with your alma mater?

AKE: Well, we always wanted to have a store that was seriously academic and would benefit the students. I mean, that was always our focus. Then, well — first it was the students who told each other, and because my wife and I both graduated from the English literature department, we had all kinds of contacts with people in that department. And then it grew from there...30 professors ordered [their textbooks] through us. But it was quite a few years before we started ordering new books for courses — it didn't happen immediately.

MD: What challenges did you encounter in establishing and developing *The Word*? What were the difficulties that come with being an independent bookstore?

AKE: We had the store back when we were living in our apartment next door — it was a four-and-a-half for \$105 a month, and for a year and a half we sold books out of our apartment. There were four

doors there that all looked the same, so we put a picture of George Bernard Shaw in the window. And then people would know. It got to the point where people would just walk in. I mean, nobody was ringing the bell or anything. They just kind of knew because it was the cool underground bookstore.

There's two aspects here: the buying and the selling of books, and then dealing with the customer. And if you're going to be successful, you've got to like both. And it's really fun. I mean, every day when I'm in this store, on at least one or two occasions people will find a book that they're really excited about, and you can hear them. They'll take it off the shelf, and they'll go "Ooh!" And that's one of the things I live for.

One of the advantages we have is that we're so visible because hundreds of students walk by us every day. We're selling literature books or philosophy books for a third of what they cost at Indigo or Paragraphe, so there's obviously a price difference. And also there are the second-hand books. We have a much wider range of books available. We have books from 1950 or 1960 ... last week, we actually bought 70 books by and about Heidegger. Most of those books are out of print and they're not available. Even if they're on Amazon or Abe [Books], there's a premium attached, because we might be selling the book for \$15 and theirs might be \$25 — \$25 American, in fact. We definitely have a cost advantage.

MD: What does your weekly

schedule look like? How often are you at the actual bookstore and how often are you out sourcing books across Montreal?

AKE: Well, usually I'm in the store, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. And then Thursdays, I do house calls. I go all over Montreal and we also buy books elsewhere. I mean, we bought a major library in Halifax a few years ago. In Toronto, we buy books ... Ottawa, we buy books. But in those situations, we have to be sure that it's really good. Sometimes you go for a house call and the books were misdescribed, or there really aren't any books you want. So sometimes it doesn't work. If we go down to Connecticut, for instance, we have to be sure that there's going to be good books. And we always buy books when we travel. It's something we always do. We just go buy books. You never know what you're going to find — you can find some really real gems like that.

MD: How have you seen both *The Word* and the McGill community develop alongside each other over the years? Do you think there are many differences from when you first started, or even when you were a student?

AKE: I mean the neighborhood has changed immensely. When we started the store, the neighborhood was run-down. It was mainly rooming houses for elderly people and poor students. And then over the years, everything was bought up and turned into condos, and now it's way more affluent than it

used to be. That's a major change in the neighbourhood. And although it doesn't really appear that way from the outside, we're making changes all the time in the store with regards to what we stock. Every week, we'll discover a new author, and we'll discuss whether we should stock their books.

I would recommend if somebody is interested in literature, to start a second-hand bookstore. However, it's really difficult now because of the really high rents. If we were just starting out now, we wouldn't be here. If we didn't buy the building 12 years ago, we would not be here because the rent would have been too high. Like any small business, you've got to work really hard to keep everything going ... Yeah, we're really fortunate. I've been glad that we've been in this location for so long. It's really extraordinary.

The Word is open from Monday to Saturday at 469 Rue Milton. For more information, visit www.thewordbookstore.ca.



The Hate Train on Teen Dramas

Increasing Popularity Gives Rise to Increasing Hate in Popular Teen Dramas

Abigail Schiff
Culture Contributor

Spoilers ahead!

Part of an endless pool of entertainment, teen dramas have long been extremely popular, and more recently have been a hot topic of discourse on multiple online platforms. Shows like *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, *The Vampire Diaries* (TVD), *Gilmore Girls*, and many more showcase a plot revolving mainly around teenage female protagonists.

As a result of their young age, the characters in these shows often make choices that the viewer doesn't agree with: Isabel (Belly) Conklin, from *The Summer I Turned Pretty* gets drunk on the Fourth of July and ruins her brother, Steven's relationship; Rory Gilmore from *Gilmore Girls* drops out of Yale; and TVD's Elena Gilbert continuously puts her personal needs before others, among other examples. Oftentimes, the main female characters in these shows get the most hate and backlash on platforms like

TikTok. Belly, Elena, and Rory are some of the most popular female main characters in teen drama television and yet somehow, they all receive extensive hate and backlash for the decisions they make.

Belly (*The Summer I Turned Pretty*), being the most recent character to enter the conversation, currently gets the most hate on the internet. As Belly navigates her late teen years and early twenties, she is constantly faced with difficult choices to make. She has to navigate the relationships she has with two very important people in her life who happen to be brothers (Conrad and Jeremiah), all while trying not to hurt either one. At the end of the second season, Belly has to choose between picking Jeremiah and hurting Conrad or vice versa. Yet people fail to realize that no matter what choice she makes, the outcome won't be perfect. They also forget that Belly is a young adult and she is going to make mistakes, as is normal for young adults to do. Though she is the main character and more focus tends to be on her, Belly gets

more hate for bad choices that she makes than any of her male counterparts. For example, Belly got more hate for choosing to be with Jeremiah at the end of season two than Conrad got for lying to her about his feelings, or Jeremiah for being in a relationship with Belly so soon after his own brother was.

Rory Gilmore (*Gilmore Girls*), although a less recent presence, but whose following has increased online, receives a lot of hate for her decision making and personality. In the beginning of the show, Rory is a studious and overall put-together character. What people don't like is her switch from a perfect and pristine student to a flawed young adult who ends up making more than a couple of bad decisions. Because she was set up as such a perfect character in the beginning, when her flaws were introduced in later seasons, people began to dislike her and disagree with her actions, deeming them out of character. People like to see themselves in a smart, studious, and good individual like Rory, and when that ideal of the character breaks, they feel like they can't

relate to her anymore because they don't want to be associated with her mistakes. Rory represents an academically gifted high school student having trouble upon entering university, and struggling to find herself. Yet her hardships, however normal, are received with less empathy and pure judgement from third-party observers.

Elena Gilbert (*The Vampire Diaries*), is yet another female main character who gets extensive hate. While she makes some bad choices, she is surrounded by people who have done much worse things, yet no one bats an eye. In the middle of a love triangle between two brothers, Stefan and Damon, Elena, not unlike Belly, is damned if she does, damned if she doesn't. Elena has also experienced a great amount of grief for such a young person, but everyone seems to think she is selfish for needing a friend to stay by her side. After losing her parents, although she had an aunt who stepped in, Elena took on a more maternal role towards her brother Jeremy. Yet, even though Elena was a teenager adjusting to her parents' death

and a drastic shift in her family dynamic, people still have a problem with her. Elena received hate for making decisions based on her feelings, but ultimately, she was a teenager who had gone through so much in such an early stage of her life. Still, people tend to overlook the age and situations of these characters and tear into their flaws instead.

It seems that in all of these shows, the female main characters get the most hate out of all of the characters, even more so than their equally flawed male counterparts. When watching them, people tend to forget that the character is supposed to portray a teenager who is inevitably going to make mistakes like all of us do. Hence, when watching these shows, viewers should exercise empathy, asking themselves if they would really do anything different when faced with the same pressures and circumstances.

Welcome (back) to the Machine

50 Years of *Wish You Were Here*

Matthew Tussman
Culture Contributor

Last month marked the 50th anniversary of Pink Floyd's ninth studio album, *Wish You Were Here*. The album is being re-released on December 12 and will feature the original tracklist alongside previously unheard demos and live recordings.

Released in 1975, the album followed the earth-shattering success of *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), which has since become the longest-charting record in Billboard history. With a well-documented history of interpersonal struggle amongst band members and the enormous pressure of having to follow one of the most important projects in music history, Pink Floyd emerged with an album centered on the themes of absence, isolation and loss – particularly in relation to former band member Syd Barrett whose substance abuse issues and declining mental health culminated into his

departure from the band in 1968.

Half a century later, the album's themes feel more relevant than ever before.

Having been introduced by my once-hippie father to Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979) at a young age, I have always had a profound admiration for the uniqueness of the band's psychedelic style and experimental sound. Revisiting them now, it is evident that their work has not only withstood the test of time, but has also successfully predicted how young people feel in relation to the dystopian world it once imagined.

"Remember when you were young? You shone like the sun."

Written as a tribute to Syd Barrett, the opening lines of the album's first song "Shine on You Crazy Diamond (Pts. I-V)" romanticize a brighter past before exploring what it means to feel truly alone in a world where chaos and social turmoil reign supreme. Unlike *Dark Side of the Moon*, which focuses on existential themes, *Wish You Were Here* only comments on the

outside world to the extent that is relevant in understanding our own positionality as listeners. The effect is a deeply personal one: listeners are invited to reflect not only on the state of society, but on their own place within it.

"You gotta get an album out, you owe it to the people, We're so happy we can hardly count."

In "Welcome to the Machine" and "Have a Cigar," Pink Floyd openly expresses their resentment towards the demands of the music industry and capitalist greed. Then and now, these songs allow young people to connect with the voices of teachers, politicians and anyone else imposing unreachable standards on those still trying to understand themselves. In a world marked by a new kind of socio-political turmoil, the message lands with a renewed strength on the young people of today. On university campuses, at family dinner tables, and across social media, divisions which have become stronger than ever have led to greater feelings of isolation

and being lost. One can't help but feel like the dystopian universe that the band once warned us about has come into existence.

"We're just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl year after year, running over the same old ground. What have we found? The same old fears, wish you were here."

That refrain from the album's title track, "Wish You Were Here," captures a mood familiar to 2025: the sense of longing for connection in an era defined by disconnection. Above all else, the lyrics of Roger Waters, the voice of David Gilmour, and the band's instrumentals make us, the listeners, feel like outsiders in our own home. This song in particular demands that listeners ask themselves the following: how did things get so messed up? In a society where anxiety and depression rates are skyrocketing to unprecedented levels, it comes as no surprise that its themes have taken on a renewed importance. Arguably more so now than in the 1970s, young people feel increasingly resentful

and powerless against a system that they did not create.

And yet, *Wish You Were Here* is not without hope.

For all its darkness, the album maintains a nostalgia and wishfulness for better days. Even in its most somber moments, Pink Floyd looks back fondly at what has been lost and holds onto the possibility of renewal. Perhaps this is where the record's timelessness lies: in its ability to balance despair with longing, anger with understanding, and pain with beauty.

Fifty years later, we are reminded that the themes of the album are not only still relevant, but are more important than ever before. Looking beyond all its cynicism, *Wish You Were Here* doesn't just describe a fractured world; it helps us endure it. On this anniversary, the teenagers of the 70s all the way up until today's generation are reminded that the album's greatest gift is the comfort of knowing that someone else feels these emotions too.

Is Montreal's Nightlife Really Dying?

The future of live music and entertainment in Montreal

Aurélien Lechantre
Staff Writer

Last February, Muzique — a popular club on Saint Laurent Boulevard — had to close after a 16 year run. John Gumbley, one of the owners of the club, admitted the club had grown run-down in recent years and needed to modernize, describing the closing as “bittersweet.” Muzique was a major nightlife institution in Montreal, having hosted some of the world’s most prominent DJs like Tiesto and Avicii.

In July, Blue Dog — another bar on Saint Laurent — had to close due to frequent noise complaints from neighbours. This same pressure was put on Champs, which had to consequently cancel its dance and live music events. Even stages that used to host Montreal’s rock and indie scene in intimate venues, like Divan Orange or The Divine Bell Social Club, are closing up due to the high number of noise complaints they have been facing.

Is the closure of these institutions a testimony to Montreal’s dying nightlife? Have clubs and live music only become a nuisance to gentrified Montreal neighbourhoods?

The cost of living in Montreal has risen dramatically in the last decade. With rent prices in Montreal skyrocketing by 71 per cent since 2019, ‘going out’ has become rarer as people opt for nights in over nights out to save money. ‘Home-tainment’ has become increasingly popular, with greater access to varied music through streaming, as well as the diminished price of consumption at home. This trend is not constrained to Montreal: nightclubs and bars are closing across North America and Europe as well. Great Britain, for example, went from having 3,144 nightclubs in 2005 to only 1,733 in 2025. The gentrification of certain areas of the city, like Mile End or the Plateau, contributed to rises in rent and consumption prices, and in turn the arrival of new residents either less inclined to enjoy or more intolerant to nightlife activities. This also means that nightclubs and bars are more exposed to noise complaints in Montreal. Unlike cities such as London, Toronto, and Melbourne, Montreal nightlife venues are not protected by the system of the agent of change principle. In these other cities, this system protects venues from abusive noise complaints by decreeing that new buildings in the neighbourhood adapt to their

surroundings and take responsibility for their own soundproofing.

The new “framework policy for nighttime activities,” issued by the Mayor of Projet Montréal, has been criticized by venues and nightlife actors. Despite promoting cohabitation, it does nothing to limit the costs of owning a venue. In fact, the framework proposes ‘24h spaces’ free of noise complaints, which would only lead to rental prices — and consequently consumption prices at these venues — skyrocketing. This is according to Mathieu Grondin, director of Mtl 24/24: an organization that seeks to develop and destigmatize nightlife in Montreal, particularly in the underground scene. Furthermore, if the plan agrees to financially support mainstream “centres of nightlife vitality” and independent theatres, not a cent will be sent to the underground scene of Montreal, arguably the most thriving cultural scene of the city.

Rave culture and the techno scene emerged in Montreal as early as the 1990s, stemming from the UK’s late 80s electronic tradition. At the time, G’nat, co-organizer of Montreal’s first rave, admits that “techno was still pretty obscure” as Montreal’s music scene was dominated by House music. However, the genre grew rapidly into one of the most

widespread in North America. Today, the rave scene, which is now both underground and legalized, have become popular to younger partygoers seeking novelty away from commercial clubs. While the DJs in a regular club often play one trendy hit after another, DJs and underground artists come with their own compositions and remixes, contributing to the novelty of the rave experience. Although illegal drugs used to contribute to the ‘novelty’ of the rave experience, the recent expansion of raves to the public, legalized scene has shown a growing inherent interest among youth in electronic music, from house and EDM to hard tech and industrial sounds. Raves and electronic music have emerged from the underground scene to the point that it was in Montreal that the first 36h party marathon of Canada was organized by Mtl 24/24 in August 2023. Halte, Montreal’s first open-air rave festival, also shows the rave scene’s emergence from the underground. Independently run by rave crews and collectives like Octov or Hauterageous in June of this year, the festival showcased underground sounds and artists while boasting as an open-air event accessible to everyone. Moreover, the electronic

scene has also reinvented itself to conquer new territory: more intimate and cozy venues like Cafe GotSoul or Cafe FAME provide alternative experiences of live and electronic music in inclusive spaces. These have brought the electronic culture out from the traditional club scene, which typically involves copious amounts of alcohol, loud bass and late nights out.

In addition to these alternative spaces, Montreal has seen a boom in the number of festivals it hosts, welcoming more and more especially during summer. While these are temporary events, they show the willingness of people to continue going out and enjoy live music and artists outside of the regular, commercialized night-out format.

The charm of Montreal’s live music venues and intimate spaces is one we can strive to preserve in various ways. Even with looming social problems, like gentrification and the surge in rent and cost of living, the Montreal nightlife scene has adapted: bringing its underground rave scene into the spotlight while learning from its resilience and constant renewal.

Skinny-Tok Commodification and Elitism

What are we doing to our bodies?

Emma De Lemos
Culture Contributor

YouTube, TikTok, Instagram — so many of our For You Pages are crowded with thinkpieces on skinny-tok, model culture, and fascism.

Yet, the concerns they raise extend far deeper than political ideologies alone. Drinking two liters of water per day, dedicating two hours for pilates, then cautiously counting the calories eaten and limiting one’s sugar intake may be considered a ‘clean-girl’ routine. However, this choreographed ‘care’ for body optimization is part of a system known as body politics — the practices and policies through which powers of society regulate the human body. This relentless scrutiny of intake shows little concern for well-being. Appearance alone takes centre stage.

Bodies are viewed as primary indicators of self-control and self-discipline. Indeed, people often feel entitled to comment on someone else’s body — the thinner one is, the merrier one is assumed to be, as exemplified by the Ozempic intake trend. Even in 2006, sociologist

Metta Spencer warned about a drastic change in women’s weight, due to the rise of model culture, which in turn instigated diet culture. Models, whose jobs are to embody ideal body figures, were becoming slimmer than most women. As a result, women began to reshape themselves to resemble them, commodifying skeletal thinness.

Sociologists warn about the cultural internalization of necropolitics, a concept defined by Cameroonian historian Achille Mbembe as a form of political power that operates through the social and literal deaths of individuals and populations. In its commercial form, necropolitics can be understood as the extreme control over and potentially deadly neglect of one’s body to conform to cultural beauty standards. Indeed, lifeless, frozen, perfect bodies surround us in pictures, ads, snaps, and stories. The media never fails to remind us of the materiality of our bodies — framing the human as bound above all by flesh and appearance. Furthermore, the number of people suffering from body dysmorphic disorder — a mental health condition in which one cannot stop thinking about one or more perceived defects or flaws in appearance — has never been so high.

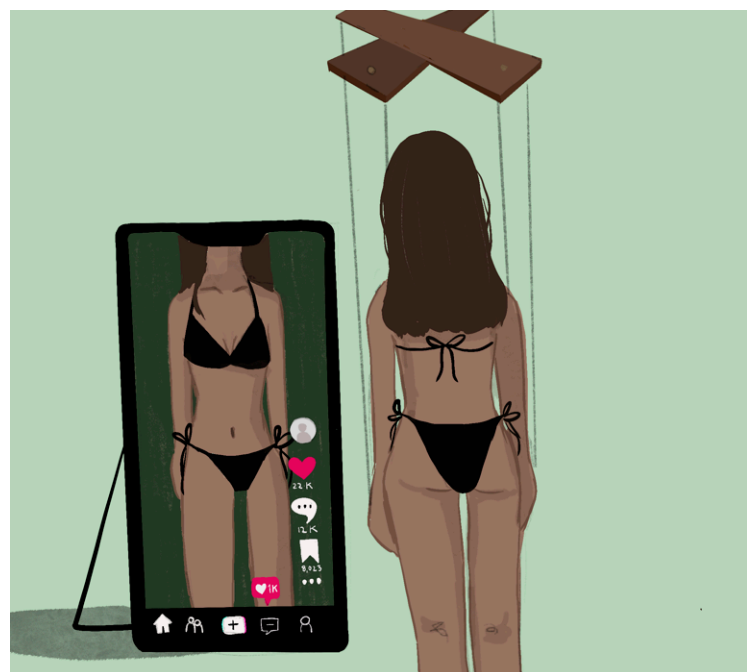
Bodies have become projects, where every change is intentional — weight loss, tattoos, surgery, muscle building, and so on. Through this notion of the body-project, bodies now lie at the core of identity, as sociologist Chris Shilling explains. In high modernism, which is inseparable from the rise of capitalism, individualism, and consumerism, images of perceived legitimacy replace social class realities.

What in our current culture leads us to hate our bodies so much? Why do we want to control them so obsessively?

The crux of this lies in how politics has bled into culture: widening class divides, glorifying elites, and turning bodies into shortcuts for social climbing. Video essays point out how the rise of model-cleansed bodies echoes the rise of populism in modern politics — here, silent racism often remains, since the preferred elite body stays a non-racialized, ‘modernized’ one. Even if they claim to stand far from each other on the political chessboard, both the extreme right and extreme left represent the interests of ordinary people against what is framed as the elite.

However, altering one’s body became a means of copying and thus passing as one of the elite — a social class elevator, and one of the main ways to attain social advantages. So you might not have noticed, but your body in itself is a tool for ideology — subtler, and

perhaps stronger, than protest. Politics leak into our identities, even when we resist its messages — rendering our bodies simply means to reproduce the status quo.



Nikhila Shanker | Visuals Editor

Dream Privilege

How Sleep Became A Status Symbol

Erandy Rogel
Staff Writer

I've always had a complicated relationship with sleep. Not love-hate so much as love-love — except the affair is entirely one-sided. I crave it, I court it, but when it's time to surrender, my body folds its arms and refuses. I know the science. Seven to eight hours will make me glow. Nine hours will make me a saint. I could probably teach a masterclass in sleep hygiene, if only I could pass the prerequisite of actually sleeping.

At eighteen, insomnia stopped being an eccentric quirk and turned into a medical file. I was prescribed Zopiclone, and when that didn't work, Seroquel — the tranquilizer they slip to people who see hallucinations, not just people who like to scroll at 3 a.m. And with this new drug came a kind of velvet sleep: dense and narcotic, like slipping underwater. That was until the next day, when fourteen hours later, I was disoriented. Eyes gummy, brain full of static, I was ashamed that the very cure meant to improve my sleep made me feel more broken than the illness itself.

For three years, I circled that drug like a toxic relationship: sometimes surrendering, sometimes resisting, never able to predict whether I'd wake up on time or at all. Last week, in a fit of impatience, I double dosed on a Sunday night. I started the next day at four in the afternoon, having missed two lectures and staggering around my apartment like a zombie. When I finally caught sight of myself in the bathroom mirror — greasy hair and vacant eyes looking back at me — I flushed the pills for good.

The irony is that while I was dragging myself half-conscious to classes and jobs, the world around me was busy fetishizing “eight solid hours.” Sleep has become less about survival and more about branding — another thing to optimize, display, and measure. Think of sleep tracking devices marketing their “sleep scores” as a badge of wellness, or mattresses selling minimalism as though they were iPhones, packaging rest itself as a lifestyle brand. What I've realized is that deep sleep has been reframed as a performance of privilege, wellness, and control; becoming one of the sharpest new markers of status in late-stage capitalism.

Before the industrial clock colonized our nights, sleep was less an eight-hour block and more a social pastime with intermissions. Historian A. Roger Ekirch notes that for centuries, Europeans practiced “first sleep” and “second sleep” — dozing off after dusk, waking around midnight to pray, gossip with

neighbors, or even sneak over to a lover's house before curling back into bed until dawn. Night had its own culture then, a looseness that feels almost illicit compared to today's rigid sleep-hygiene commandments. Imagine waking at 1 a.m. because it was simply the rhythm of life: your body in sync with darkness instead of productivity. What's striking is how ordinary that was, and how bizarre our modern obsession with “unbroken deep sleep” might look in comparison: not a natural state, but a demand engineered to serve factories, and the punch-in-clock. The eight-hour sleep model neatly mirrors the eight-hour workday, disciplining bodies into predictable cycles that fit assembly lines and office hours — and now, in its latest reincarnation, it feeds the wellness economy, where even rest is expected to be a performance.

By the 20th century, sleep had been drafted into the workforce. It was no longer just something your body did, but something scientists could measure, optimize, and discipline. Sleep labs sprang up to quantify REM cycles, transforming rest into a unit of efficiency. Mattress companies followed with promises that the right springs or memory foam would deliver not just a better night, but a better self with Sealy and Tempur-Pedic selling tranquility like it was a kitchen appliance. Now, in the wellness era, sleep has become the crown jewel of lifestyle optimization: blue-light glasses, melatonin gummies, the Calm app's celebrity bedtime stories, Oura rings that score your unconscious. Art

critic and essayist Jonathan Crary points out that in a culture where every second must be monetized, sleep stands out as the last barrier to 24/7 capitalism. Yet even here, the market has found a way in: our dreams themselves are packaged as content, whether through apps that narrate fantasies with celebrity voices or tech that tracks and gamifies REM cycles. Crary warns that this intrusion represents the ultimate commodification of human interiority — sleep and dreaming, once the most private recesses of life, reimagined as another frontier of productivity and consumption.

Contemporary sleep discourse likes to present eight hours as a common denominator, but the data shows otherwise. Research by clinical psychologist Aric Prather demonstrates a consistent correlation between socioeconomic status and sleep quality. Shorter sleep duration, more interruptions, and a higher risk of insomnia are all tied to material disadvantage rather than individual “bad habits.” The sleek world of sleep tech — noise-canceling sleep pods and blackout curtains — only amplifies this divide. Access to these technologies and the quiet, stable environments they provide is unevenly distributed. Working-class sleepers in cramped apartments or shift workers facing irregular hours simply don't have the same opportunities for “restorative sleep.” Meanwhile, Matthew Walker — professor of neuroscience and psychology and the director of the Center for Human Sleep Science at the University of California, Berkeley —

promotes in his *New York Times* best-selling book *Why We Sleep* an ideal of “optimal sleep” as universally attainable through discipline and good hygiene. This sidesteps structural inequities that make such optimization a luxury. The cultural script around sleep continues to frame exhaustion as a personal failure, even though its very distribution reflects deeper social fault lines.

These inequities are not only environmental, but also embodied and intergenerational. Studies in social epidemiology show that chronic stress from financial insecurity, racial discrimination, and precarious work rewires sleep patterns at a neurological level, making rest both lighter and more fragile. Health disparities compound this effect: sleep apnea, asthma, obesity, and untreated chronic pain — all more prevalent among the working poor — interfere with rest in ways that no blackout curtain can solve. Even knowledge of “sleep hygiene” functions as a kind of cultural capital: families with stable routines and private bedrooms pass down practices that normalize early bedtimes and quiet, while others inherit habits formed under conditions of scarcity and vigilance. Historically, too, class has shaped sleep. In his book *The Slumbering Masses: Sleep, Medicine, and Modern American Life*, anthropologist Matthew J. Wolf-Meyer notes that the Industrial Revolution restructured night into labour and leisure, factory whistles dictating when bodies could rest. The

eight-hour movement recognized sleep as a labour right before medicine reframed it as a lifestyle choice. In that sense, the modern obsession with “optimal sleep” revives a much older story: that the ability to sleep well has always been unevenly distributed and politicized.

Recent surveys make the generational angle explicit. Surveys show that only about 54 per cent of Gen Z Americans (ages 12-26) feel they get enough sleep on an average weekday, while nearly 40 per cent of Gen Z and Millennials in Canada report that financial worries are harming their sleep and mental health. The reasons go far beyond “too much TikTok” financial precarity, pandemic disruptions, and a world of gig work and constant surveillance leave young people disproportionately restless. What looks like a generation “choosing” late nights and fractured circadian rhythms is often just the embodiment of structural pressures such as student debt, housing insecurity, and precarious labor that make efficient rest nearly impossible. In that sense, Gen Z isn't uniquely bad at sleep; they are simply the most visible evidence demonstrating how uneven rest is distributed in a society that still insists sleep should be a matter of personal discipline.

I know this script because I've been cast in it. I've tried aromatherapy, crystals, not scrolling in bed, meditation, giving up caffeine and nicotine after 1 p.m. — the list is endless. I even got a watch that tracks my sleep for my birthday. But no matter what I do, my sleeping grades always hover in the seventies, because in addition to being an insomniac, my walls are thin, my rent is high, and the city never shuts up. Prather's research confirms what I already feel in my bones: poorer material conditions mean poorer sleep. But the cultural script still frames exhaustion as a personal failure. As Wolf-Meyer warns, the very invention of a rigid sleep norm turns rest into a test of character; one you're bound to fail if your circumstances don't fit the mold. Ekirch reminds us that sleep wasn't always this way. Before capitalism sanded it down to eight identical hours, it was once flexible and communal. And as Crary observes, even our failures at sleep are now folded back into systems of surveillance and optimization, as if the unconscious itself could be turned into a report card.

This means that every time I wake up groggy, ashamed by another failed night or from the chemical hangover of Seroquel, I'm not just failing myself, I'm failing a social fantasy. And what's more exhausting than that?



Zoe Sanguin | Visuals Contributor

The *Daily's* Consumer-Girl Autumn Starter Pack

How overconsumption shapes our seasonal experience

Lily Tasson & Julia Lok
Culture Contributors

It's finally that time of year. When the summer's last ice cream has been had, that favourite pair of shorts has been over-worn, and everyone is sufficiently tanned to last through the winter; we must finally accept that fall is upon us. As the leaves turn red and a cool breeze starts to nip in the air, we begin to change with the season. There must be something about the smell of pumpkin spice and a hot drink with cinnamon sprinkled on top that triggers a sense of academic purpose. The additional nostalgia, warmth, and coziness that comes with the season are not to be missed. But, it can't truly be fall without the following things. Luckily, we've got you covered.

Scented candle collection

First, let's set the mood. A nice soy candle, with countless scents to choose from. Mahogany apple, pumpkin pecan waffle, fall farmhouse... the list goes on. With a bounty of different options to choose from, one must stock up. We are told that the only way to experience the season is to indulge all the senses. Can it even be called fall without the ever-present aroma of spice? No. These candles capture the scents of fall, which is why they are rarely used at other times of the year. And so long-lasting items, such as candles, become disposable before they are fully exhausted. The candle itself becomes the perfect analogy for all the money that gets burned through on fall-themed items.

Gourds, gourds, and more gourds

Oscar Wilde once said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. So this goes to show our love when our homes are covered in autumn hues! New burnt-orange pillow covers, a flannel blanket, and an array of heirloom pumpkins and gourds:

We've fallen in love with a curated seasonal aesthetic, one that has made us extreme consumers.



Zoe Sanguin | Visuals Contributor

these are the things that make a house a home. Big-box retailers, such as HomeSense and Target, stock their shelves as early as July with various fall home decor. This pre-emptive marketing is what builds the desire for the "aesthetic of autumn" on the hottest days of summer. Decor that brings the outside indoors suggests that one must fully immerse themselves in the season to participate in it. Display it while you can, because this decor won't match nature for long!

Sweaters, scarves, socks

With the changing weather, of course we are going to need a change in wardrobe. Colder weather calls for thicker sweaters (like the one Rory Gilmore adorns!), another scarf for the year, layered fuzzy socks, earthy-toned clothes, and a new pair of UGGs. When you buy

your new fall uniforms, you'll wash and wear them, but how long will you keep them for? Your new clothes comes with a cost greater than the price tag itself. Fast fashion is polluting our earth by overusing water and generating waste that eventually goes into landfills. Additionally, fast fashion contains many unethical practices such as the mistreatment of workers and the use of child labor. Still, the micro-trends on our For You pages keep changing each time we scroll, flowing with the speed of fast fashion. We invest in something seen in one TikTok, and then a week later, we forget about that cute sweater we just bought and want the fluffy quarter-zip this other influencer has.

Pumpkin Spice

Don't forget the iconic fall flavour: pumpkin spice. On August 26, the Pumpkin Spice Latte (PSL) returned to Starbucks. Run, don't walk to your nearest coffee shop, because you surely need pumpkin spice to spice up your day, whether it be in a latte or chai. While you're enjoying your yummy drink, you

can think about how PSLs have dominated consumerist culture in the last decade. With everyone indulging in the iconic fall drink, Starbucks sells over 20 million PSLs a year. That is about 20 million coffee cups used and thrown into a landfill each year. Depending on the material of the cup, it will take months to years for a single coffee cup to be reabsorbed into the earth again. The 20 million coffee cups only address Starbucks' sales. Pumpkin spice is a popular flavour in most mainstream coffee shops like Second Cup and Tim Hortons. The waste is never-ending when it comes to pumpkin spice.

Bottom Line

What do we really love about the fall? Is it the cold and unreliable weather, the school work that starts to pile up, the shorter days and less natural light? Does the temporal change really set the tone for the new season, or is it the marketing campaigns that accompany it? We've fallen in love with a curated seasonal aesthetic, one that has made us extreme consumers.

Companies and social media influencers alike use a tactic

called "FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) Marketing" that preys on anxieties of missing out to drive purchases. Creating a fall wishlist of "must-haves", predicting fall beauty trends, and using the well-renowned "Lalalala" sound from *Gilmore Girls* to rope you into buying pumpkin-scented products; these are all examples of how social media tricks us into overconsumption.

We can use McGill students as a demographic to view how the marketing techniques play into our vulnerabilities. With Montreal's vibrant social scene and going out culture, it can be easy to feel like one is missing out. This general "FOMO" is exploited and extrapolated into a fear of missing out on a whole season if we don't participate in its consumerist trends. Furthermore, most of us are far away from home. Hence, it is possible that we long for coziness and comfort as we prepare for midterms in the Montreal cold. In line with this, the media promotes buying more seasonal items as a way to incite feelings of safety and solace.

Additionally, seasonal marketing exploits human anxieties about the passing of time. Through pre-emptive seasonal marketing campaigns, we're led to long for something in the future. This longing only shortens the amount of time we feel engaged in each season. In the fall, companies exploit the nostalgia for simpler times, and organize their aesthetic around the 80s, 90s and early 2000s to appeal to a large millennial audience. This is implied as a way to alleviate uncertainty about the year as it comes to a close. Hence, media from the past becomes "fall-coded" meanwhile Bon Iver's music and Nora Ephron films make their resurgence. Either way, we are deterred from enjoying the current moment and primed to prepare anxiously for the next season through our consumption choices.

Whether or not we wear UGGs or indulge in PSLs, we will still be participating in the season just by living through it. A brand new apple cinnamon candle can smell just as sweet as last year's. In Montreal, there are so many ways to enjoy the season, like taking a hike up Mont Royal right behind campus! This fall, let's take advantage of the season without letting it take advantage of us.

Friendships at McGill: Chance or Choice?

The Never-Ending Cycle of Friendships

Yasmine Guroluk
Culture Contributor

On campuses across Canada, it's hard to find a student without a phone in hand. Screens have become the starting point for countless friendships, with social media acting as our new campus common room. However, at McGill, many students insist their closest connections weren't sparked by Instagram or Facebook Messenger. Rather, these friendships were born in residence kitchens, fostered at late-night club meetings, or initiated during campus events that turned peers into companions. In other words, McGill friendships aren't accidental; they're engineered by the spaces that bring students together.

But are these friendships built to last, or do they fade as quickly as they form?

For most McGill students, residence acts as a social fast-track. Pack a few hundred 18-year-olds into the same

building and friendships seem to form overnight. Roommates become confidantes, hallways turn into hangout spots, and shared kitchens double as confessionals.

But proximity can be a double-edged sword: seemingly unshakable friendships often fade by move-out day. Many first-year friendships grow out of convenience. While shared classes and dorms provide instant companionship, these friendships often lack the depth to endure. Once schedules shift and students scatter across the city, these first-year connections undergo their greatest test: to discover whether or not they can survive.

By second and third year, the social map shifts. Most students move off-campus, trading residences for apartments. Without the built-in convenience of bumping into friends in the elevator or grabbing a late-night snack in the common room, maintaining connections suddenly requires planning. Hangouts must be

scheduled, transit routes considered, and calendars synced, especially as majors and minors narrow students onto different academic tracks. The result? Social circles usually shrink, but the friendships that remain deepen. Instead of dozens of surface-level bonds, students invest in fewer bonds strong enough to withstand summers apart and the physical sprawl of city life.

By fourth year, the social landscape has largely settled. The structures that once fostered accidental encounters have been replaced by more intentional networks: study groups, long-term club connections, and departmental associations. Friendships evolve, with some connections fading after a season, and others deepening through shared investment and mutual growth. The result is a smaller, yet more resilient circle of friends who leave McGill with enduring relationships.

But, what happens when a student enters into McGill's social scene halfway through their degree?

Exchange students know this challenge well. Unlike first-year students in residence, they arrive without a built-in network. Instead, they rely on connections made back at their home university or friendships made in class. One exchange student explained that not living in residence has made them feel "less pressurized to feel part of McGill," and allows them to enjoy Montreal on their own terms. Yet, it also meant they were "not immediately integrated into McGill life." While clubs, orientation events, and other university-organized programs exist to help students socialize, these events can be difficult to access or simply go unnoticed. As our interviewee explained: "there was an exchange orientation that my friends said had such a long queue they left." Because exchange students often lack built-in networks and face limited access to social events, friendships tend to form slowly. And, when opportunities like orientation events are overcrowded or

inaccessible, it becomes even more difficult to find and build lasting connections. This interviewee's perspective shines a light on both the strengths and limitations of McGill's social infrastructure: while it provides numerous initial points of contact for students, those connections do not always guarantee depth or longevity.

Friendships at McGill are shaped as much by its institutional structures as by the students themselves. From residence halls to intentional networks, the university creates both opportunities and limitations for connection. If friendships are solely fostered through orientation programs and clubs, what does that say about the ties we form? Are they truly organic, or are we simply navigating the infrastructure that McGill provides? And for students entering midstream, how can our university better balance accessibility and depth in its design?

Degrees of Uncertainty: The Fading Promise of Higher Education

As tuition rises and job prospects dwindle, students weigh passion against security

Lisa Banti
Staff Writer

The countdown to graduation should feel like a victory lap, but for many students it feels more like a cliff edge. As convocation gowns are ordered and resumes polished, the looming question isn't "What comes next?" but rather "Will anything come at all?" A university degree, once considered a golden ticket to financial stability, now seems less like a guarantee and more like a gamble. Recent surveys show that nearly half of Canadian undergraduates are underemployed, working in jobs that don't require the very diploma they spent years and thousands of dollars earning.

What, then, does a university degree actually promise today? Is it still a pathway to meaningful work, or has higher education become another costly rite of passage into an increasingly precarious job market?

The Changing Value of a Degree

A generation ago, a bachelor's degree was widely seen as a near-guarantee of stability. Graduating in the 1970s or 1980s often meant stepping into a secure full-time job: frequently with benefits, pensions, and a clear career ladder. The degree itself was enough to signal competence and open doors.

Today, the picture is drastically different. In Canada, tuition fees have climbed far faster than wages. The average undergraduate student's tuition has more than doubled in real terms since the early

1990s, while entry-level salaries have remained stagnant. Canadian graduates now leave school with an average of nearly \$28,000 in student debt; in the United States the figure is closer to \$40,000 USD. At the same time, the job market has become precarious. A bachelor's degree is no longer the differentiator it once was in the job market. For many entry-level jobs, employers now prefer or require graduate credentials, a pattern researchers call degree inflation. The surge in post-bachelor programs within Canada reflects that shift. While some graduates desperately search for stable employment after finishing school, others find themselves cycling through unpaid internships, short-term contracts, or gig-economy work, in hopes of eventually securing a foothold in their field.

Credential is a major proponent of this crisis: the more degrees people hold, the less any one degree seems to matter. The result is a generation that is paying more, working harder, and receiving less security in return. However, more people going to university isn't the only cause of the worsening job market.

Structural shifts add another layer that has eroded a university degree's value: automation has replaced entire categories of work, globalization has widened competition across borders, and decades of wage stagnation and inflation have left young workers scrambling to keep up with soaring living expenses and a labour market that offers less security than it once did.

Student Realities: Stuck between Passion and Security

For undergraduates today, the decision of what to study often feels like a high-stakes gamble. The arts and humanities, once celebrated as cornerstones of critical thinking and culture, are increasingly treated as impractical luxuries.

Ask an English or Philosophy major about their plans, and the nervous laughter that follows is almost as telling as the answer itself. By contrast, STEM or professional programs are framed as "safe bets", chosen not always out of passion, but out of fear.

Many students describe a sense of quiet resignation when weighing their passions against the financial realities of debt and employability. One might admit to loving history but ultimately choose accounting because it felt like the "responsible" choice. Another, knee-deep in engineering, may confess they never liked math but couldn't imagine justifying another career choice to their family.

Even within the supposedly secure fields, unease persists: medical students worry about residency bottlenecks, and law graduates contend with an oversaturated legal market where entry positions are increasingly scarce. The trade-off is clear: pursue your passion and risk underemployment, or play it safe and risk dissatisfaction. Either way, a university education is increasingly seen as transactional, its worth measured not by intellectual growth but by marketability.

What This Means for Students

The crisis, then, is not in the degree itself but in the systems around it. Higher education is marketed as the most certain path to financial stability, yet the ground beneath that promise has eroded. Students are funnelled into universities with the assurance that their time and debt will pay off, only to find a labour market that is oversaturated, underpaying, and dicey. The mismatch between one's expectation and reality is not incidental: it reflects institutions clinging to an outdated narrative while the conditions that once supported it have collapsed.

This raises uncomfortable questions. By touting success stories while ignoring the growing number who cannot secure work in their fields, are universities complicit in setting young people up for disappointment? Should higher education rethink its purpose entirely, shifting from promising job security to cultivating adaptability, creativity, and resilience? And beyond academia, what responsibility does society bear in perpetuating the illusion that a degree is the only legitimate marker of success, while offering few viable alternatives?

For students, these contradictions are deeply personal. University students are told to dream big but simultaneously warned to be realistic. They are encouraged to pursue their passions but also

chastised when those passions don't translate into "marketable" careers. Urged to invest in themselves through education only to discover the returns aren't what they were led to expect. It is no surprise that so many graduates emerge ambitious yet disillusioned, eager to work but uncertain whether the work they desire will ever be accessible.

Where do we go from here?

As graduation season approaches, students will cross stages, shake hands, and hold diplomas with the hope that these pieces of paper still mean something. Yet behind the smiles lingers the quiet fear that the late nights in the library and the mounting tuition bills may not add up to the future they were promised. For some, this fear is already reality: siblings are burdened by debt, friends are stuck in jobs unrelated to their fields, and peers wonder if the sacrifice was worth it.

And yet, education still matters in ways not captured by employment statistics. Universities remain spaces of discovery, friendship, and ideas that shape how we see the world. The challenge is not to abandon the degree, but to confront the system around it. We must demand that institutions be honest about outcomes. We must question economies that value more than profit, and encourage a society that measures success beyond paychecks.

The question, then, may not be "Is a degree worth it?" but "What should it be worth?" That answer is still unwritten. And it is today's students, fearful of the future but daring to imagine more, who will ultimately define it.

Feminism Online and its Many Faces

How social media has changed how we engage with feminism

Grace Gehrman
Commentary Contributor

What is feminism? The answer, etymologically, is simple – the advocacy for women’s rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes, as defined by Oxford Languages. Culturally, however, feminism has evolved beyond what a single word can capture. Given the pervasion of social media in everyday life, how the users of these platforms are capturing particular cultural movements such as feminism unquestionably impacts how we view them. Though social media can spread awareness of feminism, along with other significant causes, it has also completely altered how people see these issues. I wonder: do people still know what feminism is really about?

If, hypothetically, you had not heard of feminism before 2025, your first encounter with it could very well have been on TikTok in the form of the satirical archetype of the ‘performative man’: a category of man defined by his eagerness to be perceived as feminist or ‘pro-women’ through the fervent consumption of matcha and feminist literature. If that was your first introduction to what being a feminist was, you would instantly discredit feminism as a shallow aesthetic or even a consumerist trend, rather than seeing the movement as one defined by a belief in full equality between men and women. That’s a funny (and hopefully improbable) hypothetical. But if these performative men are parading a facade of feminism, it’s reasonable to assume there could also be other actors misrepresenting the values most of us would consider part of the fight for gender equality.

Ironically, Western society’s earliest image of the ultimate feminist used to be that of a woman presenting conventionally masculine traits and behaviour. For example, the iconic Rosie the Riveter caricature is a woman with short hair flexing her bicep. In the modern day, whether it be by wearing suits in the office or forgoing shaving their body hair, women disregarding specific gendered expectations in mundane ways has come to be automatically equated with a sense of feminism. Of course, part of the vision for gender equality is an environment where women are allowed to

express themselves freely without being limited to the social confines created for them according to male preference. In a way, it does make sense that feminism has become associated with the idea of women expressing themselves in ‘unconventional’ or ‘masculine’ ways. So maybe it’s only natural that our society would come to see men unashamedly enjoying things that are known to be more popular among young women as a presentation of feminism too. After all, it’s another example of bending the popular social conventions around appropriately gendered behaviour.

In and of itself, this is hardly problematic. However, the reduction of feminism to its aesthetic components certainly is. Assuming that any man who wears jorts and drinks tea or any woman who wears flannel and doesn’t shave her armpits is trying to project feminism is to consider feminism itself as something insubstantial as an outfit, a habit, or a trend.

Perhaps these widespread, generalized images of ‘feminist’

presentation are benign, but maybe they also demonstrate a much more serious decentring of the tenets of feminism. One present indicator that we still have progress to make is another cultural archetype prominent on social media platforms: the ‘girl’s girl.’ According to the Urban Dictionary, the term refers to a “girl who has [respect] for female etiquette.” But in a broader sense, this label is used to describe women who prioritize their close female friendships, look out for other women, and uplift each other. Being called a ‘girl’s girl’ is an aspirational compliment, it means that you don’t seek to be a threat to other women, but an ally. I agree wholeheartedly with the social media consensus: ‘girl’s girls’ are the best, and I strive to be one too. Yet subconsciously, I’ve always found something wrong with the idea of a woman’s goals being solely to lift others up. Of course being generous is an excellent ideal for anyone to have, but it feels odd that society again seems to have found a way of telling women they should

aspire to prioritize others when women historically were already being confined to supporting roles as mothers, wives, nurses, or teachers.

Arguably, this modern standard is an improvement, where women are now encouraged to be taking care of each other rather than focusing on men or children. Still, in an ideal situation, women wouldn’t have to face any of the challenges intrinsic to their gender and there would be no need for ‘girl’s girls.’ The fact that so many women feel they need to set these new expectations in order to receive support from fellow women is, in itself, indicative of the enduringly imperfect reality of the female experience.

Are these newer, more trendy ways of seeing feminism valid? I would say yes, except the real, continuing struggle for gender equality is still far from accomplishing its goal. Ultimately, neither of these two popular archetypes are devastatingly consequential. Neither are likely to stay relevant even in the next calendar year,

yet it is nonetheless interesting to examine the way our current culture sees feminists: male feminists as the obnoxious owners of carabiners and tote bags, and female feminists as just another type of caretaker, except this time for other women.

Trends can be fun when they facilitate action. Maybe it will be appropriate to associate feminism with a certain aesthetic once the fight has been won – when women no longer experience disproportionately high levels of poverty, workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and mistreatment in healthcare. We can’t let ourselves forget that it isn’t over yet.



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Where Do We Come From and Why Does It Matter?

Identifying with your cultural origins is not an excuse to absolve your nation of criticism. What happens when our nationalism crosses into something else?

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Commentary Contributor

In diverse environments like McGill, where everyone seems to be from everywhere, it is easy to feel like you are a direct representative of the country you come from. This often gives rise to a powerful sense of pride. Yet, that same pride begs the question: where is the line between belonging and blindness?

Today's global political landscape is a hellscape of profit-driven decisions, where states act not in favour of citizens' well-being but to optimize lower oil prices or increase their economic control over other fragile democracies riddled with corruption. From the new tariffs imposed around the world by the United States to India's continued import of Russian oil despite global criticism, nations are repeatedly proving how little their governing bodies truly care for national opinion. Even so, when I see an Indian flag in the wild, my heart swells. Why is that so?

In a fragile world like ours, where states seem to go to war at a moment's notice and we constantly feel the looming threat of nuclear weapons, it is hard to imagine why anyone would choose to continue identifying with their nation. However, national pride is an undeniably powerful emotion that has historically led revolutions, sustained empires, and been the cornerstone value of most great leaders. Still, it is strange that we can feel so strongly towards an entire nation despite having virtually no role in its successes, failures, or sometimes, not even living there. For instance, I have not lived in India, my country of origin, for the last seven years, and yet I still come to its defence in any argument. When asked where I'm from (which tends to be quite often as a first-year), I still take immense pride in announcing that I am from India. Somewhere down the line, a nation can become an integral part of one's identity, and after that, it is hard to separate it from one's sense of self, thus leading to what we know as national pride or patriotism. However, it is essential to realize that affinity and pride for a nation do not automatically insinuate a whole-hearted agreement with the

state's legislation or politics.

Harbouring love for a nation is a slippery slope because we are never fully in control of its actions. Nations are not singular entities. Therefore, blindly supporting them in the name of national pride can, at times, call into question our very belief system and values. How do we know if our pride has gone too far?

Over the last decade, we have witnessed a Western shift towards conservatism and the rise of authoritarian leadership on an international scale, while norms in "freer" countries are dwindling and becoming increasingly fractured. Still, rather than fighting against these suffocating systems, it seems the world is only being pushed further into the confines of the borders that separate one nation from another. An increasing number of individuals are slipping down the line of national pride towards extreme nationalism. While these features are especially prominent in the United States since Donald Trump's re-election, extremism can also be found in Russia, France, Germany, China, and India, among others. Increasingly, citizens are being conditioned by nationalist dialogue to believe that international cooperation and globalization are the cause of economic inequalities and social decline. For example, in India, Hindu nationalist rhetoric frequently casts globalization as a Western import eroding cultural traditions. Multinational institutions like the United Nations are losing their global legitimacy as peacekeeping organizations due to the lack of belief in the globalized model, and driving more people to solidify their belief that a realist, nationalist society is more prosperous.

The rise of conservatism and anti-liberalism directly relates to an increase in extreme nationalism. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first term in 2014, polarization among the people of India has increased as his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has sought votes by perpetuating cultural divisions among the population, reigniting century-old cultural feuds and tensions between the religious minority and majority groups in the nation. Implicitly,

Modi's use of majority-first rhetoric when referring to (what was widely assumed to be) Muslims as "infiltrators" and to Congress as "thieves" seems to have sparked a primal but dormant fury in the eyes of many Hindu people in India. They feel their nationalism is vital in 'reclaiming' their country from those who are not truly Indian through violence and destruction.

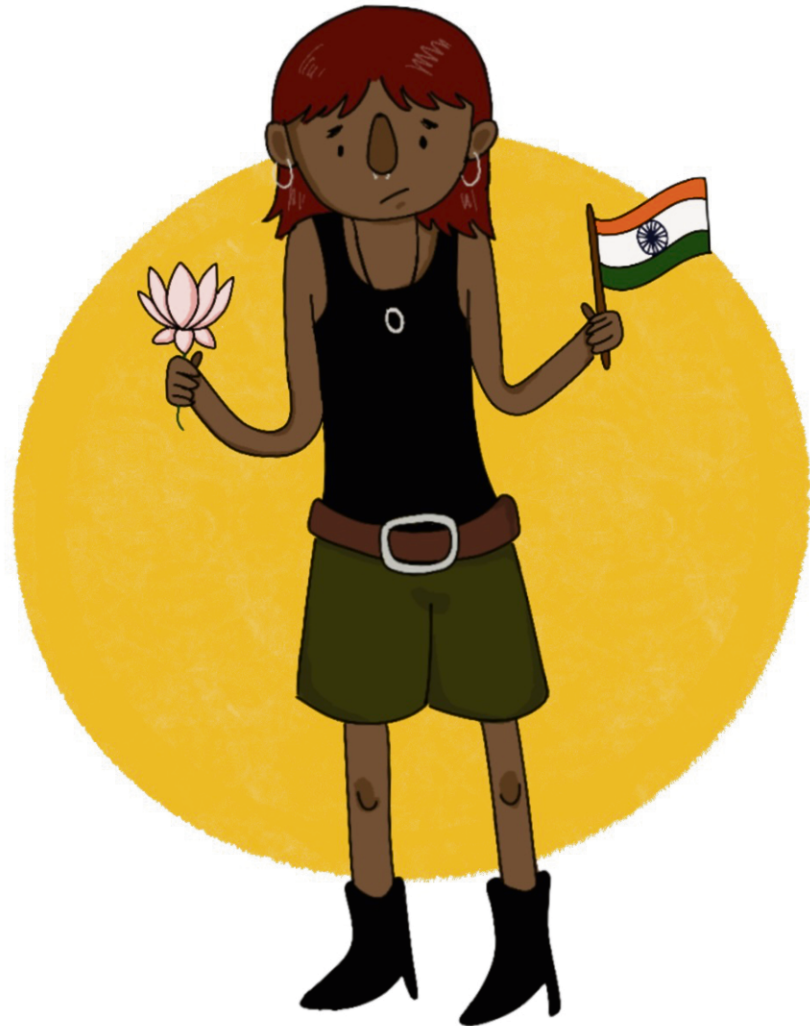
Essentially, the question of what nationalism versus national pride boils down to is a matter of culture versus politics. My national pride is a reflection of my roots as someone of Indian origin who grew up with the rich, unique teachings and values of those who came before me. Correspondingly, any sense of community I feel towards India is derived from those regional connections and customs. These cultural factors drive my sense of pride more so than any political ideology or alliance; a sentiment I think many people can resonate with in today's socio-political

climate. That is why weaponising heritage to create political conflict in a nation like India, one that has suffered enough division and erasure historically by colonisers like the British, fans fires that are better off left alone. Rather than manipulating national pride to push extremist nationalism and division, national pride should be harnessed as an asset to propel nations into global arenas and achieve their development goals.

It is clear that national pride is inherently linked to a sense of belonging, thus further connecting national pride to culture and identity above all. We cling to the nations that birthed us and make us feel as though we have a place in the world; something of our own that will accept us the way we accept it.

I once saw an Instagram post about the most recent election in Sri Lanka, which said that, "Support without scrutiny is surrender." That encapsulates what I believe distinguishes

national pride from extreme nationalism. Harbouring love for the nation you come from is normal, but, similar to other aspects in our lives, it is essential to scrutinize and critique the structures before us to demand the world we desire. A world without scrutiny of politicians and nations is one of subservience and fatalism, which, frankly, I refuse to accept as our collective reality. In my opinion, extreme nationalism is the easy way out; closing your eyes to the harsh realities of the world and your nation's role in it by choosing to live in an echo chamber of nationalist propaganda that worships ideologies over morals. There is so much change to be demanded from our leaders, and as the people who make up these very nations, we must take a step back, take off our orange/green/white/blue-tinted (or whatever your flag colours may be) tinted glasses, and separate our cultures from extremism. We must demand more from the world.



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