

Canada as the 51st state? Nope, say local youth

US President Donald Trump's comments about Canada becoming the 51st state dismissed by some local youth, while others say they're insulting.

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Directors Approve 2025-26 UNA budget

Balanced budget is forecasted for upcoming fiscal year.

BY THE CAMPUS RESIDENT STAFF

The UNA board of directors have approved the budget for 2025-26.

The budget was approved unanimously during the board's February monthly meeting. Directors approved the balanced budget with operating expenditures and revenues of \$8.4 million. Expenditures and revenues are forecast to be 4 per cent higher than in the 2024-25 budget.

The proposed budget has been previously made available for a two-week public consultation. An information package for residents included the UNA's strategic plan, the draft operating and capital budgets, a timeline of the budget process, as well as highlights and key changes. The package was available on the UNA website and available for download. The UNA website provided space for public feedback and questions.

With consultation complete and the feedback reviewed by the board's finance and audit committee, the budget was presented to the UNA board for final approval during the February 18 meeting.

The budget is now expected to go to the UBC Board of Governors, and the university will assess whether expenditures are in line with stipulations of the Neighbours Fund.



Recreational and culture programming fees - the UNA's second largest revenue source - are estimated at \$1.6 million for 2025-26, which is a slight increase from \$1.5 million in the 2024-25 budget. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

Under the Neighbour's Agreement, UBC is entitled to receive the budget 45 days before the end of the fiscal year.

The Neighbours Fund is the largest single revenue source. It is paid by UBC and covers the costs borne by the UNA to provide municipal-type services in the university neighbourhoods. For 2025-26, it is projected to bring in \$5.9 million, compared to \$5.6 million in the 2024-25 budget.

The UNA's second largest revenue source comes from the fees from recreational and culture programming. Those fees are expected to earn \$1.6 million, a slight increase from \$1.5 million in the 2024-25 budget.

On the expenditure side, the costs of recreational and culture programming are forecast to be \$3.5 million compared to \$3.4 million in the 2024-25 budget. When the revenues from these services are considered, the net cost of recreational and culture programming for the 2025-26 fiscal year is \$1.9 million. Administration and salary costs are budgeted at \$1.8 million compared to \$1.7 million in the 2024-25 budget.

The UNA's draft capital budget for 2025-26 is forecast at \$321,700, up from \$190,200 in 2024-25. The largest capital item is for parks and roadway enhancement at \$185,000, up from \$13,200 in 2024-25. The increase is due mainly to specific projects, such as adding shading structures in a park adjacent to Wesbrook Community Centre and upgrading park pathways.

UNA Dog Park Plan Moves Forward

After community input, the plan has gone back to landscape architects for revisions.

BY POURIA KARIMI

The University Neighborhoods Association is making progress on the proposed off-leash dog park in Wesbrook.

Public consultations on the proposal were completed in December, with staff presenting findings to the UNA board on Jan. 21. That marked an important step in improving the park's design and addressing community feedback.

"The UNA has, just before the holiday season, completed the round of community engagement," Paul Thorkelsson, the UNA's chief administrative officer, said.

"Further detailed design of the park based on the

input received is necessary before a costing of the design can be carried out. That work is intended to proceed following the board's consideration of the community engagement and input."

Following the January meeting, the UNA sent the draft plan back to the landscape architects for changes. A revised plan is expected to reflect community feedback and concerns, and provide an updated project budget.

During the board's February meeting, UNA staff reported planning is ongoing, however an undisclosed delay prevented staff from providing directors with updates. Staff said the UNA's operations department will provide the board with a progress report at their March board meeting, currently scheduled on March 18.

The dog park would be located near the Wesbrook Community Centre, the Wesbrook Community Field, and the splash pad. The area now includes beach volleyball courts—the plan would keep two of the courts.

An online and paper survey was conducted as part of the consultation. Of 243 respondents, 60 per cent indicated strong support for a dog park at the proposed site

Pacific Spirit Dog Rules Under Review



Community members Nataliia and Anton, pictured here in Wesbrook Place with their 7-year-old friend Conner last week, are watching two developments that could usher in changes for dog-owning residents. While the UNA is finalizing plans for an off-leash dog park in Wesbrook Place (story on Page 1, left), Metro Vancouver is also currently reviewing its dog management policies in Pacific Spirit Regional Park. Read all about it on Page 5. (Photo: Lily Li)

while 14 per cent were strongly opposed. The majority of respondents, 62 percent, were dog owners. The survey did not provide a breakdown of how dog owners and people without dogs felt about the issue.

PARK CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



The site of a proposed off-leash dog park, located in the area between Ross Drive and Webber Lane, north of Birney Ave. (Photo: UNA)

A More Pedestrian-Friendly Wesbrook Village

Resident Ian Carter has produced a plan to convert a Wesbrook parking lot into a pedestrian-friendly public square.

BY EMMANUEL SAMOGLOU

A resident has taken the initiative to address traffic issues in an area of Wesbrook that often sees friction between pedestrians and motorists.

Ian Carter, a retired architect who has lived in the university neighbourhoods for nearly a decade, presented his idea to revamp the main parking lot in Wesbrook Village to the UNA board late last year.

The parking lot, which fronts Save-on Foods, Shoppers Drug Mart, and the Wesbrook Community Centre, has been described by residents and campus officials as problematic due to the number of vehicles that often circle the lot while searching for a parking spot, all while pedestrians and cyclists move throughout the same area.

“It’s not dangerous, but it’s not very welcoming out there,” Carter told The Campus Resident.

During the presentation to the UNA board, Carter provided an artistic rendering of his idea to transform the lot into a public space he called Wesbrook Plaza.

The idea revolves around the removal of almost all parking from the existing lot, which would force drivers to use the currently underutilized underground parking garage.

Instead of parking, Carter envisions a

public square with permanent and removable seating, tables, a splash pad for children, and trellises along its edges.

It was the pace of development on campus that prompted him to develop the plan and share it with the UNA. “In nine years, there has been tremendous change; a change in the number of people, a change in the number of cars, of vehicles, not just cars. And there seems to be more anger out there, with people getting upset because they can’t find a parking space.”

“I do have a real concern as to how this is going to develop over the years,” said Carter, who is also a member of UBC’s Development Permit Board, which reviews and approves developments proposals in the university neighbourhoods.

Under his plan, there would be designated parking spots at ground level for disabled people and families with small children, while the existing underground lot would provide ample parking for everyone else. Carter says he uses the underground lot on occasion and “when I do use it, I’m astounded to find that basically, it might be 30 per cent full.”

While he hasn’t received formal feedback, Carter said he would like to see planners move forward with his idea, refine it through further traffic studies, and eventually implement a plan that will remedy problems with the area.

Additionally, he said his plan could also play a role in addressing the broader issue of traffic safety in campus neighbourhoods,



Pedestrians in the main parking lot in Wesbrook Village. Richard Watson, a former UNA board chair, said the area is becoming problematic with the amount of vehicle traffic. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

particularly after recent incidents, including one last September where a senior was knocked off a wheelchair in a hit-and-run collision.

“You just want something to happen that makes this place to have a more community feel and be safer for families and where families can in fact gather,” Carter said.

Richard Watson, former UNA director and board chair at the time of Carter’s presentation, said the idea was received with “great interest.”

“We all recognize there is a problem with the amount of vehicle activity in the area and are very concerned about how it might get worse with the increased growth,” he said.

Watson said several factors must be

considered before any redevelopment, including addressing the need for some surface-level parking, the needs of community members who use the area as a drop-off and pickup point for University Hill Secondary School, and maintaining access for delivery and service vehicles. “If these needs can be adequately addressed, transforming the space into an open community space or pedestrian plaza is very appealing.”

Carter’s proposal can be “a good reference point” for future board discussions and UNA interactions with UBC’s campus community and planning unit, Watson said. “It would go a long way in making our community more attractive and livable.”

EMMANUEL SAMOGLOU IS THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE CAMPUS RESIDENT.

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Opinion: Legends and loyalties

With so much diversity, how do we create a sense of shared connection in the university neighbourhoods?

BY EAGLE GLASSHEIM

My family headed east in December to see the East Van Panto’s holiday rendition of Robin Hood at the York Theatre. In this version of the story, a ragtag group of residents try to liberate Trout Lake Park from the clutches of privatization. It’s a funny and rousing play, and happily, the denizens of East Vancouver get their park back. Power to the people!

But who are the “people” of East Van, and where do their intense loyalties come from?

That got me thinking about our distinctive, but relatively young, neighbourhoods at UBC. With the exception of Hampton, founded in the 1980s, all UBC’s residential neighbourhoods date to the 21st century. With few exceptions, they are planned communities, developed by UBC and built on spec for condo buyers and

UBC-affiliated renters (us, that is).

Most residents come from somewhere else—from all over the world actually. This is among our distinctive strengths as a community, but it also means we’re still newcomers to this place. Most of us are still learning about the deep and continuing Musqueam stewardship of ʔəlq̓sən (ulk-sen), also known as the Point Grey peninsula. We didn’t build the houses, shape the parks and public spaces, or even, for the most part, choose the flowers or plants that front our homes or line our streets.

Given our newness, and that we are guests on Musqueam and UBC land, how might we establish a sense of place, the kind of shared connection that can build community? Learning about the history of this place, and its embeddedness in the wider territories of Musqueam, UBC, and Vancouver is a start. But we also need opportunities to add our own contributions to our neighbourhoods.

We do have some special places in the neighbourhoods that have emerged from community initiatives. There is the Children’s Garden at the Old Barn, founded and run by volunteers and supported by the University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA). The Iona Labyrinth, adjacent to the Chancellor neighbourhood, is a place of both silent contemplation and connection. Or the semi-hidden treehouse (location undisclosed), built by hand with re-used wood and tires, long a favourite of local kids of all ages. These are beloved, locally curated spaces but they only scratch the surface of possibility for residents to contribute to the identity and community of our neighbourhoods.

Driving back from the theatre in the December dark, my family passed the icon-

ic East Van cross, shining brightly above busy Clark Drive, East Van’s gateway to downtown. Commissioned for the 2010 Olympics, Ken Lum’s seventeen-metre cross drew on an East Van graffiti meme with a long but obscure history.

There are many possible sources of East Van identity and community, including its fine parks, schools, and community gardens. Public art plays a role too, though like Lum’s cross, public art is perhaps most successful when it emerges from local traditions and experience.

Beyond community gardens, make-shift treehouses, and the occasional labyrinth, perhaps we need a quirky piece of public art, something that emerges from our community. Probably not a statue of Robin Hood, but surely we have our own legends and stories to tell. 🌱

EAGLE GLASSHEIM IS CHAIR OF THE CAMPUS RESIDENT EDITORIAL COMMITTEE. HE IS ALSO CHAIR OF THE UNIVERSITY NEIGHBOURHOODS ASSOCIATION AND IS A PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AT UBC. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE ARE ENTIRELY HIS OWN AND DO NOT REPRESENT EITHER THE UNA OR UBC.



The East Van Cross. (Photo: TimBray, CC BY-SA 4, Wikimedia Commons)



The Old Barn Children’s Garden. (Photo: Eagle Glassheim)



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Youth Explore Canadian Identity in Face of American Belligerence

US President Donald Trump's comments about Canada becoming the 51st state dismissed by some local youth, while others say they're insulting.

BY CAMI YU

When U.S. President Donald Trump made comments about erasing the 5,525-mile-long border and making Canada the 51st state of America, many Canadians were quick to roll their eyes.

While Trump's comments appeared to be widely seen as an attempt to provoke his neighbours, they raised an interesting question—how do local youth view the US Presidents comments? And how do they see their national identity, especially in contrast to the United States?

For many students at University Hill Secondary School, the answer is clear: Canada – a nation of 40 million people and 9.9 million square kilometres - is not America, and they are proud of that fact.

Whether through frustration, humor,

or quiet defiance, their reactions provide some insight as to what it means to be Canadian in a time when the U.S now faces deep political and social divisions, and its politicians call the nation's sovereignty into question.

Some students responded to Trump's 51st state comments with dismissal. "I think it's silly, and he's just saying it to get attention," said Aaron Liu, a Grade 11 student.

Others were more direct. "He's a stupid idiot," said Fernanda Meza, a Grade 10 student, who lived in America during the first term of Trump's presidency. "I feel pride for being born a Canadian. To see that they voted for Trump again makes me even more connected."

Meza also pointed out differences she said define Canada. "Free healthcare, more rights, protecting people, accepting immigrants, recognizing Indigenous people," said Meza. "More freedom and more equality, which is ironic since America is supposed to be the 'land of the free.'"



Fernanda Meza, a Grade 10 student at University Hill Secondary School, lived in the United States during Donald Trump's first term as President. His re-election has reinforced her pride as a Canadian, she says.

the U.S. "We're treating America not just as the country beside us but as a threat, a common enemy. We definitely feel more united," said Grade 9 student Jared Qin.

None of the students interviewed were convinced Trump's suggestion was serious, but some held strong opinions about what they would miss if Canada ever became the 51st state.

"My rights," Meza said without hesitation.

"Free healthcare," Qin added.

"Feeling safe, probably," said Liu.

Although only a few months into Trump's four-year term as President, local students have met the moment with a little pride, a shrug, a joke, and for some, a freshly baked loaf of bread. 🍞

"I think they see us as weaker," remarked Alva Wong and Iman Ulmer, both Grade 11 students. "It makes Canadians feel inferior."

Others saw Trump's comments as an opportunity to define themselves against

CAMI YU IS A GRADE 11 STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL



THE CAMPUS RESIDENT

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Get Ready For More Hyperlocal Journalism

BY TCR STAFF

The Campus Resident is coming to your mailbox monthly!

Since *The Campus Resident* re-launched with a print issue in September 2023, we have heard many comments from readers who prefer to read the print edition, and more of it. If you are one of those fans of an old-style physical paper, we have great news!

Responding to reader feedback, the UNA board made a decision in October 2024 to increase the frequency of print issues produced per year from a quarterly to monthly.

The paper's Newspaper Editorial Committee has set a new annual publishing schedule and will now feature 10 print editions per year, along with its regularly updated website at thecampusresident.ca.

Commencing April 2025, the newspa-

per will now be printed on a monthly basis 10 times per year, with issues published on the first Thursday of every month except for January and August.

Want to contribute? With additional print issues we can always use more content.

If you have enjoyed reading the paper and you have a story idea, we'd love to hear from you. We are also more than happy to assign stories to aspiring reporters. If you don't have experience, that's fine. We'll work with you to find and interview sources, and shape and edit your story. Reporting and writing for *The Campus Resident* is a great way to learn more about issues in your community and create connections with your neighbours. Get in touch by writing to editor@thecampusresident.ca.


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Dog Policy at Pacific Spirit Regional Park Under Review

Worries around safety, complaints from the public, and ecological damage have prompted Metro Vancouver to review its designated dog off-leash area program at popular park.

BY AMIE BERNAERDT

Metro Vancouver is currently reviewing its dog management policies in Pacific Spirit Regional Park.

The park is a popular destination for campus residents looking to connect with nature or go for a hike close to home. In 2024, four million people visited the park, and it is the busiest park in the Metro Vancouver regional system. “There are 55 kilometres of trails that are used by joggers, cyclists, dog walkers, and equestrians, and we want it to be welcoming to all visitors,” said Richard Wallis, the park operations supervisor with Metro Vancouver.

Just under two thirds of the park’s trail system is designated as leash optional. This means that dogs can be off-leash, but should be kept under control at all times and kept out of wildlife habitats. The remaining 35 per cent of Pacific Spirit trails require dogs be on leash. Some trails have a mix of designations, which can be confusing for park-goers.

Metro Vancouver is currently reviewing the program at Pacific Spirit due to worries around safety, complaints from the public, and ecological damage.

This review of Pacific Spirit has been in the works for several months, and is still in the information gathering stage. As of right now, there is no set proposal or plan for changes to dog-leash requirements in the park.

Potential changes could range from signage and education, enforcement, and even to trail designation updates. Changes to leash requirements could be made for specific days of the week, or times of the day, for example. “Any changes will be implemented as a pilot project, and will be monitored and evaluated throughout the rest of the year,” said Wallis.

Nothing is set in stone yet, though. Any changes will be informed by feedback Metro Vancouver has received from users of the park. Some of the reported incidents have concerned off-leash dogs injuring, chasing, and being aggressive to park visitors. There have also been altercations between park users, fighting between dogs, and dogs being injured by other dogs.

Dog owners can take steps to keep everyone safe while visiting Pacific Spirit



The author’s dog, Ella, enjoying a walk in Pacific Spirit Regional Park. (Photo: Amie BernaerdT)

by carrying a leash, picking up after their dogs, and making sure they have control and recall with their off-leash dog in appropriate areas.

“I have heard an increased number of concerns over the past 1-2 years,” said Jen McCutcheon, the elected director of Metro Vancouver’s Electoral Area A—which includes UBC’s Point Grey campus.



The plan for the proposed Wesbrook dog park. (Photo: UNA)

PARK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Despite general support for the project, some residents raised concerns about its impact or felt that the space would be better used for other community priorities.

Board members emphasized several issues. These included addressing community concerns about safety, the impact on nearby areas, the park’s vicinity to the splash pad, and the need for separate areas for large and small dogs. Board members were also concerned that dog owners will need to be accountable and follow rules that will be set for park use.

The consultations heard calls for features such as shaded seating areas and fresh water taps for pets. However, board members noted that such features must be balanced against the costs.

The proposed site, north of Birney Avenue near Ross Drive and Webber Lane, was selected by a working group. It was

chosen based on its central location and other nearby recreational spaces. The site is also reserved for an elementary school, but construction isn’t expected for five to 10 years.

Introductory designs include two fenced areas: one for small dogs and one for large dogs. Proposed amenities include shaded seating, pathways, and waste disposal stations.

The park is currently estimated to cost \$200,000. The UNA hopes to secure funding from the Metro Vancouver community works fund. An additional \$30,000 for contingencies would be financed from the UNA’s operations budget.

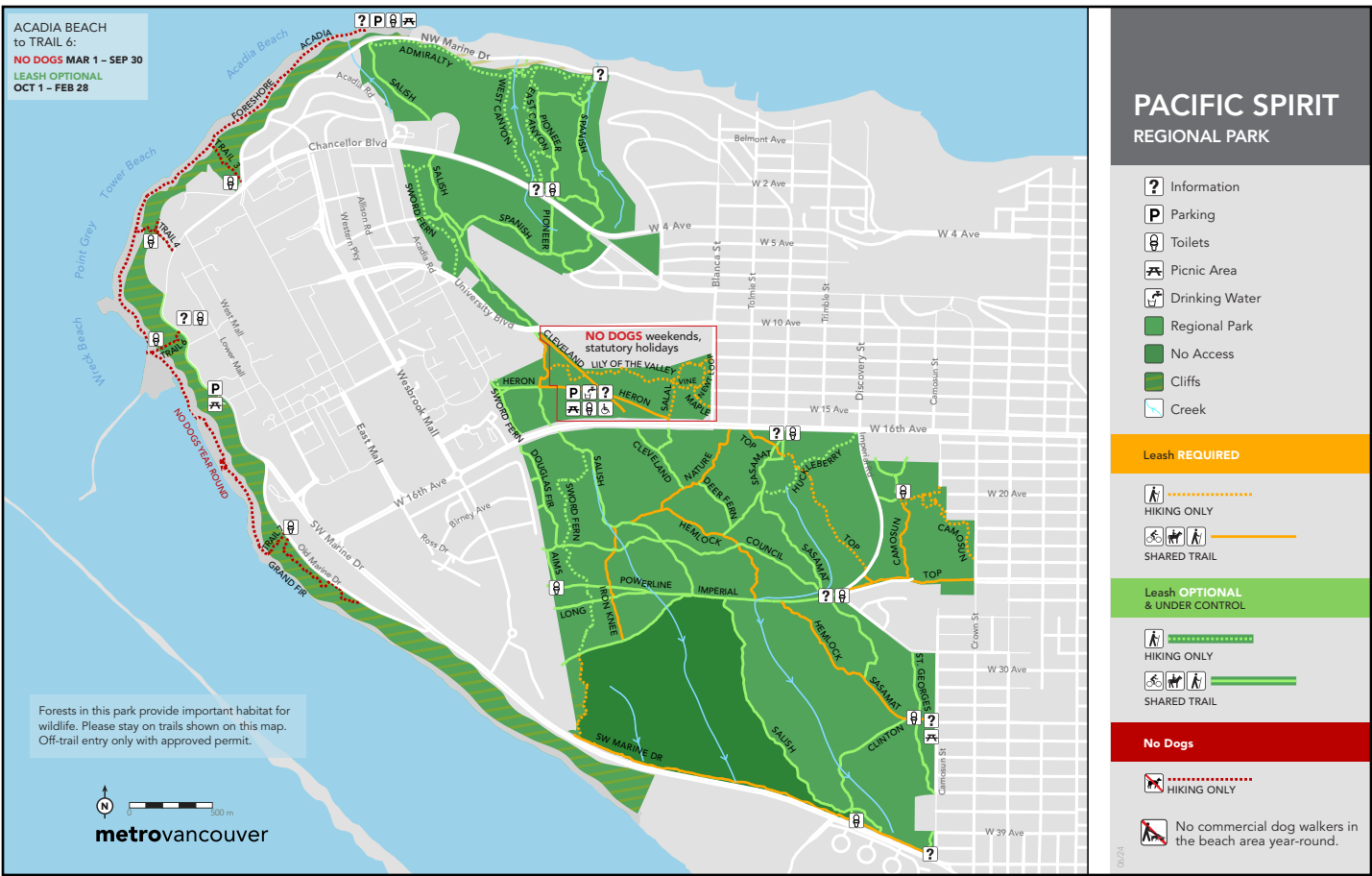
Discussions regarding whether the UNA would apply a dog control bylaw were left for another time.

The UNA hopes to open the park this summer.

POURIA KARIMI ATTENDS UNIVERSITY HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL.

to the city. If you would like to provide your feedback to the city about changes to dog leash requirements in Pacific Spirit Regional Park, reach out to icentre@metrovancouver.org.

AMIE BERNAERDT IS A THIRD YEAR STUDENT AT UBC, MAJORING IN CREATIVE WRITING AND ANTHROPOLOGY. SHE LIVES IN WESBROOK PLACE.



Trail map showing which trails in Pacific Spirit Regional Park are designated as leash-required and leash-optional. (Map: Metro Vancouver)

Contribute to Community through Citizen Science

Whether through technology or local hands-on experiences, there are many ways people can play a role to help further our understanding of the natural world.

BY URSULA ELLIS

When you're out walking around campus, have you ever wondered about the plants, mushrooms and birds you see?

There are many ways you can satisfy your curiosity and contribute to science at the same time, and one way is using technology through smartphone apps like iNaturalist, Pl@ntNet, and eBird.

iNaturalist, which is available in over 32 languages on both Android and Apple devices, helps you identify plants, fungi, and animals by matching photos you take on your phone with similar photos taken nearby.

The pictures you take help scientific research and conservation efforts in a number of ways.

Photographs submitted to iNaturalist document the presence of native and invasive species in an area and can show the impacts of climate change. For example, a historical record of pictures could show plants are flowering earlier than in the past, or an insect found outside of its usual range. The images also become available for others to freely reuse for education or other purposes.

Another way you can contribute to science with iNaturalist is by helping to identify the species in other people's observations. I've posted an image of a feather, and experts let me know what kind of bird it's from.

Users should know that the suggested identification the app gives you is tentative and may be incorrect, so don't eat plants or mushrooms based on iNaturalist or other users' ID alone. There are many toxic lookalikes for edible plants and fungi. Also note that iNaturalist is meant to be used to gather data on wild plants and animals,

not on cultivated plants or captive animals.

There are occasional iNaturalist community events called "Bioblitzes", with a goal of collecting as much biodiversity data as possible on a specific area in a short time. One such event was held last May at UBC. Other efforts focus on collecting data in an ongoing way as a project, such as for BC Parks.

For kids, iNaturalist offers a fun, simplified app called Seek. Other, more specialized apps similar to iNaturalist include the plant-focused Pl@ntNet app, while apps like Cornell University's Merlin and eBird focus on birds only.

Merlin has a feature that lets you identify birds by their songs and calls, in addition to photo-based ID. Merlin's sound-based identification can help less experienced birders to know what to look for, and also to confirm the species of birds you hear. It will also record your observations and keep your life list.

Merlin can be connected with its companion app, eBird, which has additional features for tracking and sharing bird observations. Like iNaturalist, Merlin has community observation events focussed on gathering as much data as possible in a particular time period.

If technology isn't your thing and you're more interested in hands-on citizen science experiences, there are local opportunities with groups such as the Pacific Spirit Park Society (environmental monitoring, restoration, education),



WildResearch (bird banding, wetlands monitoring), the Camosen Bog Restoration Group (camosunbog.ca), and Nature Vancouver, which holds a monthly bird survey at UBC Botanical Garden.

I've found citizen science to be a fun and flexible way to volunteer, learn more about our local community, and advance scientific research worldwide. 🌿

URSULA ELLIS LIVES IN WESBROOK PLACE AND WORKS AT UBC LIBRARY.

Clockwise from top left: Slime mold *Lycogala epidendrum*, common name wolf's milk, observed in Pacific Spirit Regional Park; A barred owl observed in Pacific Spirit Regional Park; Fungus in the genus *Mucronella* observed in Pacific Spirit Regional Park.; Hair ice, produced by the fungus *Exidiopsis effusa*, observed near Norma Rose Point. (Photos: Ursula Ellis)



UBC Properties Trust says there are no more "major" leaks after repairs to the Webber Lane waterway, pictured here last month. (Photo: Emmanuel Samoglou)

Let the Water Run

No major leaks in Webber Lane waterway following lengthy repairs, says UBCPT.

BY ROBYN STARKEY

The Webber Lane waterway, troubled by leaks since early 2021, is finally working following repairs that have taken over a year.

UBC Properties Trust, which was handling the repairs, announced on its website that "the work to address its major leaks is complete." It said, however, that a water pump needs to be redesigned "to restore the water pressure in the Nobel Park and Mundell Park ponds." There are also some minor maintenance issues, it added.

The repair process, initially reported in The Campus Resident in September 2023, has been plagued by delays. Some delays were due to supply chain issues and problems identifying the leak. Repairs were also delayed to avoid

interfering with tadpole breeding season. As well, UBC Properties Trust hired a biologist to inspect the area to make sure wildlife habitat was not disturbed.

Management of the waterway is supposed to be transferred to the University Neighbourhoods Association once repairs are complete. According to Wegland Sit, the UNA operations manager, "the area has not been formally handed over back to the UNA management." There is currently no timeline for the change.

The good news is that water is flowing, and it is considerably cleaner than it was in the summer.

It is expected that Mundell Park will be fully accessible for residents in the spring and summer. The lawn area that was closed due to damage done during the pond repair has now recovered.

With Pacific Tree Frog breeding season approaching, the waterway should again be a popular breeding ground for the frogs and their nightly chorus.

The UNA sustainability and operations team is working to replace the signage about the frogs in time for the breeding season. 🐸

ROBYN STARKEY IS A WESBROOK PLACE RESIDENT AND A MEMBER OF THE CAMPUS RESIDENT NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.

I must admit I felt like a bit of an intruder when I entered the spacious, contemporary classroom with its floor to ceiling windows, allowing sunlight to stream in on an eclectic group of women, all seated in a circle and looking intense, with their notebooks open and eyes towards the white board, giving attention to the well-dressed woman in front of it.

I was three weeks late to the start of the Intermediate French course taking place at the Westbrook Community Centre, which I had registered for two months previously.

I am a firm believer learning should not stop upon the graduation of high school, college or university. Studying does not have to be undertaken with an articulated goal, for example, to gain entry to a specific profession, or to increase employment prospects.

There are many benefits to stretching the mind and the body in a multitude of

Becoming a “Lifer”

Writer Jayne Seagrave signed up for a French language class last fall. That decision may lure her into a lifelong journey of learning.

BY JAYNE SEAGRAVE

stimulating ways.

Taking courses in pickleball, crochet, bridge, computer programing, water colour painting, the guitar, environmental science, or learning another language enriches a life. Programs like these offer chances to make new friends, share my interests, and achieve personal goals. Learning can happen, and should happen, at any and every age.

I had attended the French language course about three years previously, given

by the same wonderful Francophone teacher, Catherine Black. Although I had every intention of taking the course again, which is very reasonably priced at \$150, for some reason life took over and I lapsed until October 2024. Even then I was weeks late to the first class.

I entered the classroom apologetically with a rush of déjà vu, immediately recognizing about half the students who were in the class the last time I attended. It was a firm endorsement, if I even needed one, that this course delivers. Later Catherine told me her regular students refer to themselves as “the lifers”, as they have been coming regularly for years.

For the next nine weeks, during the Autumn of 2024, I attended the intermediate French language course along with fourteen other women. I found it to be well structured, informal, entertaining and not at all dry. The fact the cohort of students all knew each other meant any tensions

or nervousness about opening my mouth and attempting to speak in another language was gone.

The “lifers” had done their time, they understood the drill, liked the routine, were confident and relaxed, and comprehended their colleagues, which meant I was put at ease. Speaking French, at any level, was not an issue in this welcoming environment.

Although the course is designed to teach a second language, many of the students already speak two or three, with English often not their mother tongue. Ukrainian, Korean, Russian, and Mandarin were other languages spoken by my cohort.

Frequently the class was tasked with describing personal experiences from their country of birth, such as their primary school experience, holiday customs and traditions, modes of transportation, recycling, and markets. And in detailing what occurs in their country, the class learns not only the French language, but of another way of life. This sharing is special, as a new vocabulary is taught in addition to the norms of a foreign country.

While the stated objective is to improve language and comprehension skills, I found this also to be a social group of friends with a common interest- to learn another language, enjoy the experience and continue along the path of lifelong learning.

There is a serious possibility I too could become a “lifer”.

“Learning can happen, and should happen, at any and every age.”



Students, and maybe a few “lifers”, at a UNA language class. (Photo: UNA)

JAYNE SEAGRAVE IS A B.C. RESIDENT AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF “CAMPING BRITISH COLUMBIA, THE ROCKIES AND THE YUKON”. SHE WRITES FICTION AND NON-FICTION, AND OCCASIONALLY TEACHES WRITING AND PUBLISHING COURSES.

Lots of Fun Locally and Beyond During Spring Break

From camps to family events to short day trips, our spring break guide has you covered.

BY SEOHYEON PARK

With warmer temperatures, breaks from school, and longer daylight coming this month, it’s the perfect time to embrace the vibrant energy of spring. Whether you’re seeking family-friendly entertainment, local activities, or a quick gateway, our spring break guide presents an ample selection for everyone.

For a relaxed cinematic experience, the UNA’s Family Movie Night on March 15 at 6pm featuring *Minions: The Rise of Gru* might be an appealing option. For an admission fee of just \$2, families can enjoy a fun movie night at the Old Barn Community Centre with popcorn, snacks, and drinks available for purchase. Families are welcome to bring blankets and pillows for extra comfort and coziness.

For young adventurers and emerging scholars, UBC offers an extensive array of spring break activities including aquatics,

baseball, biking, and arts for children aged 3-17. With over 50 programs, kids can explore everything from aquatics, a TED-Style public speaking camp, Coding with Lego, and filmmaking. Discover all available options at recreation.ubc.ca/camps/spring-break.

And the UNA is also offering a wide range of summer camps, including a creative performance camp that explores classic works of art, coding and animation, space exploration, and a K-Pop/hip hop dance camp. To sign up, visit myuna.ca/programs.

Short getaways from home are also a good option for a relaxing break.

In this early spring weather, immerse yourself in the scenic beauty and rustic charm of Harrison Hot Springs, basking in the hot mineral spring pools or indulging in rejuvenating spa treatments – and it’s only a few hours away from campus. Enjoy a peaceful stroll through the new neighborhood and lounge by the pools with loved ones under a starlit sky, making memories in tranquility.

If the last call of snow beckons you, March is an ideal time to ski at Whistler

Blackcomb. With prime snow conditions, sunny days and blue skies, March is one of the best times to ski and snowboard. For a more leisurely adventure, snowshoeing offers a perfect opportunity to explore the winter wonderland without any special

skills—just strap on a pair of snowshoes and embark on a scenic walk before the snow melts!

SEOHYEON PARK IS PURSUING HER BACHELOR’S DEGREE IN PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES AT UBC.



Play Ponders Questions of Personal Responsibility in the Face of Evil

The Arsonists explores the costs of political complacency using a storyline based on the fall of the Weimar Germany and the descent into Fascism.

BY DANIEL LI

A stirring reminder of the cost of complacency in an era of turmoil, *The Arsonists* mixes the grandeur of an ancient Greek tragedy with an allegory of the fall of the Weimar Republic in 1930s Germany to Fascism, enhanced by sharp acting and

punchy sound design. The UBC theatre production of the play written by Max Frisch was directed by Stephen Heatley. It ran from January 29 to February 8 at Telus Studio Theatre at The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts on campus. The story follows businessman Gottlieb Biedermann, a model of civic virtue, and his household as a stand-in for early 20th century Germany, and their dealings with Josef Schmitz and Billy Eisenring who play the titular arsonists of the play, represent-

ing the forces of political extremism. At first, Biedermann offers his attic to the arsonists out of sympathy for their stories of hardship, but this goodwill is abused by Schmitz and Eisenring after the placement of several barrels of oil in the attic, which eventually leads to their whole city being burnt down. Despite Biedermann knowing about the oil drums early in the action, he refuses to take any action, instead holding fast to the belief that as long as he appeases the arsonists, he can save his house and quiet life from the fires of chaos. The rest of the household are complicit as Anna the maid and Biedermann's wife Babette become enchanted by the arsonists' stories of poverty and victimhood.

But while the portrayal of these characters on paper may seem flat or unsympathetic, the stand-out acting from the main cast - in particular Miles Davies as Biedermann and Paula Goldie as Anna - brought out a humanity that highlights the tragedy.

In particular, near the end of the play, as Biedermann despairs at the realization of who he's been really hosting in his attic, he addresses the audience, asking them what would they have done in his shoes? It's a reminder that complacency is not just a historical artifact, but something which no one is safe from.

The arsonists, too, are more than what they seem on the surface to both the Biedermann household and the audience at first glance.

When Schmitz and Eisenring first appear, the audience is led to believe they are nothing more than chaos and destruction personified. When a Doctor of Philosophy appears, who is focused on the ideological and theoretical side of the fire, we are reminded that however much

we want to dismiss political extremists as raving lunatics, the coalition for extremism - whether in 1930s Germany or today across the democratic world - is broader than we sometimes acknowledge. Such a group can recruit from across society, from blue collar workers to intellectuals. As the play progresses, a chorus of firefighters, in the style of ancient Greek drama, stand at the edge of the scene offering commentary about Biedermann and the city. In one particularly memorable scene, they forcefully confront the businessman after his failure to report the arsonists to the police for storing oil drums in his attic. The chorus' awareness of the oncoming attack and preparation for it fail to prevent them from being ensnared by the arsonists in a trap that seals the fate of the Biedermann household and of the city. The chorus is most clearly representative of the democratic guardrails and institutions that we depend on to safeguard ourselves from the rise of extremist and authoritarian politics. Yet their fate in the play tells us that they cannot by themselves shield us when we fail to take action.

Alongside the tight script, the sound design of the play played a large part in creating an environment of tension and a crawling sense of despair. The ominous chimes of a clock occasionally ringing out across the theatre remind us of the ever-closer approach of a disastrous midnight. The use of blaring air raid sirens during a speech by the Doctor of Philosophy made that scene almost biblically apocalyptic, further reinforcing the play's overall tragic atmosphere.

While the play is based on events from the 20th century, the core message of the play - which is the dire costs of failing to stand up to tyrants and demagogues in favor of appeasement - resonates all too clearly today.

Layered on top of the script, a sympathetic performance from the Biedermann household and a chillingly sinister one from the arsonists makes the play well worth the lingering reflection it induces.

DANIEL LI IS A GRADE 11 STUDENT PASSIONATE ABOUT POLITICS AND JOURNALISM.

(UBC Theatre and Film's final production of the 2024/2025 season, *The Last of the Pelican Daughters*, is onstage at the Frederic Wood Theatre from March 19-29.)



Cast members of the UBC Theatre and Film production, *The Arsonists*. (Photo: Javier Sotres)

UBC OPERA

2024-2025 SEASON

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UBC THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Music

Manon

March 28 - 7:30pm | March 30 - 2:00pm

Old Auditorium

Jules Massenet's *Manon* is a captivating French Romantic opera following the passionate and tumultuous romance between Chevalier des Grieux and the enchanting Manon.

Jacques Lacombe | Conductor

Nancy Hermiston | Director

Members of the

Vancouver Opera Orchestra

Metropolitan Opera Star

Emily Pogorelc | Manon

Acclaimed Tenor

Frédéric Antoun | Des Grieux

ubcooperatickets.com

UBC THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Music

Opera Tea

April 6 - 2:00pm | UBC Botanical Gardens

Opera Teas bring you closer to the performers onstage. Enjoy a concert of opera arias and song favourites in the casual settings of the Old Auditorium and UBC Botanical Gardens. Join us in April, when our Opera students will perform a program of opera favourites to end the season. Coffee, tea and light refreshments will be served. It will be a varied feast of opera and operetta repertoire.



Cast members (L-R) Ekaterina de Boni, Baltzer Musherure, Miles Davies, Paula Goldie, Yan Ching (Rainbow) Hui on *The Arsonists* set, designed by Amy Currie. Costumes were created by Teylor Pierre-Corno and lighting by Kaitlyn Fernandes. (Photo: Javier Sotres)