

THE TRUTH OF RECONCILIATION, A DECADE LATER

# THE WALRUS

CANADA'S CONVERSATION ✦

NOVEMBER 2025 + THEWALRUS.CA



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Zoya Shepherd is the design director at The Walrus.



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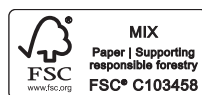
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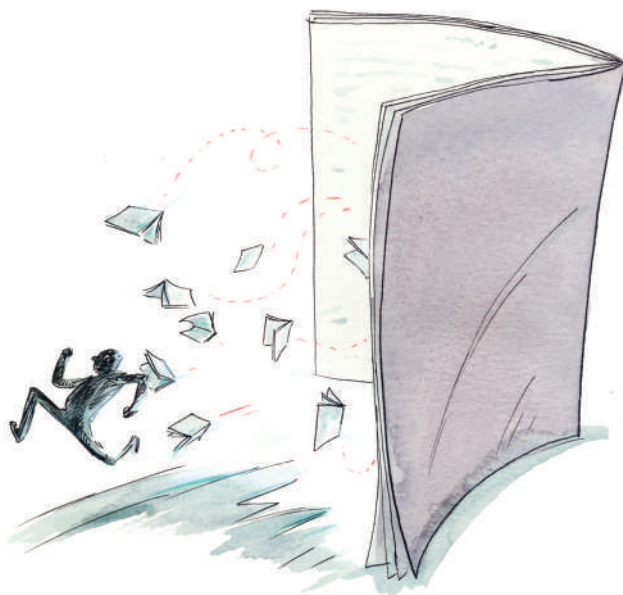
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## Editor's Letter

**A** FEW WEEKS AGO, Senior Editor Harley Rustad sent me a real estate listing over Slack. No note. No context. Just the link. This was odd—Harley, as far as I knew, didn't moonlight as a realtor. Of course, I clicked.

On 157 acres of Niagara farmland, twenty-five minutes from Hamilton, sat a 57,650-square-foot compound: a “grand foyer,” a commercial kitchen, a gym with a rock-climbing wall and boxing ring, a library, a science lab, a soccer field. Marketed for “educational use, a corporate retreat, or repurposing,” it carried a \$9.4 million price tag and the promise of “outstanding potential.”

But the photos told another story: dorms, hallways, a mess hall—all deserted. The place felt frozen, as if everyone had fled at once. It didn't look like something to buy. It looked like the site of something gone terribly wrong.

And then it hit me. This was Robert Land Academy. Once a “tough love” military-style private boarding school for boys, now abandoned and bankrupt. Empty of students. Empty, too, of the staff who, as we relentlessly reported over the past year, abused them, according to lawsuits filed against the school.

What the kids endured is shocking: public shaming, racist harassment, withholding of food, sleep deprivation, forced outdoor exposure in winter, and isolation. The lawsuits—which now number more than eighty in total—claim administrators maintained a system “designed to cover up” sexual, psychological, and physical cruelty. Survivors describe lasting trauma, with some saying the school “destroyed” their childhoods.

This “expansive property,” in other words, was the visual record of a crime scene. It was also proof of justice served: contributing writer Rachel Browne's series of investigations helped shut down the institution in April.

We're no strangers to dramatic results. In 2017, a joint investigation with the CBC's *Fifth Estate* into seniors who had vanished in Muskoka uncovered secret police documents and new details on the decades-old case. In 2024, our exposé of former art director Ferdinand Eckhardt's Nazi affiliations pushed the Winnipeg Art Gallery to cut ties with its founding leader and prompted Premier Wab Kinew to strip Eckhardt's name from Manitoba's Order of the Buffalo Hunt, one of the province's highest honours.

Michelle Cyca's recent reporting about so-called “pretendians” forced long-overdue public reckonings for people who have sidestepped accountability for years. And Soraya Amiri's coverage of Afghanistan has become a trusted record that's shared in WhatsApp chats, X, and across the diaspora.

Will our November issue create aftershocks? Maybe. Whether we're taking stock of Mark Carney's first months in office, grading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's progress a decade on, or scrutinizing China's record of executing Canadians, each story asks the same question about power: who wields it, who keeps score, and who lives with the consequences?

But the impact of our reporting can't always be captured in headlines—or in page views, time on site, and social shares. More often, it's the strange, unpredictable directions a story takes once it leaves our desks. How it takes up space in a reader's life—stirs a memory, sparks dinner table debate, or completely changes how they think about a subject. You can't plan for that. You certainly can't control it. But it's the reason most of us got into this business in the first place. 🍀 —*Carmine Starino*

# Letters



## POWER TRIP

In “Canada Needs a Foreign Spy Agency” (*thewalrus.ca*), Wesley Wark cautions us that when we imagine foreign intelligence agents, we shouldn’t picture Jason Bourne or James Bond. I concur, but we need not look so far from home

for inspiration for what Wark has in mind. Some of the cruelest, most scientifically useless forms of abuse perpetrated under MKUltra occurred on Canadian soil. At McGill University, agents drugged civilians with hallucinogenic and narcotic drugs in the pursuit of novel forms of torture and interrogation. Maybe, instead, we should take as our example the Central Intelligence Agency agents (both named and anonymous) who abetted in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, former prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 1961. Or the Canadian assets who have played roles in right-wing coups in countries like Guatemala, Bolivia, and Iran. Wark seems content to perpetuate the fantasy that spycraft is, as Rudyard Kipling’s spy novel *Kim* once put it, a “great game.” If it is a game, it is only because it’s played with other people’s lives and other nations’ democratically elected governments. Perhaps we’ll need a Canadian Henry Kissinger next.

*Tom Thor Buchanan*  
Toronto, ON

## A LEGACY OF SHAME

In her piece on Guantanamo Bay, “Where Cruelty Is the Point” (July/August), Michelle Shephard captures the feel of the naval base. I, too, travelled back and forth between Joint Base Andrews and Guantanamo, as lead defence counsel for Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep, one of the Southeast Asian detainees in the military commissions. It was a four-year legal odyssey for me and our defence team. Nazir was tortured for three years and then warehoused without trial for two decades. It was his torture, and that of all the other detainees in the charged cases, that was correctly named by John Baker, former chief defence counsel in the commissions, as Guantanamo’s “original sin.” There

is no getting around that brute fact, as hard as the United States government has tried, and still tries, to evade and excuse it. While I am deeply proud of the work our team did, as we stood against this human rights obscenity, when I think of that period, the dominant emotion I feel is sadness. It’s sad to know that state-sponsored torture is forever part of our national legacy. As Shephard observed, terms like “enhanced interrogation techniques” and “reservations” are not just “dizzying” but outright misleading. Such cynical wordplay has done the heavy lifting for authoritarian regimes throughout human history. Part of the point of propaganda is to make it seem like everything is normal. In the military commissions, nothing is normal but abnormality itself. We desperately need a truth and reconciliation commission on torture. And that’s sad too: knowing we may never find the courage to honestly face what we have done, or to demand accountability for it.

*Brian Bouffard*  
Fort Worth, TX

## BEYOND THE GRAVE

From the age of eighteen to twenty-four, I worked in cemeteries restoring historic gravestones. I’m pretty sure it will go down as the best job I ever had. Ellen Himelfarb’s “The Dearly Departed Are Getting Creative with Death” (*thewalrus.ca*) highlights the growing scarcity of available plots in old urban cemeteries, in part due to expanding cities and the paucity of land. The reason I loved working in those cemeteries so much is because of how beautiful they are. Most are lined with trees older than the inhabitants of the soil. They are dotted with headstones and flat markers made of materials from all over the world (and the odd early twentieth-century zinc marker). These are public spaces. Quiet, well shaded, good benches, old stones. They’re mature parks. It would be a shame to let the city sprawl swallow these spaces that haven’t changed much since their advent. Build more cities, build more cemeteries.

*Kipp Macdonald*  
Hamilton, ON

.....  
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.....

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## SOCIETY

# When Immigrants Oppose Immigration

*Many established communities are embracing anti-newcomer rhetoric*

BY MIHIKA AGARWAL

ILLUSTRATION BY ASHLEY FLORÉAL



**A**T JUST TWENTY-THREE, Jessie, a second-generation immigrant, was working in the federal government to save for law school—even though he felt deep “dissain” for “big government.” Jessie’s supervisor suggested that his current role could help him secure a job at the Department of Justice and receive law school funding. But he resisted. He didn’t want to become a lifelong bureaucrat.

The young federal employee shared this story in an interview with Emine Fidan Elcioglu, an associate professor at the University of Toronto, who ran a study on why some racialized

communities are turning to the right. Jessie said his contempt for the state came from watching his family be failed by the system. (Jessie is a pseudonym.)

His mother, who had immigrated from Guyana at seventeen, and his father, who fled Haiti in the early ’90s, met while working in fast-food jobs. When Jessie was born, in 2001, his father died suddenly, leaving his mother to raise two young children alone. Around this time, the federal government downloaded social assistance to the provinces, and Ontario—where Jessie’s family lived—instituted a restrictive model. Payments were cut by 21.6 percent,

and recipients were no longer eligible to receive social assistance if they were working, even if the earnings from those jobs put them below the government’s own low-income cut-off. Jessie’s mom refused to participate in the program precisely because the new model felt inadequate, but that meant begging outside grocery stores for food and diapers.

Jessie acknowledged this systemic failure but went on to embrace the conservative policies that had helped create it. “You have to look out for yourself, because no one else will,” he said. In his conversation with the sociologist, he argued that immigrants—once settled—ought to vote in their self-interest. Though his mother had arrived in Canada through a family sponsorship program, and despite having directly benefited from the policy, Jessie now opposed previous Liberal governments’ efforts to strengthen such schemes. “You’re no longer someone trying to get into Canada,” he told Elcioglu. “You’ve arrived. You’re a Canadian. So start voting like one.”

For Jessie, political affiliation wasn’t about ideals—it was about climbing up the socio-economic ladder. That climb often involves racial strategies—subtle efforts to align with whiteness by distancing oneself from other racialized or immigrant groups and adopting the political preferences of wealthy white Canadians.

Like Jessie, many established immigrants in Canada are now favouring restrictive immigration policies, and drawing boundaries between “past” and “present,” “good” and “bad” immigrants. According to a recent survey commissioned by OMNI Television to research firm Léger, two-thirds (67 percent) of immigrants—especially those who have lived in Canada for more than six years—support tougher regulations for international students. This marks a notable shift from previous decades: as recently as the early 2000s, immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area were far more likely to vote Liberal or New Democratic Party and to support pro-immigration policies. But according to an April study by the University of Toronto’s

School of Cities, immigrant voters in the GTA are now increasingly aligning with right-leaning positions.

Support is even higher among South Asian immigrants, rising to 77 percent, according to the results of the OMNI/Léger survey. Another 2024 Léger poll found high anti-immigrant sentiment in that community: 50 percent of surveyed South Asian immigrants believe that the government plan at the time would “admit too many immigrants to Canada.” (That plan aimed to welcome 465,000 immigrants in 2023, scaling up to 500,000 in 2025.) The same poll suggested that the longer a South Asian immigrant lives in Canada, the more likely they are to support the Conservative Party, which typically tends to favour stricter immigration policies. A fall 2024 study by Environics Institute also reports that, over the past year, an increasing proportion of racialized Canadians agree that too many immigrants are “not adopting Canadian values.”

Social media platforms like Reddit often surface similar rhetoric around lack of assimilation—though it’s not entirely clear what commenters mean by this. “I can’t be more vocal against banning these exploiters,” wrote one racialized immigrant on a forum. “We uproot so much to move to a better promise.... The social fabric here has been ruined to below the standard of society and culture I left behind.”

Elcioglu believes that voting conservative becomes a way for some second-generation immigrants to reject the perception that they are still outsiders. “By distancing themselves from newer, poorer, or more stigmatized immigrants, they are attempting to claim a fuller version of Canadian belonging,” she says. In a 2025 paper published in the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Elcioglu argues that electoral behaviour is a mechanism for this faction to “edge closer to privilege.” She writes, “These efforts can be characterized as ‘racial strategies’ or how white-adjacent groups try to ‘achieve’ whiteness in a society that deems them tolerated citizens at best and failed or non-citizens at worst.”

In Canada, Hindu nationalist groups’

increasing affinity with right-wing political parties can be seen as an extension of the same dynamic, according to Elcioglu. While a growing faction of Hindu immigrants is using Conservative votership as a means of aligning with the “community of value”—or white, wealthy native citizens—right-wing leaders like Pierre Poilievre and Maxime Bernier have in turn courted the same demographic to clutch on to power.

In a late 2024 post, Bernier lauded one such Hindu nationalist group for its beliefs around ending “mass immigration” and that “immigrants should integrate into Canadian society rather than live in ethnic ghettos.” Poilievre, too, has pandered to Hindu nationalists—even as nationalist sentiment in India caused an increase in brazen attacks against minorities, particularly Muslims. In a 2024 statement, he said: “May the Maple Leaf and the Tiranga [India’s tricolour flag] forever fly united in celebration of our freedom and our democracies.” The dynamic has resulted in a mutual friendship of convenience.

A 2024 poll by Angus Reid shows that the Conservative Party now holds the support of 53 percent of Hindus in Canada. In April 2023, Poilievre also became the first federal party leader to speak out against so-called Hinduphobia. In an interview with diaspora channel Prime Asia, he said, “We have to stop Hinduphobia and nasty comments that are made about Hindus and the vandalism and other violence targeting Hindu Canadians.”

But as South Asian journalists Saima Desai and Aniket Kali note in an in-depth investigation for *The Breach*, the ongoing rhetoric around “Hinduphobia” is often an attempt by far-right Hindu groups to stifle allegations of caste-based discrimination. Caste-based prejudice persists in Canada, particularly within South Asian communities. The Caste in Canada project, an initiative run by researchers Suraj Yengde and Anne Murphy, documents how many Dalit Canadians feel compelled to hide their caste identity to avoid

stigma, even in the diaspora. First-hand accounts from students in Ontario further expose how caste bias manifests through social exclusion, slurs, and workplace discrimination—often at the hands of fellow South Asians. These experiences underscore that caste is not just an issue “back home” but a lived reality for many in Canada.

In March 2023, the Toronto District School Board voted to request a framework from the Ontario Human Rights Commission to tackle caste-based discrimination in Canada’s Hindu community. The Hindu right-wing group Canadian Organization for Hindu Heritage Education pushed back. The organization initiated a change.org petition calling caste-based discrimination in Canada “non-existent” and warning that such measures could fuel bias against South Asian Hindus in Canada.

“Denial of casteism and alignment with Hindu nationalist narratives can be used to claim moral authority and legitimacy—a way of asserting, ‘We are good, orderly, respectable immigrants,’ in contrast to what they may frame as ‘backward’ or ‘disruptive’ others,” says Elcioglu. “This mirrors how some respondents in my study distanced themselves from other racialized groups.” For upper-caste Hindus, publicly recognizing caste as a form of discrimination might challenge the “model minority” narrative or attract unwanted attention and stigma. As a result, this denial can function as a strategic move to preserve a seamless, socially acceptable identity.

Satwinder Bains, director of the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley, believes that the Conservative Party’s active outreach strategy directed at racialized immigrants may have proven to be successful. “The only way forward [for some immigrants] is through not looking back,” she says. “It is seen as a way to get closer to power and privilege, which would normally take whole generations to achieve—with the false promise of equal power sharing by immigrants and racialized groups.”

MIHIKA AGARWAL’s work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Vox*, and *Vogue*.

PART ELEVEN

# We travel to call the muse

By Lavinia Spalding



Last summer, I sat outside the iconic Parisian bookstore Shakespeare and Company and reached for my backpack. Across from me was the Notre-Dame Cathedral, her restoration nearly complete, and I wanted to capture the moment. While I pulled out paints, brushes, mini-palette, and sketchbook, my husband and son occupied themselves reading. They were growing accustomed to these painting interludes—even if I wasn't. The fact that I owned and used art supplies still seemed preposterous. But travel had changed me. It has a way of doing that.

The first time this happened, I was ten, moving cross-country with my family in a refurbished school bus. I had already planned to become an author, and for years, I had filled spiral notebooks with slow, deliberate cursive. But somewhere between New Hampshire and Arizona, I started scribbling with a sudden mysterious fervour, my pencil tearing wildly across the pages.

## Y WE TRAVEL

Why do we travel? Contributors are accomplished writers from all walks of life. Over the length of this series, they will explore the diversity of purpose in our journeys—not just where or how, but why.

When I ventured overseas for the first time, using college student loans to fund a European backpacking trip, I discovered a similar feeling. I journaled obsessively, and I depleted half a dozen glue sticks collaging pamphlets, tickets, wine labels, and candy wrappers into my notebooks. I still didn't consider myself artistic, but I noticed a kind of electric charge radiating through those glue sticks.

Maybe the act of leaving home is so imbued with transformation that it invites contemplation and self-expression. Or perhaps it's the special alchemy of free time meeting the world's untold wonders and stimuli. History agrees: Ernest Hemingway, Georgia O'Keeffe, Igor Stravinsky, and Claude Monet produced some of their finest work when they changed location. All I know is that in an unfamiliar environment, my muse springs to life, insisting I reimagine myself.

People have talked for thousands of years about "the muse," the divine spirit who breathes magic into our projects and exists either beside or inside us. Many modern writers and artists reject the notion, attributing creative flow to diligence and discipline. Scientists are more likely to credit enhanced neuroplasticity, the brain's rewiring in response to novel experiences. But I'm still partial to the oldest and least practical explanation: the muse.

And it turns out mine needs to keep moving.

After that summer backpacking in Europe, I knew I needed more travel. So I accepted a position teaching English in Busan, South Korea. That decision reshuffled the cards of my life. There, I became a travel writer and, perhaps more importantly, a disciple of creativity.

As a young adult, I had been stumbling through life, seeking clarity and purpose (and, let's be honest, dopamine). I often felt adrift. Living on another continent both liberated and anchored me. For the first time, I gave myself carte blanche to write with abandon but also to dabble in pursuits I'd considered the domains of others. I studied photography and film development, took piano lessons and Tae Kwon Do, learned to cook, meditate and speak Korean, and, after a lifetime of believing I couldn't carry a tune, sang my heart out at *noraebang* (karaoke). In my spare time, I made floor lamps out of chopsticks. Travel showered me with inspiration and those inexplicable electric creative charges. It also helped me push through fear, embarrassment, and imposter syndrome. I became more patient with myself and less attached to results.

Artistic outlets grounded me, offering cultural insight and a sense of belonging.

When travelling, if we give ourselves over to the muse, she gives back tenfold. When we immerse ourselves in a craft, our powers of observation deepen and our self-image shifts. The focus required to make something with our hands elevates an experience, inviting us to become more present. And time slows, often fixing a memory more vividly than if we'd attempted to pin it down with a photo. I know because while I have hundreds of photos from a trip to Fez, Morocco, it's a pair of etched brass plates that instantly transport me there, to a small studio where my husband and I spent hours tapping out intricate designs with rustic wooden tools.

Creativity is an extraordinary tour guide, invariably leading us to dazzling vistas and even places that change our lives. This happened to me twenty years ago when, as the sole guest in an old hotel in Álamos, Mexico, I conjured an idea for a book on keeping travel journals. While mangos dropped outside my door, I worked feverishly on a first draft, and the book was published a few years later. On a Hawaiian vacation, I was so impressed by one ukulele tutorial that I purchased a uke of my own. It was a lark, but strumming that instrument made me miss the flamenco guitar I played in my youth, so I later flew to Spain to study and rekindle that old passion.

Admittedly, not everything stuck. I was a terrible pianist, I remain a mediocre photographer, and my guitar often sits silently in a corner, shooting me dirty looks. I'd injure myself if I tried Tae Kwon Do today. What's important is that the combination of motion, distance, and creativity released me from the certainty of my own limitations.

Which brings me back to Paris, and before that, the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, where I taught a writing workshop three years ago. My friend and student, Colette, offered a painting lesson to our group, and although I was positive I'd embarrass myself by participating, I let my travel curiosity call the shots. Before long, I was happily mixing colours and sketching a marigold garland. And when that old electric charge fired again, I was finally able to trace its source; it was radiating through the paintbrush, but it came from me. ●

Lavinia Spalding is an award-winning author and editor who has published eleven books, including *Writing Away*, and edited six editions of *The Best Women's Travel Writing*. She is the co-founder of Studio Unfurl. She lives with her family in New Orleans and on Cape Cod.

## Where We Travel



I'm blessed to have family all over the world. I travel to see them, as well as the places where they live—from Slovenia, where my wife is from, to Japan, where my sons live. I would love for everyone to experience cultures, beliefs, and foods that are different from their own. The more we learn about the world, the better. To put it in Alberta terms, air travel is like a pipeline. It connects people, cultures, goods, and economies, not just Canada to the world, but the world to Canada. If I'm having a hard day, I walk down to the arrivals area at Edmonton International Airport (YEG) and watch people disembarking from international flights. I recently saw one man arrive with just a plastic bag for luggage. He was so happy to get here that he literally bent down and kissed the ground in joy. Our city has always needed workers from elsewhere. More than one in every four Edmontonians is an immigrant. Our region is expected to grow by nearly 100,000 people by 2027, and more than 100 languages are actively spoken here. People like to say that YEG stands for young, educated and growing. I'm proud that our airport helps make this city so welcoming and vibrant.

Myron Keehn,  
CEO,  
Edmonton International Airport



EXPLORE THE  
Y WE TRAVEL SERIES



“THE LUCKIEST fucking guy in Canadian politics.” That’s what former Quebec premier Jean Charest reportedly called Mark Carney on the eve of this year’s federal election. He wasn’t wrong. When Carney started kicking the Liberal Party’s tires in late 2024, smart money was on Pierre Poilievre to win the next election. Poilievre had a double-digit lead in the polls, and Ottawa was bracing for the coming Tory revolution.

Then came Donald Trump with his threat to break Canada’s economy so we’d crawl to the United States—and his mutterings about forcibly annexing us and Greenland too. Canadians were looking to hire someone with the brains to take on the president. Someone credible and not weird. This was no longer a time for a celebrity who traded on empathy or someone who wanted to fit in at Mar-a-Lago. Voters wanted someone they could trust with a complicated tax return. So they turned to the bank manager, who delivered the Liberals’ fourth election victory in a row. Luck doesn’t just come from events. It’s also about synchronicity with the moment.

Why Carney won is clear. Who Carney is—less so. Canadians voted for a CV, not a biography. The Walrus ran a big feature on him in 2021, and a couple of decent magazine and newspaper profiles came out before the election, but Carney had no real face recognition outside the Ottawa bubble and the realms of high finance. His first big North American media moment was on Jon Stewart’s *The Daily Show* in early January, coyly playing with the comedian about running for Liberal leadership. (“I just started thinking about it when you brought it up,” he joked to Stewart.) The only books about him that you can buy are sold on Amazon and likely written

## POLITICS

# Mark Carney Is Not Here to Make Friends

*The new prime minister is rewriting the rules of the game with all the subtlety of a hostile takeover*

BY MARK BOURRIE

by artificial intelligence. Aside from being one of the luckiest politicians in Canada, he also came into the job as one of the most unvetted.

There are some things we do know about our economist-in-chief. In a time when populism is driving politics, Canada has never picked a more upper-class prime minister. Carney didn't need to worry about the Tories running the kind of "he's not ready" and "he's not up to the job" campaign that they hit Justin Trudeau with over a decade ago. Only William Lyon Mackenzie King trumps Carney on education credentials, and no one comes close in his business and public service life. Carney's Harvard BA and Oxford DPhil, his career with Goldman Sachs and Brookfield Asset Management, his experience running two G7 central banks: Carney has the best credentials of any current world leader. And he's likely one of the richest men to ever run Canada. Is he the kind of guy you want to have a beer with? Ask British prime minister Keir Starmer, who went to an Ottawa bar with Carney in June to watch a Stanley Cup final before heading to Alberta for the G7 summit.

Or better: ask Doug Ford. Poilievre might be better at working a crowd, but the Ontario premier is the country's most successful populist, winner of three big majorities in a row. Somehow, both Ford, who dropped out of community college and went to work in his dad's label company, and Carney have captured the national zeitgeist. Carney is the smart, fast-skating forward; Ford is his "elbows up" man working the corners. Their bond reveals how Carney seems to see himself

as a politician: not a tribal partisan but a big-tent operator; his instincts are transactional, not ideological. For now, at least, the two men have a partnership that works, with common views on accelerating infrastructure and energy projects. And as long as Washington keeps generating danger to the nation's jobs and sovereignty, it's an alliance that leaves hard-right, Trump-adjacent figures like Poilievre and Alberta premier Danielle Smith on the fringe, looking reactive, not visionary.

If Carney's political instincts are pragmatic, his personal drive is relentless. One key to Carney's success is a punishing work ethic. Take his bestselling book *Values: Building a Better World for All*, which came out in 2021. It's a beast of a book, coming in at 528 pages. Most politicians' autobiographies/manifestos are ghostwritten collections of anecdotes. Jonathan Kay (former editor-in-chief of *The Walrus*) did most of the work on Justin Trudeau's 2015 bestseller *Common Ground* (352 pages). George Radwanski, a former *Toronto Star* editor, and journalist Gérard Pelletier (who was also a former politician) constructed much of Pierre Trudeau's *Memoirs* (379 pages, with lots of pictures). Journalist Ron Graham made a science of his craft, ghostwriting Jean Chrétien's *Straight from the Heart* (221 pages). At times, such books—like Trudeau elder's—are written when their "authors" are underemployed or retired. Publishing sources say Carney wrote *Values* himself. It was acquired only a few months after he left his post at the Bank of England—which suggests that he may have even started the process while on the job.

How does a person like that run a country? Or, more to the point, how does a person like that steer Canada through the political storms created by Trump? The president seems to respect Carney, possibly even like him. At some point—maybe sooner than the Liberals will like—we’ll have a hard conversation about whether any Canadian leader could have got a better trade agreement, or one at all. And we’ll pick apart his domestic policies.

For now, Carney is using power in ways few other prime ministers have dared.

**C**ARNEY ISN’T just a response to Trump. He’s also a reaction to Poilievre, to Trudeau, and to the endless churn of outrage. He came in offering normalcy to people exhausted by the shrillness and mudslinging. People are tired of screwballs, scandals, drama, and partisan brawls. And Carney is a reaction against the way our country’s been governed, at every level, for generations. Tough calls don’t get made. They’re agonized over: endless consultation, compromise, public scrutiny, and trashing by pundits. Canadians were tired of a system whose expenditure of energy and money isn’t justified by outcomes, and they picked a leader to reflect that.

And now we’re starting to see what the unleashed power of a national leader looks like in practice. The first thing that strikes you is the technocratic ruthlessness. As soon as he was sworn in, Carney stripped away Poilievre’s best slogan by killing the retail carbon tax in a stunt that looked a lot like Trump’s executive order photo ops. It was also a personal reversal: Carney has called climate change an “existential threat” and a “crisis.” Just months before, he was the United Nations special envoy on climate action and finance. He’s even jokingly described himself to the British press as a tree hugger. Right: a tree hugger with a chainsaw.

Then, after the election, Carney dropped the housing minister, Toronto member of Parliament Nate Erskine-Smith, who had supported him in the Liberal Party’s

leadership race. Erskine-Smith, seen as a leader of the next generation of Liberals, posted on X, “It’s impossible not to feel disrespected.” Political loyalty breeds expectations. Carney, shaped by corporate culture, seems more comfortable with a different set of rules.

His decisiveness didn’t stop at scrapping taxes or dumping ministers. Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act, is supposed to erase interprovincial trade barriers, streamline the approval process for projects deemed to be in the national in-

*Like Stephen Harper, Carney practises the politics of control. The rumour mill around the current prime minister and his staff is silent.*

terest, and expedite major building efforts. The law gives cabinet—really, the prime minister—the power to identify these priority projects and push them past whatever environmental and political barriers stand in the way. The bill, supported by Conservatives, was rammed through Parliament with minimal scrutiny. It’s starting to feel like our prime minister isn’t leading a country but running a start-up with over 41 million employees.

Voters responded—with an astonishing 64 percent approval rating, as of August. Another poll found that a surprising slice of that enthusiasm is coming from conservatives. There are outliers: Sikhs are angry about Carney’s invitation to Indian prime minister Narendra Modi for the G7 summit held in Alberta in June; environmentalists are worried about Carney’s push for east-west trade infrastructure, which might include petroleum pipelines; Indigenous leaders fear that infrastructure might be bulldozed through their territory. But there are—as

yet—no rail and highway blockades, which dominated Trudeau’s second term before COVID-19 came along, no marches on Ottawa, no anti-Carney rallies.

**S**TILL, THE FIRM HAND on the tiller can become the iron fist of the state. Since the early 1960s, federal power’s been hoarded in the Prime Minister’s Office, and it’s now being used. Carney’s shop is not like Trudeau’s. To begin, there are no women near the top of the organizational chart: this is 2025, not 2015. Carney brought in Michael Sabia, ex-head of Bell Canada and Hydro-Québec, to head the bureaucracy and remake it. Lawyer and diplomat Marc-André Blanchard, who worked on free trade negotiations in 2017, is chief of staff. Former justice minister and fellow Oxford alumnus David Lametti is principal secretary.

The image of old white guys going over spreadsheets is a big contrast to Trudeau’s first months in power, with their defining images of him doing selfies with Parliament Hill visitors. Just before renaming the squat, ugly building that houses the PMO, Trudeau surrounded himself with young, attractive, inexperienced people. Some were college buddies; others were campaign workers. The majority of those hired were in their thirties and forties. Trudeau’s office—despite, or maybe because of, its young, hip staff—became something of a snake pit, with high turnover and a reputation for struggling under competing priorities.

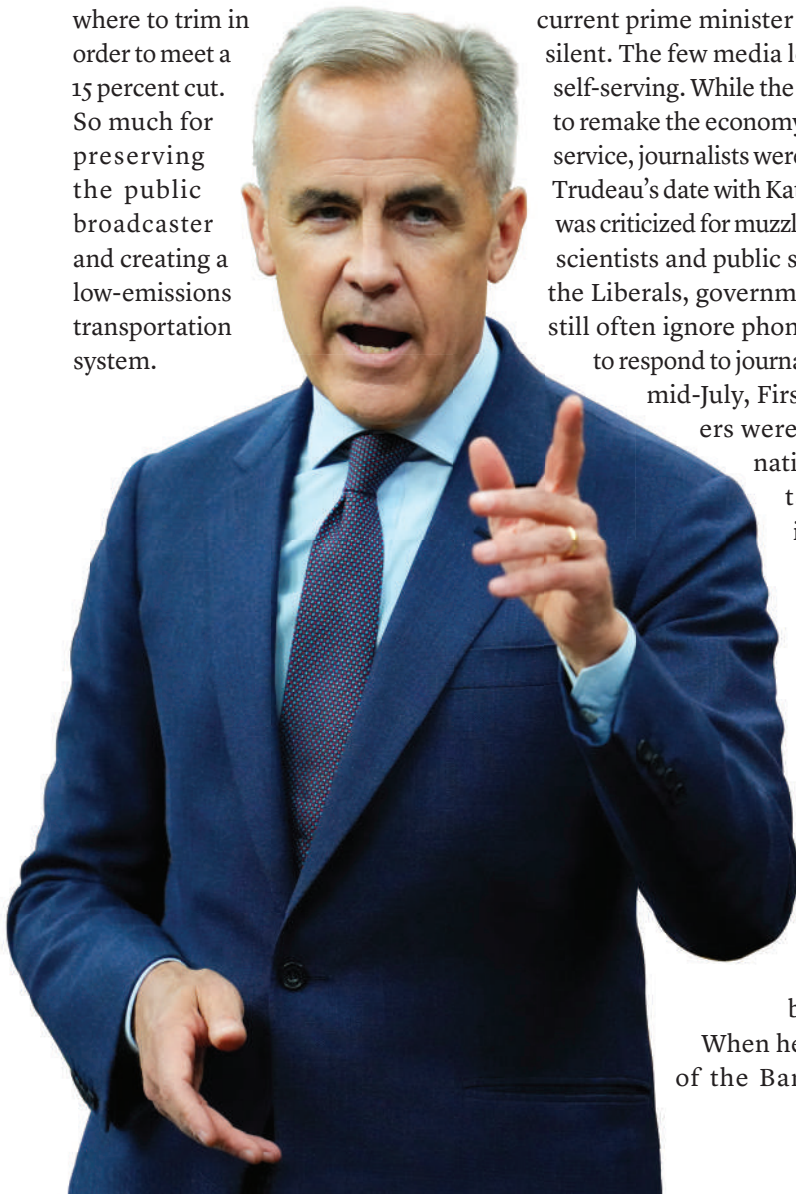
Carney’s office, instead, projects the corporate attitude of the boss. Staff show up in business suits. Carney doesn’t tolerate tardiness. Everyone needs to review their files and be ready to answer Carney’s questions. When he was governor of the Bank of England, staff learned it was better to admit to being unprepared than to try to bluff. “He could explode. It was better to say you don’t know and get the information to him later,” one insider told the *Times*. In June, people close to Carney leaked to the *Globe and Mail*’s Robert Fife that Carney would not tolerate senior bureaucrats who fail to live up to

expectations. Ministers, deputy ministers, and their staff must work with “pace and urgency” to implement Carney’s plans, one official told Fife. He wants action: public servants must stop being bogged down in process.

Then Carney ruined bureaucrats’ summers by making them come up with plans for big cuts to staff and programs. He took a short holiday in July but was back in his office for one of Ottawa’s now-routine heat waves, which had the added feature of being laced with wildfire smoke as Canada’s boreal forests burned.

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne has ordered most departments to slash budgets by 7.5 percent next fiscal year, 10 percent the year after, and 15 percent in 2028/29—though, according to the CBC, benefits like Old Age Security will be untouched. The *Toronto Star* reports that the CBC and Via Rail have been told to decide

where to trim in order to meet a 15 percent cut. So much for preserving the public broadcaster and creating a low-emissions transportation system.



The cuts dash the hopes of young people who want a career in federal public service, making no distinction between high performers and clock watchers. Michael Wernick, clerk of the Privy Council from 2016 to 2019, argued that freezing hiring and reducing staff levels through attrition is a self-defeating way to run an organization. “What happens if your absolute key cybersecurity expert retires next week? You’re not going to replace her?” he told a CBC reporter. “If your aspiration is a serious compression of the numbers, then you have to be more mindful about it, and you have to do layoffs and buyouts.”

Trudeau promised sunny ways. Carney brings deadlines, hard choices, and an unforgiving to-do list.

**L**IKE STEPHEN HARPER, Carney practises the politics of control. The rumour mill around the current prime minister and his staff is silent. The few media leaks have been self-serving. While the PMO was trying to remake the economy and the public service, journalists were stuck covering Trudeau’s date with Katy Perry. Harper was criticized for muzzling government scientists and public servants. Under the Liberals, government employees still often ignore phone calls and fail to respond to journalists’ emails. In

mid-July, First Nations leaders were invited to the national capital to talk about the implementation of Bill C-5. The Canadian Press reported that the chiefs and executives of First Nations organizations had to submit their questions to Carney’s staff in advance. He would not be blindsided.

When he was governor of the Bank of Canada,

Carney dealt largely with a small pack of deferential financial journalists who avoided short sound bites and “gotcha!” traps. Since then, he’s had to work with reporters with different agendas. Like Harper, he has very little time for tough questions and the people who ask them. In March, Carney got into a public fight with two Parliament Hill journalists who questioned him over conflicts of interest from his career as vice chairman of Brookfield Asset Management Ltd. When the CBC’s Rosemary Barton said it is “very difficult to believe” Carney didn’t have conflicts, Carney shot back, “Look inside yourself, Rosemary. You start from a prior of conflict and ill will,” and implied he had sacrificed a lot to serve Canada.

London’s often-brutal journalists, who got to know Carney better than Ottawa’s press corps have, saw a man who, as Bank of England governor, made sure everybody knew he was the smartest person in the room. When challenged about his decisions during Brexit, Carney became prickly. In fact, that’s the Brits’ go-to adjective for Carney. Phillip Inman, former economics editor at the *Observer*, told The Walrus writer Curtis Gillespie in 2021, “He was very prickly when you asked questions that appeared to impugn his forecasting or his social conscience or any of the things that he felt he should be praised for.” Roya Nikkhah and Oliver Shah, covering Carney’s first weeks in power for the *Sunday Times*, wrote: “He was known for outbursts of temper inside the Bank and he could be prickly with journalists.”

Liberal Party and Canadian voters know he’s no empath like Trudeau, but they picked him. Maybe it takes a prickly streak to make it in politics, but you’re much more likely to hear about Trudeau quietly throwing people under the bus than having a temper tantrum. Jean Chrétien was skilled at picking his battles, believing most problems went away on their own. Carney is, at least in fiscal policy and governing style, the heir to Brian Mulroney or even Harper. He is winning over Conservatives without playing to the populist right, like supporters of the 2022 “Freedom



the Canadian Press, he warned that the government might “get the machinery working” but “leave a lot of roadkill along the way,” criticizing the rush to pass the bill without proper study or genuine Indigenous involvement. But the left, inside and outside Parliament, was quiet. Many Indigenous leaders have been willing to go along with the program, or at least talk. Carney has assured them that approval of national projects won’t infringe on modern treaties.

Why have Liberals stayed silent about Carney’s move to the right? A veteran of the last three Liberal prime ministers told me many in the party, like plenty of Canadians, were fed up with what they saw as Trudeau’s fixation on identity politics. If Trudeau’s team was winning elections, there wasn’t much they could do about it. “The Liberal Party is a big tent. Sometimes, the left dominates, sometimes the right. It changes to suit the times, and right now, people in the party and voters want a leadership that can handle Trump and deal with whatever economic changes come from

what’s happening in the United States.”

Just as the federal Conservatives are splitting between western populists and eastern centrists because of Poilievre’s insistence on hanging on to the leadership, Carney’s Liberals have issues that may eventually bring them down. In the first months of his government, people saw the change in tone and policy but not the results. How do the Liberals square years of reconciliation with First Nations and Carney’s Bill C-5? What happens when Trump stops threatening Canada? Or when people realize that money spent on the military is cash that no longer goes to the things they think are important? Events could change the vibe: an environmental catastrophe, a global financial meltdown, a foreign crisis that Canadians can’t ignore, a George Floyd-style racial reckoning, another pandemic.

By mid-summer, an Abacus Data poll showed 69 percent of Canadians believed Carney is “calm and steady during uncertain times,” his most favourable attribute. Just 50 percent said the same about Poilievre—who, in a bid

to claw his way back into Parliament, was preparing to fight for a seat in an Alberta by-election. On “avoiding unnecessary conflict,” Carney led Poilievre by twenty-two points. Overall, the Liberals had reversed the polling numbers of the summer of 2024. That, in itself, was a mandate for big change.

High approval ratings in a honeymoon period when your opponent is busy fighting for his political life can generate hubris. Most political careers end in tears or, at least, intense frustration. Can a prime minister remake Canada’s economy while spending so many hours dealing with Trump’s petulance? Can he remake the Canadian economy to reduce our dependence on the US? He was in the front row for two of Britain’s existential crises: Brexit and Scottish independence. Now his home country faces its own. Can he manage it? 

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**MARK BOURRIE** is an Ottawa-based author and lawyer who holds a PhD in history.

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# Understanding Obesity

Busting Myths, Breaking Stigma, and Counting the True Cost of a Chronic Disease

BY MADELEINE SOMERVILLE

Lisa Schaffer remembers how it felt to be one of the biggest kids in every room. She remembers the sting of having to wear a mother-of-the-bride dress instead of a graduation dress like her peers, and the isolation of not fitting in—sometimes literally, into chairs at her doctor’s office or desks in university lecture halls. Schaffer, now the executive director of Obesity Canada, says living with obesity took a disastrous toll on her mental health. “I broke my own heart,” she says with a rueful smile. “I kept trying to understand why I was successful in so many other parts of my life, but this one spot just continued to evade me.”

Schaffer’s story is shared by millions. Nearly one in three Canadians live with obesity, and obesity rates have more than tripled since 1985. In addition to its devastating impact on mental health, obesity is linked to hundreds of other conditions, including heart disease and diabetes. Despite its prevalence and far-reaching ripple effects, the advice for the millions of Canadians living with obesity has remained mostly unchanged: eat less, move more.

Messages like these lead to a frustrating cycle of diets and disappointment, as people like Schaffer blame themselves for being unable to lose weight (and keep it off) through diet and

exercise alone. Dr. Tasneem Sajwani, medical director of the Edmonton Weight Management Centre and an ABOMd-certified family physician specializing in obesity, says that an explosion of research into the disease is providing a new understanding of obesity for healthcare professionals and new hope for her patients.

Sajwani says, “We can now objectively say that obesity is a chronic disease, versus what we previously thought—that this was a lifestyle choice or something that we could quickly fix ourselves.”

Schaffer and Sajwani are among a growing number of advocates, researchers, and healthcare professionals dedicated to sharing this new understanding of obesity, hoping to eliminate bias and stigma, streamline access to evidence-based obesity treatments, and save the Canadian healthcare system billions of dollars each year.

## “Obesity is a Disease, Not a Decision”

Understanding obesity as a chronic disease comes after tremendous research advances into the physiology of weight regulation. Sajwani explains



**LISA SCHAFFER**  
Executive Director  
Obesity Canada



**TASNEEM SAJWANI**  
Medical Director  
Edmonton Weight  
Management Centre

that over 300 genetic variants are associated with obesity risk, influencing a person's appetite, satiety (the feeling of being full), energy expenditure, and body fat. Even factors that may seem like conscious choices aren't quite so black and white: those living with obesity often have more ghrelin (an appetite-stimulating hormone) and less GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1, a hormone which makes you feel full), creating frequent hunger that can feel almost impossible to satisfy.

When someone living with obesity does lose weight, Sajwani says it can be challenging to maintain, "Our brain has a robust biological drive to regain that lost weight—and more for good measure."

Identifying the complex factors contributing to obesity explains why lifestyle changes alone are often insufficient in treating this disease and provides an evidence-based counter to misconceptions that those with obesity are lazy or lack self-control. "Obesity is a disease, not a decision," says Schaffer. "You can't willpower your way out of a chronic disease."

### The Cost of Obesity

Despite this new research, obesity bias and stigma persist, creating devastating effects on mental health, physical health, and even employment, particularly for women. A recent economic analysis found women living with obesity earn as much as 12% less each year compared to healthy-weight women and are also 5.3% less likely to be employed, while 54% of all people with obesity report stigma from co-workers.

According to Obesity Canada, 64% of people living with obesity have experienced bias in healthcare, which can lead to delayed surgeries, missed diagnoses, or an erosion of trust between patients and their doctors.

Obesity stigma also comes with a steep price tag. The economic cost of Canada failing to recognize and treat obesity as a chronic disease is an estimated \$27.6 billion annually, which

### MYTHS VS. REALITY

#### MYTH

**Obesity is a result of poor lifestyle choices**

#### REALITY

**Obesity is a disease, not a decision**

Chronic diseases result from a combination of genetic, biological, and environmental factors — according to Obesity Canada, up to 70% of obesity risk factors are determined by genetics.

#### MYTH

**People living with obesity just need to eat less and exercise more**

#### REALITY

**Weight is not a behaviour**

People with obesity can control their behaviour, not their weight. Effective obesity treatment plans include appropriate nutrition and physical activity; however, complex genetic and biological factors mean that diet and exercise alone may not result in weight loss.

#### MYTH

**Taking treatments like GLP-1/GIP is the "easy way out"**

#### REALITY

**Like many other chronic diseases, obesity can be effectively treated with pharmacotherapy**

Those living with obesity deserve individualized, evidence-informed care. Pharmacotherapy can be an important pillar in the management of obesity, just like it is in other chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes or hypertension.

includes increased healthcare costs, reduced personal income, and reduced workforce participation.

"We need to understand that the weight of the stigma and bias that people with obesity receive is deadly, and very, very problematic," says Schaffer. "It's not just that we want people to be nice to us—it's costing people's income, it costs them their health, it costs them their basic dignity. We all deserve all three of those things."

### Treating Obesity

Breaking through obesity stigma is crucial to educate and support health care practitioners in providing access to effective obesity treatments. "This is a complex disorder that requires, and deserves, multimodal management and evidence-informed care," says Sajwani.

In her practice, this involves individualized treatment plans that take into account dozens of patient details like weight history, sleep habits, and overlapping disorders like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), address medical nutrition, and explore pharmacotherapy options.

Sajwani believes a multi-modal approach is crucial for sustainable care, but she stresses that patients shouldn't need to "earn" pharmaceutical interventions. "Everything around pharmacotherapy is important too, but it can't be held hostage to it. It can't be 'Go home. Try this diet first, and if it fails, then come back and then I'll consider medications.'"

Pharmacological options include new advances in obesity medications, such as GLP-1/GIP (glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide), which work by switching off hunger hormones and signalling a sense of fullness, allowing the brain to stop focusing on food acquisition. Schaffer describes that focus as "food noise," saying, "These medications turned that *wanting* off in my brain. I hadn't even realized how much space it was taking, and how much of your life you get back, even just from that."

While Sajwani has spent time specializing in obesity, some primary care practitioners may feel out of their depth in treating the disease. Schaffer says Obesity Canada designed its Clinical Practice Guidelines to support physicians, synthesizing the most recent and accurate obesity research and evidence into a document that she says has become the "global gold standard for understanding obesity," including obesity management for Indigenous peoples.

### Moving from Shame to Science

Schaffer believes including GLP-1/GIP as one element of an obesity treatment plan can be a powerful source of change. She urges provincial healthcare systems to recognize obesity as a chronic disease (Alberta is currently the only province to do so) and treat it accordingly by creating obesity-specific billing codes and covering Health Canada-approved treatment options in healthcare plans.

"We're at a really amazing, once-in-a-generation opportunity to reset and get this right, because we also know if we intervene on obesity early and correctly, we can remove the ripple of over 200 other diseases that can come downstream," she says. "I believe we can build a future where care is truly compassionate, and where policy is informed by science, not shame and misinformation." ●

## SOCIETY

# All Truth, No Reconciliation

*Ten years after the TRC, Indigenous writers reflect on its ambitions and outcomes*

**GUEST-EDITED BY MICHELLE CYCA**  
**ILLUSTRATIONS BY JESSIE BOULARD**

**I**N 1958, EUGENE ARCAND FROM MUSKEG LAKE CREE NATION was taken to St. Michael's Indian Residential School. There, he was assigned a number—781—and he lived under the constant threat of abuse. Arcand began playing hockey after he noticed that the school athletes were the only ones who were fed properly. At hockey tournaments, he and the other children from St. Michael's were made to wear their equipment at all times so they couldn't run away. At the Final Report ceremony, Arcand unfolded a black and white photo showing a group of thirty-two little boys and girls laughing and smiling in the sun—his grade two class at St. Michael's. Only nine of those children, he told the crowd, were still alive.

Arcand is one of more than 6,500 survivors and witnesses of the residential school system who spoke to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when three commissioners, led by Murray Sinclair, spent six years gathering testimonies and millions of federal records. On December 15, 2015, the TRC presented its Final Report on the impacts of residential schools, just eighteen years after the last institution closed its doors.

What the TRC compiled was a record of a system designed to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children, including at least 3,200 who died there. Sinclair, who passed away last November, maintained that the true number of deaths was far higher.

As Justin Trudeau, then the newly elected prime minister, accepted the report from Sinclair, he thanked survivors for their courage, saying, "Today, there is reason for hope... we need nothing less than a total renewal of the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples." He promised to "completely implement" the ninety-four Calls to Action in the Final Report, which outlined the changes necessary to repair that relationship.

But a decade later, most of those calls have not been answered. Trudeau is gone, having made his ignoble exit in the midst of an international

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relations crisis between Canada and the US. Mark Carney has taken his place and unveiled a new vision of Canada as an economic powerhouse—a plan that requires Indigenous nations and their resource-rich territories to get on board. Indigenous nations, meanwhile, are furious with new national legislation—specifically the Building Canada Act, part of Bill C-5—that appears to bypass their rights entirely, with leaders staging protests, filing legal challenges, and walking out on the prime minister. There is a distinct atmosphere of national impatience: Can't we move on from this reconciliation thing already? Hasn't Canada said enough, done enough? What could Indigenous people still have to complain about?

**I**T SEEMS THAT EVERY NEW federal regime in Canada is accompanied by a reckoning with the fraught relationship between Indigenous nations and the Crown. The TRC, launched in 2008, was not the first attempt to improve this dynamic. In 1982, after an eighteen-month international campaign by Indigenous activists, Section 35 was added to the Constitution Act, affirming, if not clearly defining, the existence of inherent Aboriginal and treaty rights. And in 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established to “restore justice to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada” in the wake of the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance, also called the Oka Crisis, a violent seventy-eight-day siege on Mohawk encampments by the Quebec police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canadian Army.

After five years and consultations in nearly a hundred Indigenous communities, the RCAP issued a report with 440 recommendations. The response from the federal government was muted, and the vast majority of recommendations were never addressed or implemented.

A year later, in 1997, the federal government finally released their “Aboriginal Action Plan” in response to the RCAP—which included a commitment to address Canada's role in the residential school system. A decade later, the Indian

Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was implemented, offering compensation to all applicants who had attended a residential school, as well as a secondary avenue of compensation for survivors who testified to experiencing physical or sexual abuse. The latter received 38,000 claims.

The TRC was another condition of this agreement. “Canadians believe that the [TRC] came out of the goodness of

**“The failure of Canada to keep its promises highlights the limits of ‘reconciliation’ as a framework for meaningful and lasting change.”**

Canada's heart, not as a product of the largest class action lawsuit in Canadian history,” says Ian Mosby, an associate professor of history at Toronto Metropolitan University. Since the budget for the commission came through the settlement, “survivors spent their own money” for the TRC to exist, he says.

When Mosby first thought to check how many Calls to Action by the TRC had been completed in 2016, he was surprised to find that no one was tracking progress. “I remember being in the room when they released the Final Report, and all these government ministers and heads of churches and other important people were there, committing themselves to completing the work of the TRC. It was very emotional. The tears of the politicians seemed genuine,” he recalls. This is a common dynamic between Canada and Indigenous people: a conflict that revealed the ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous people, prompting overtures of change from an embarrassed nation—commitments that diminished

in tandem with public pressure.

The TRC's ninety-four Calls to Action span many sectors—child welfare, education, sports, business—and each is directed to a specific level of government. In 2016, Mosby found five calls had been completed; in 2017 and 2018, three more were fully implemented, bringing the total to eight. Then, in 2019, he and colleague Eva Jewell, also a faculty member at TMU and an Anishinaabekwe from Deshkan Ziibiing, published their first report through the Yellowhead Institute, an Indigenous-led research and education centre based out of the university. Their fifth report, released in 2023, determined that only thirteen calls had been completed—and none at all that year. At this rate, they calculated, Canada would not fulfill all calls until 2081. (The federal government said in December 2024 that “over 85 per cent” of the seventy-six calls that they were directly or partially responsible for were “now completed or well underway.”)

Estimates from the CBC and non-profit Indigenous Watchdog list only fourteen or fifteen calls as complete, and in some cases, Canada is moving backward: APTN reported that fifteen Indigenous people died in police custody in a three-month period in 2024, and Indigenous people are even more overrepresented in the prison system than they were a decade ago. Federal funding for gravesite searches at former residential schools was almost slashed by more than 83 per cent last year, before community outcry got it reinstated, and an expert committee to support searches was defunded in February.

In the final pages of their report, Mosby and Jewell posed a question: “Perhaps, though, the ongoing failure of Canada to keep its promises when it comes to the Calls to Action highlights the limits of ‘reconciliation’ as a framework for meaningful and lasting change,” they write. “And we have to wonder: should we just abandon ‘reconciliation’ altogether?”

**T**HAT QUESTION LINGERS. Today, the bestselling book in Amazon's “First Nations in Canada” category is not a work of fiction or nonfiction from an

Indigenous author; it is a book denying and distorting the history of residential schools. Residential school denialism is now commonplace, and based on the emails I receive whenever I write about the history of these institutions, a growing number of Canadians are eager to believe that the testimonies gathered by the TRC and the corroborating federal and church records are hoaxes.

As Donald Trump threatens and bullies Canada, federal and provincial leaders have responded with legislation that appears to sweep Indigenous rights entirely to the side with a shocking swiftness. Staggering inequities remain, many of which stem from the residential school system—the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care; higher rates of incarceration, poverty, and addiction—as well as those that are plainly the fault of governments, such as inadequate funding for services and housing on reserves. Many Indigenous communities in Canada are still under long-term drinking-water advisories years after the federal government promised to resolve them, while provincial leaders in Alberta and Ontario argue that federal legislation for clean water on reserves could undermine business interests. As Carney sets the direction for Canada’s relationship to Indigenous nations for the next several years, it’s worth considering where we’re heading before it’s too late to change course.

Mosby and Jewell’s work tracking the implementation of the Calls to Action reveals an unsurprising pattern: when national attention is on reconciliation, change happens. Five calls were completed in the first year after the TRC’s Final Report was published; another five were completed in 2021 and 2022, following the discovery of unmarked graves on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School and the global outpouring of grief and horror. “When we talked truth and reconciliation prior to the disturbances in Kamloops, I had noticed a real complacency had set in,” Arcand wrote in 2022. “Well, that complacency disappeared very quickly, but it only took six to nine months for it to creep back in. The only way to keep

the TRC agenda alive is to keep people thinking about it—hit them right in the heart, right in the head.”

Old regimes don’t give me hope, but children do. They’re the impetus for truth and reconciliation and the hope for its realization. Ten years ago, Sinclair said, “The story of the truth of

residential schools in this country is the story of the resilience of the children.” To Theland Kicknosway, then a twelve-year-old drummer from Walpole Island First Nation, he said, “Sing loud, and do that forever, my young friend—so that people will come to realize what could have always been, because of you.”

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MICHELLE CYCA is a contributing writer for The Walrus.



**TRUTH**  
MICHELLE GOOD

**F**OR SIX YEARS, starting in 2007, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission travelled throughout the country, hearing testimonies from over 6,500 people who’d endured Canada’s residential school system. Six thousand and five hundred people, believing in the mandate of the commission, courageously testified, thinking that, finally, they would be heard and amends would be made. It’s difficult to imagine what that must have been like—reliving the abuses and indignities of what can only be described as internment facilities following a mandate of indoctrination set by the state and implemented by the Church.

There is no doubt that residential schools were what’s known as “total institutions”—institutions that function in a manner that physically and socially separates those held there from the outside world. One need only consider the words of Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin, a powerful advocate for the mandatory attendance of Indigenous children at these internment facilities, who, in 1875, reportedly stated: “We in-

stil in them a pronounced distaste for the native life so that they will be humiliated when reminded of their origins. When they graduate from our institutions, the children have lost everything Native except their blood.”

Each of these witnesses experienced the force of the state’s determination to eliminate Indigenous peoples. Deconstructing their identity, it was hoped, would eliminate them as barriers to the exploitation of Indigenous lands and resources. Miraculously, these witnesses, representative of survivors throughout the country, were not destroyed. Deeply and irrevocably injured, yes, but still standing—standing before a commission empowered to hear them and to create a path forward, grounded in unearthing the truth of the origins and intent of residential schools. From that truth, necessary action was identified—to right the wrongs of the past and to create a future with safeguards against institutionalized systems founded in racism, hatred, and a drive to control and oppress.

When the TRC’s Final Report was

submitted, in December 2015, it was the culmination of heartfelt effort—arduous work on behalf of the commission, its staff, and all those survivors who came forward. The report was momentous and hopeful and brilliant in its clear-headed analysis of what must occur to reconcile history with the truth and to base a meaningfully improved future on an understanding of how we came to be where we are today.

The idea of reconciliation and a profoundly different understanding of Canadian history are taking root throughout public bodies, post-secondary institutions, elementary and secondary schools, the judiciary, and society generally. But we are seeing now what we have unfortunately and repeatedly seen in the past. Ten years on, only fourteen of the ninety-four Calls to Action have been implemented. While a website for Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada refers to the calls as “recommendations,” they most certainly are not. They are an articulation of *required* action, not mere suggestions. In that downgrading of the nature of the Calls to Action, we see the heart of the problem: the institutionalized resistance to substantive change. Call to Action number fifty-five, for example, requires annual reports from all levels of government on the progress of reconciliation. Not one annual report has been written. This failure demonstrates an important truth: that none of the substantive calls have been implemented.

When we focus more closely on the calls on which work has not even started, we gain an even deeper insight into the factors contributing to the fertile ground for the disturbing upswing in residential school denialism—that is, denying the testimony of those 6,500 survivors. Denialists are those Canadians who cling to the notion that genocide could not and did not occur in Canada and resist the facts to the contrary placed before them. The violence of their beliefs, which are being propagated at a frightening rate, finds justification in the failure of governments to stand behind their promises to the process of reconciliation and to Indigenous peoples

themselves. Government inaction is, therefore, also an act of violence, not just a failure to act.

*Without truth, there can be no reconciliation* is a refrain we hear more and more as less and less is accomplished. Implementing systemic change, once again, is thwarted by a resounding failure to fully embrace the truth of

Canada’s genocidal agenda as it pertains to Indigenous peoples. In some senses, it is easy to understand why Canada has a difficult time seeing itself as genocidal. However, that acceptance is the only thing that will allow all Canadians, Indigenous and otherwise, to move beyond that painful truth and into an era of true reconciliation.

**MICHELLE GOOD**, a member of Red Pheasant Cree Nation, is the author of *Five Little Indians* and *Truth Telling: Seven Conversations about Indigenous Life in Canada*.



## CHILD WELFARE

ANNA MARY MCKENZIE

**M**ORE THAN 150,000 children taken. That’s really all you need to know about residential schools. In Canada, more than 150,000 Indigenous children attended these institutions between the 1870s and the late 1990s. There, they died, suffered, and ached—for their families, communities, languages, and ways of life.

Today, there are more Indigenous children in care than there were at the height of the residential school system. This is a momentous problem, especially in a time where so many in Canadian society seek to reconcile. Reconciliation simply cannot occur when our children and families continue to suffer.

I was hired in 2020 to be trained for a new journalism outlet called *IndigiNews*. My beat was the child welfare system—where I drew on my experiences as a youth worker supporting Indigenous kids involved in the child welfare system. I remain haunted by the stories I reported and the statistics surrounding Indigenous

children and youth in Canada. The number of Indigenous girls who go missing while in the care of the province of British Columbia, for example, and the continuation of cycles perpetuated by the child welfare system that seep into Canada’s prisons are amplifying the same harms that, for decades, Indigenous people have fought to heal and recover from.

Before there was the TRC, there was the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. This settlement was, until recently, the largest class action settlement in Canadian history. The agreement reflects decades of advocacy by Indigenous people to demand accountability for the harms and losses suffered by children in residential schools and for other mechanisms of colonialism, like the loss of land, access to language, ceremony, and culture.

The settlement agreement stands on the shoulders of those who participated in

the Constitution Express (a cross-country protest led by Indigenous activists to ensure Indigenous people were included in the patriation of the Canadian Constitution), those families who defended their land during the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance, and those thousands of parents who fought for information on the whereabouts of their children. Then came Idle No More, a movement beginning in 2012 where Indigenous people across Canada stood up to say we are collectively and literally sick to death of our people falling through the cracks.

These are all examples of movements that have contributed to justice and equity for Indigenous people in Canada. To this day, many Canadians aren't aware that First Nations don't receive monies from Canadian taxpayers. Our programs and services are partly funded by a trust held by the federal government, and the interest earned by that trust is funnelled into education, health, and governance. This paternalistic approach has been mired in problems, and as a result, we see vast inequities across Canada, including lack of access to clean drinking water and life-saving medications. And it's that same paternalism that tells Indigenous people we don't know what's best for our lands, our communities—and our children.

A 2024 study by the University of Manitoba and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs found a “staggering” number of First Nations newborns in Manitoba involved in the child welfare system; a follow-up study this year noted that half of First Nations families in Manitoba have had a child welfare file open on them. In BC, Indigenous children still make up a large percentage of children in the care of the province, despite efforts to divert kids from falling through the cracks and despite the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into provincial law.

The first five Calls to Action are centred on child welfare, an area of Canadian law and policy that is plagued with child apprehension and the breaking apart of Indigenous families. The calls seek to address the overrepresentation of

Indigenous children and youth in the care of provincial governments and to provide support to keep Indigenous kids connected to their families and communities.

But ten years later, we are in a time where these calls are being drowned out by apathy and denial about the harms of residential schools. The momentum that followed the uncovering of unmarked graves and missing children, the Idle No More awakening, and all the other efforts by Indigenous people to capture

the attention of the world is waning. Instead, energy is being summoned so Canada can quickly exploit the land for rare minerals in the name of Canadian sovereignty.

We can't let these calls fade from our minds. Our collective memory needs this information so we don't forget how Canada allowed the harm of so many children. This memory will help us in paving a new pathway forward. As an Indigenous mother, I have to believe that.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JANELLE LAPOINTE

**I**S IT POSSIBLE FOR INDIGENOUS nations to define their own priorities within the very same economy built on their oppression and exclusion? In the decade since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its Calls to Action, the Canadian government has failed to shift the foundations of its economic system in a way that can truly make space for Indigenous self-determination. Instead, Indigenous people are told to be grateful that they have a seat at the table, with the menu already set.

The majority of the Calls to Action are not written for corporations. But call ninety-two highlights the need for fair access to employment, training, and education in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and for free, prior, and informed consent before proceeding

with economic development projects. It must also be interpreted in light of the demands on the government to provide culturally relevant health care, fair access to education, and the revival of Indigenous legal systems.

Rather than implementing these calls through strong policy, federal and provincial governments have outsourced a simple checklist of Indigenous partnership to industry. In the absence of land back, redress, and systemic change, we have corporations cherry-picking language from the commission in order to legitimize resource extraction. In recent years, governments and industry have increasingly pointed to call ninety-two to justify “economic reconciliation,” a term that barely appears in the TRC’s Final Report and has since been co-opted to greenlight resource extraction projects under the guise of partnership. It has

been reframed as a means of enabling pipelines, mines, and corporate access to Indigenous lands, rather than representing the commission's intention or the survivors' vision.

This is an active political decision made by governments, rather than passive neglect. Governments can preserve the appearance of progress without ceding power by assigning accountability to industry. It can be easier, and cheaper, to allow corporations to make private deals and create short-term jobs rather than have the government confront land restitution, Indigenous governance, or the full implications of Indigenous sovereignty. In this arrangement, reconciliation becomes a public relations strategy, delivered by corporations, and keeps the status quo intact.

Since the TRC, it is clear that in the eyes of the government, Indigenous people do not have the right to define their own priorities if they run counter to the government's desire to extract land and labour. The Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and land defenders spent years resisting the Coastal GasLink pipeline on their unceded territory, only to be met with militarized Royal Canadian Mounted Police raids and criminalization. In Ontario, Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinabek First Nation (Grassy Narrows) has spent decades mired in a legal and political struggle for justice after mercury poisoning devastated its community and surrounding area, all while fighting off logging operations. The Blueberry River First Nations had to take the province of British Columbia to court to finally have their treaty rights recognized after years of cumulative industrial development.

There are no meaningful avenues for Indigenous people to assert rights on their own lands aside from front-line resistance or protracted, costly legal battles—which inevitably result in their being characterized as opposed to economic progress.

Far too often, people hear about economic development and think of industry, factories, big companies, and assimilation into the Canadian extrac-

tion economy. Another way forward exists. Across this land, nations are bringing local food systems back to life through hunting, fishing, farming, and careful preservation that feed people and nurture the soil. Indigenous communities are now backing renewable energy projects that cut diesel reliance, keep energy ownership local, and let revenue stay within the community.

Language immersion schools, cultural tourism, and artist-run spaces do double duty by breathing life into identity and creating steady jobs. Midwifery programs, land-based healing, and community care places put health and wellness ahead of profit.

These are not side projects. These efforts form a circular, regenerative economy where value is shared through kinship, rather than pulled away and sold. If governments funded these initiatives

at even a fraction of what they pour into resource extraction, or celebrated them with the same fanfare they give to liquified natural gas ground breakings and ribbon cuttings, we would be miles closer to real economic reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a duty, not a project to be left to the private sector, not a branding opportunity, and not a line item in a corporate social responsibility report. Chronic funding gaps and a lack of political imagination mean that Indigenous-led visions for economic development, rooted in land stewardship, language, care, and culture, are often dismissed or defunded. This leaves communities stuck with the choice to participate in extractive economies on settler terms or to be excluded entirely. Until Indigenous priorities are more than a checkbox, reconciliation will remain unfulfilled.

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**GENDER**  
EVA JEWELL

**T**WO THINGS ARE TRUE about Indigenous girls, women, and gender-diverse people in Canada.

First, as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson notes, they “reproduce and amplify” Indigeneity, the definitive characteristics of Indigenous peoples and culture, diverse as they are. Second, she writes, it is this quality that has made them targets of violence in a country that seeks to eradicate Indigeneity.

These truths have especially been on full display in Manitoba since 2022. Following the discovery of O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation member Rebecca Contois's remains in a garbage bin outside a Winnipeg apartment complex, at least three more Indigenous women were thought to be in a landfill north of the city. Mercedes Myran and Morgan Harris of Long Plain First Nation and Ashlee Shingoose from St. Theresa Point Anisiniwew Nation, like Contois, were

all described in news reports as vulnerable and street involved. All were also mothers. The convicted serial killer who murdered these women was known to frequent homeless shelters in Winnipeg to search for his victims, his preference being vulnerable Indigenous women whose circumstances were dire.

The women's families and communities pleaded with officials to conduct a search—cries for justice which police and provincial leadership countered with tuts of fiscal feasibility. The tension spilled into the provincial election when the Progressive Conservative campaign claimed there were exorbitant financial and safety costs associated with the search. This debate whether Indigenous mothers were worth retrieving from piles of waste reveals where gender and reconciliation intersect. The public and political indifference to their living and posthumous dignity is rooted in a specific problem: Canadian exceptionalism that touts progressive feminist politics except if you're Indigenous.

In 1994, Canada sponsored the founding of the United Nations' special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes, and consequences. A champion for human rights, gender equality, and even a feminist approach to international assistance policy, Canada has been distinguishing itself as an advocate for women's rights in the global sphere for more than three decades. At home, in 2015, then newly elected prime minister Justin Trudeau proclaimed, "I am a feminist," appointed an equal number of women and men in his cabinet, and mandated gender-based analysis on all government policy approaches.

Though the position was founded in 1994, the first visit to Canada by the special rapporteur was not until the spring of 2018. In her 2019 report to the UN, then rapporteur Dubravka Šimonović noted Canada's leadership in gender equity and women's rights, as well as its declaration as a feminist government, but gestured to a grimmer domestic reality. "Indigenous women from First Nations, Métis and Inuit

communities," the report notes, "face violence, marginalization, exclusion and poverty because of institutional, systemic, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination not addressed adequately by the State."

Such is the curious nature of Canada's enduring existential conundrum: simultaneously a champion and a violator of human rights. Several of the report's recommendations, like many reports that preceded and succeeded it, call upon Canada to end systemic harms that

## In the wake of near total cultural annihilation, Indigenous peoples are now bringing back what was taken.

disproportionately affect Indigenous women and to account for the impacts.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not explicitly apply a gender-specific focus. How reconciliation in Canada might be a gendered pursuit is a question that Indigenous women advocated for during the TRC process, but that was not outlined in the Final Report itself. Of the ninety-four Calls to Action, only one focused specifically on a gendered issue: number forty-one, which prompted the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Two hundred and thirty-one calls to justice emerged from the inquiry into MMIWG, but six years later, only two have been fulfilled.

Liora Salter and Debra Salco describe "inquiry fatigue" in their 1981 text *Public*

*Inquiries in Canada*: "Inquiries depend upon the good will of government and departments to ensure that the conditions they propose 'on approval' are met." Reports, inquiries, commissions, and studies into the injustices Indigenous peoples face in this country have all concluded that Indigenous peoples endure interlocking forms of systemic discrimination for which Canada is squarely responsible.

Reconciliation and governmental goodwill to address these issues were absent when Manitoba held public debates over how to offer dignity in the wake of the incredible violence the four Indigenous women had endured, in life and in death. Wab Kinew's election as premier confirmed what Indigenous peoples have always known: redress and justice for Indigenous peoples do not emerge from mainstream Canada's moral clarity. It took the first ever Indigenous premier to ensure justice for these women, one of whom is still missing. Reconciliation itself is a lopsided aspiration, with Indigenous peoples—many of them women—doing most of the heavy lifting.

And as Mark Carney's version of reconciliation holds an economic focus, it's worth noting that resource development projects—the cornerstone of this economic plan—are epicentres of human trafficking, impacting Indigenous communities and, in particular, women and gender-diverse people the most.

While it's true that reconciliation without a gendered focus leaves Indigenous girls, women, and gender-diverse people more vulnerable, it is also true that these are precisely the people in our communities who are doing the important work of advocacy, justice seeking, and cultural protection. Their ability to thrive ensures the prosperity and future of our distinct Indigenous nations. Far too many are made vulnerable in systems intent on inaction. As reconciliation shifts to its economic focus, it's almost as if that's the point.

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**EVA JEWELL**, from Dëshkan Ziibiing (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation), is an associate professor at Toronto Metropolitan University.



## LAND

RILEY YESNO

**I**N 2024, THE HAIDA NATION reached an agreement with the provincial government of British Columbia and the federal government to return the nation's authority and jurisdiction over its ancestral archipelago, Haida Gwaii. This historic agreement was the first title case to be settled through negotiation with the federal government rather than through courts. According to the Canadian government, there are more than 170 such rights-based negotiations currently in process.

In the same year that the Haida title was achieved, Ottawa also transferred jurisdiction and authority over Crown lands and subsurface rights in Nunavut to the territorial government. While not an exclusively Indigenous government, the Government of Nunavut typically features strong elected Inuit representation, along with additional structures in place to ensure that Inuit voices are heard in the political process. Many saw these two milestones as examples of long overdue land and resource restitution—key tenets of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report—in action.

But these milestones are the exception, not the norm. In the decade since the TRC released its Final Report, Canada has largely failed to address fundamental issues, such as stolen land and resources, preferring to pursue actions that do not existentially threaten settler-colonial interests (establishing national holidays, renaming buildings and places, and conducting inquiries whose calls to action have been generally ignored, for example).

It's in this context of relative inaction that "Land Back"—the slogan, the movement—emerged in the late 2010s and early 2020s, thanks in no small part to Indigenous youth online. Land Back calls on colonial countries such as Canada to prioritize the return of lands and other material goods in its quest for transformed relations, as well as to empower Indigenous people to continue the generations-long fight to reclaim what is rightfully theirs, regardless of support from the state.

In 2020, members of Six Nations of the Grand River staged a standoff against developers seeking to build residential properties on twenty-five acres of land claimed by the First Nations, dubbing it 1492 Land Back Lane. Today, we see First Nations in the far north of Ontario promising blockades if the provincial and federal governments attempt to extract resources from their traditional homelands without their consent. As of late June, encampments have already begun to take root.

Such examples of grassroots Land Back movements threaten to become increasingly frequent, particularly as many Indigenous people seem skeptical about whether the newly elected Mark Carney government will prioritize resolving conflicts related to Indigenous title, as thus far in his term, he appears to prefer talking about economic reconciliation via resource extraction projects rather than land restitution. It's

a far cry from Justin Trudeau's cabinet, which took up the language of Land Back explicitly, indicating Indigenous title as a priority issue even if their progress on the issue was flawed.

But Carney's change in tone highlights a broader problem than any current lack of progress on Land Back: Canadian governments continually treat Indigenous title as a "policy issue" rather than a legal obligation and fundamental right. Why are Indigenous people always made to fear that these rights are threatened by the changing whims of Canada's government of the day?

The Nunavut and Haida cases show the benefits of the Canadian state becoming actively involved in Indigenous title cases: Indigenous nations can avoid decades of costly and exhausting court battles, and they can also achieve significant land returns in a single transaction, rather than fight for the land one acre at a time. But these negotiations require a willing partner, and Canada's willingness depends on its own interests and priorities.

Still, even with the potentially preferred partners in the Trudeau government, would Canada have been so eager to strike a deal to recognize Haida title if they wanted to build a pipeline on that land, or would they use militarized force, as they have in the Wet'suwet'en Yintah? Would they strike such agreements with treaty nations whose territories encompass major metropolitan centres, such as Montreal and Calgary?

Even at its most reconciliatory, Canada engages in Land Back initiatives selectively: only in instances where the political and economic stakes remain relatively low and it can purchase some public and Indigenous goodwill without threatening the settler-colonial status quo.

Canada must understand: Indigenous people's vision of Land Back won't wait for the right politician to be elected or for mega corporations to join the cause. Instead, Land Back will continue to flourish in the face of it all—just as it has always done.

RILEY YESNO is a queer Anishinaabe scholar, writer, and commentator from Eabametoong First Nation.



## MEDIA

JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT

**M**Y FIRST WEEK as a journalist was the same week the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released the summary of its Final Report. I was twenty-two, a recent graduate of a university named after Christopher Columbus. *The Huffington Post* had hired me to be their “Native Issues Fellow,” essentially a glorified intern working mostly from behind a desk in New York City. My first headline, written in that tabloid-y left-of-centre *HuffPost* style: “Canada Just Confronted Its ‘Cultural Genocide’ of Native People. Why Can’t the U.S. Do the Same?” Ten years later, I find myself asking strikingly similar questions about what it means to reckon with genocidal histories—to get the story right but coming to different conclusions.

I’ve now spent a decade reporting on Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States. I’m a member of the Canim Lake Band Tsq’escen in British Columbia, an Indian under Canada’s Indian Act. My father was born at St. Joseph’s Mission, an Indian residential school near Williams Lake, BC, and found minutes later abandoned in a trash incinerator. He had a hard upbringing, bouncing from one house to the next. He got off the rez as soon as he could, found his way to Emily Carr College of Art + Design in Vancouver, and landed a job at a fine art printmaking studio as far away from Canim Lake as he could imagine: New York. That’s where he met my mother, a loud, quick-witted Irish Jewish New Yorker, at a bar outside the city. According to legend, Dad took a gold feast ladle earring out of his lobe, gave it to Mom, and that’s how I came to be.

After moving around for Mom’s jobs—Minneapolis, Miami—my parents settled in Oakland, California, a city with a large urban Indian community. Not long after that, Mom and Dad split on account of Dad’s alcoholism.

In the wake of the loss of my larger-than-life Indian artist dad, my mother did everything she could to keep me connected to my culture. She brought me home to the Canim Lake Indian Reserve almost every Christmas and most summers. She drove us down to the Intertribal Friendship House in East Oakland, where every Thursday night they held powwow drum and dance practice. When I expressed interest in dancing, Mom learned to bead so I could have a proper “coming out” into the powwow circle. Before I was a journalist reporting on Indian country, I travelled the powwow circuit, dancing in competitions across the US and Canada. One time, at the Lillooet New Year’s Powwow in BC, I even won a horse. An Apache guy who was a sort of stand-in for my father nicknamed me “Champion,” as in “champion dancer.”

Journalism, the powwow trail, and my upbringing have given me a transnational view of Indian country. As an Indian from Canada raised and working in the US, I’m often asked about the differences between the two countries. In both, Indigenous peoples have lost almost all our lands. Our populations were reduced to fractions of former might. Some were killed off entirely. Then our children were taken away to segregated church-run

schools where they were stripped of language, culture, and lifeways. In Canada, there was a high-profile truth and reconciliation process to address the wrongs of Indian residential schools. In the US, there was an inquiry into Native American Boarding Schools. But it never received the same level of media and public attention as its Canadian counterpart. In the US, Indians are mostly powerless and invisible. In Canada, Indians are also mostly powerless, but we are at least visible, and so Canadians feel “sorry.” North of the border, there’s some desire to know our story and make things right.

Like dancing, storytelling has become a way for me to understand and recover who I am against that history of cultural genocide. Nearly a decade after the TRC’s Final Report, I co-directed *Sugarcane*, an Academy Award-nominated documentary about an ongoing investigation into abuse and children who went missing from St. Joseph’s Mission, the Indian residential school where my family was sent and my father was born. Making that film reshaped how I understand my role as a storyteller. Now, I see my responsibility as not only to unearth truths hidden by colonization but also to bring our traditions back to life. That’s why my first book, *We Survived the Night*, is written in the form of a “Coyote story,” a traditional trickster narrative from my own culture. Because, in the story of a rabble-rousing creator, destroyer, deadbeat, and survivor like Coyote, I have come to see and understand a great deal of my father, my people, and myself.

A decade into this era of truth and reconciliation, I still find myself asking the same questions about what it will take to get our stories right and make our truths known. In the wake of near total cultural annihilation, Indigenous peoples are now bringing back what was taken. Not only because our ways, like the Coyote stories, were nearly wiped off the face of the earth. But because our traditions have always gotten the stories of this land right. ©

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**JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT**, a member of the Canim Lake Band Tsq’escen, is a journalist, an Oscar-nominated filmmaker, and the author of *We Survived the Night*.

WORLD

# Capital Crimes

*China is secretly executing Canadians. A former prisoner explains why*

BY MICHAEL KOVRIG

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ANA LUISA O. J.

**F**OR OVER a thousand days, starting in December 2018, China's government held me hostage in an attempt to blackmail Canada into releasing Meng Wanzhou, a Chinese telecom executive arrested on American criminal charges.

During hundreds of hours of interrogation and false accusations, my captors threatened me with sentences that could extend to life in prison and potentially death. Thankfully, the case against me was purely political, and I had the support of relentless advocates and negotiators who eventually resolved the geopolitical standoff. But I never forget that my fate

could have been far worse.

Not everyone has been so fortunate. Earlier this year, China executed four Canadian prisoners, ignoring repeated pleas for clemency from Canadian officials, including the prime minister. Their deaths were kept secret by both governments until the information was leaked to the press on March 19. Mélanie Joly, then foreign minister, confirmed and condemned China's actions. Amnesty International called the killings "shocking and inhumane" and "a wake-up call for Canada."

In response, the Chinese embassy said the Canadians had been convicted on drug-related charges and sentenced

under Chinese law. A spokesperson for the foreign ministry added that Canada should "stop interfering in China's judicial sovereignty." During an interview with CTV News in May, a smiling Wang Di, China's ambassador to Canada, presented his government's lethal zero tolerance policy as a global good: "If the drug problem is allowed to be rampant in China," he said, "it will not only cause damage to China but also to many other countries."

My own reaction was sadness at this unnecessary destruction of human life. For the dead men, at least the suffering is over. For their families and friends, it is not.



To Canadians and citizens of other countries that have ended capital punishment, this spate of executions may seem bafflingly harsh, particularly while China's officials have rolled out the charm in a search for allies against US president Donald Trump's trade policies. The executions also undercut efforts by a handful of pro-engagement Canadians who see current disputes with Washington as an opportunity to thaw relations that froze after China detained me and a fellow Canadian and imposed trade sanctions. That crisis largely ended with our release in September 2021, but senior officials have had little direct contact since.

The Canadian government has instead been taking measures to counter a range of growing threats from China, including political interference, espionage, cyberattacks, economic coercion, and manufacturing overcapacity. In March, China responded to Canadian tariffs with a set of its own on agri-food products. But in recent months, both sides have sought to reopen channels. So why kill Canadians now?

**T**HE BODY COUNT is, in fact, even higher. Between this year's four confirmed executions and earlier ones reportedly carried out between 2014 and 2023, the People's Republic

of China—PRC—has apparently put to death at least seven Canadians in the past decade.

The identities of the recently executed have not been disclosed. But from earlier media reporting, we know that on April 30, 2019, a Jiangmen court sentenced to death a Canadian man named Fan Wei for his alleged role in a methamphetamine-producing crime ring. A Guangzhou court then sentenced Xu Weihong on August 6, 2020, on charges of manufacturing ketamine, and the next day, a Foshan court sentenced Ye Jianhui on charges of selling drugs such as MDMA. It remains unclear whether these Canadians were among the three

previously executed or part of the most recent group of four.

Global Affairs Canada hasn't publicly questioned the validity of the charges. The disagreement is about capital punishment, which Canada abolished decades ago. To understand why China imposed the death penalty, we must look to the country's political culture and the authoritarian path being charted under Chinese Communist Party—CCP—general secretary Xi Jinping.

The CCP and the institutions it controls have fused into a single party-state. This vast and uniquely powerful regime is locked in a constant struggle to maintain dominance and legitimacy, viewing internal divisions, domestic dissent, and foreign adversaries as existential threats. It uses every tool at its disposal—ideology, bureaucratic incentives, laws, regulations, coercion, fear, and information control—to mobilize a country of 1.4 billion in service of its goals, from ensuring regime survival to establishing itself as the nexus of power in the global order.

By law, courts must obey CCP dictates, particularly in politically sensitive cases. The party-state has thousands of judges, who—like all of the roughly 20 million state sector employees in China—answer to it. Most of those judges are probably CCP members, since that is, with rare exceptions, a prerequisite for promotion to senior positions.

That top-down legal obedience extends most aggressively to cases the CCP deems politically or morally threatening—and few crimes are framed as more corrosive to national order than drug use. Chinese officialdom has abhorred drugs since the Qing Dynasty, when opium ravaged society and sparked the humiliating Opium Wars. Propaganda narratives still invoke opium as part of a “bitter memory” of foreign exploitation. It was only through large-scale mass campaigns in the 1950s that the party succeeded in eliminating opium use—efforts that made drug enforcement a foundation of modern China and its system of social control.

Under Article 347 of the Criminal

Law, producing or trafficking 1,000 grams or more of opium, or fifty grams or more of heroin, methamphetamines, or significant amounts of other narcotics, carries a minimum sentence of fifteen years in prison and can be punishable by death. (In Canada, there are no minimum sentences, and the maximum for extreme cases is life imprisonment.) Legal scholars argue that the massive expansion in drug production and seizures has made China's thresholds obsolete, resulting in many minor cases consuming significant judicial

## Civilians are economic units that must be kept productive to realize China's rise to power and guarantee the regime's survival.

capacity. Instead of revising the law to better allocate resources and focus on major traffickers rather than minor offenders, sentencing has become influenced by technicalities. Even Chinese scholars have criticized the use of capital punishment for drugs.

That all seven Canadian executions were carried out in Guangdong—a relatively developed and globalized province where the judiciary has ample experience with foreigners—may have been a calculated decision to present them as strictly adjudicated “tie an,” Chinese for “iron cases”: legally airtight and beyond political interference. Courts had the option to impose “death with a two-year reprieve,” a unique sentence often commuted to imprisonment if the offender behaves well during the reprieve period. Instead, they picked the most severe, irreversible punishment.

As is standard procedure with death penalty rulings, China's Supreme

People's Court—SPC—reviewed each of the four cases and upheld the sentences. These reviews are conducted by the SPC's Criminal Division, a large judicial body based in Beijing that assigns one of its numerous judges to the job, which includes interviewing the accused. This process, the result of reforms enacted in 2007, illustrates the party-state's blend of procedural rigour and opacity which ensures outsiders have no means of evaluating the truth about charges or fairness of rulings.

International legal practice is to reserve the death penalty for the most serious crimes, like murder. Of the fifty-five countries where capital punishment remains on the books, thirty-four include drug crimes within its scope, but aside from China, only about four other governments routinely impose it for narcotics. Even as global trends have shifted heavily toward abolition, the PRC is an outlier for the sheer scale of its capital punishment. If anything, it's become even more totalitarian and punitive. Human rights organizations estimate that it executes thousands of people each year for various offences—more than all other countries combined—while concealing the numbers and details behind the veil of state secrecy.

Such extremes have antecedents in millennia of imperial governance, notably ancient Confucian and Legalist philosophical traditions which promote strict hierarchical and harsh autocratic moral frameworks. The CCP itself selectively invokes ancient precepts to legitimize its rule, but one can find evidence of both draconian punishment and moments of leniency in early China, and scholars disagree on the relevance of pre-modern ideas and practices.

More significant is that a callous exercise of power is baked into the CCP's Marxist-Leninist ideology, organizational behaviour, and political culture. Social engineering trumps individual rights. Civilians are merely economic units that must be kept productive to realize China's rise to power and guarantee the regime's survival. Extensive scholarship has documented this Orwellian playbook.

The state secures convictions in over 99 percent of cases, a rate made possible by detaining most suspects before trial, subjecting them to prolonged and coercive interrogations, sharply curtailing the role of defence lawyers, and maintaining a level of judicial secrecy so extreme it often obscures the very existence of cases. Cruelty is policy. It shows up in brutal policing, grim prison conditions, endless sentences, ignored appeals, solitary confinement, torture, and long sentences for dissent and economic offences.

Officials claim the public demands capital punishment and that satisfying that desire matters more than global pressure to stop. For former leader Mao Zedong, executions were a political tool to channel the people's anger. Chinese legal practitioners indicated in a 2007 survey that executions are also influenced by the principle of *minfen*—vengeance. Even today, local governments occasionally hold mass public sentencing events known as *shenpan dahui*.

But experts argue these claims are just cover for the party-state's own lethal appetites. More detailed surveys show popular sentiment is shifting and that support for the death penalty is stronger among elites, likely because they worry less about going to the gallows. What little data exists suggests most of those sentenced are poor and uneducated.

To be fair, legal reformers have introduced procedural safeguards, and the official rhetoric is now “kill fewer, kill carefully.” But in practice, initiatives that encourage restraint rarely take hold. I saw this first-hand as a diplomat at Canada's embassy in Beijing during the rollout of landmark reforms in 2015. Chinese legal scholars I spoke to accurately predicted the changes would instead strengthen the CCP's ability to rule through law, not in accordance with it. In 2018, Xi launched an anti-crime crackdown that, like previous “strike hard” campaigns, served to merely reassert political control over the means of punishment.

With China's economy reeling from weak job growth, a real estate slump, falling investment, and shrinking exports, the CCP has leaned harder on

national security and social order. That stance now extends to drug crime, but only selectively. Trafficking that harms Chinese citizens is met with unforgiving severity. But the country's role as a major exporter of fentanyl precursors to North America is a revealing glimpse into what the CCP chooses to police and what it allows to pass.

**T**HE EXECUTIONS were a reminder of the despair and suffering my cellmates and I endured. There were days during solitary confinement

## China's role as a major exporter of fentanyl precursors is a glimpse into what the CCP chooses to police and what it allows to pass.

when it felt like death would have been preferable. Did these four dread their final moments or see them as release from torment?

Canadians are not the only victims of China's death penalty. Over a dozen foreigners have been executed in China since 2000, including British, Colombian, Filipino, Japanese, and South Korean citizens—all for drug trafficking. Last year, the party-state threatened to also impose the penalty on Taiwanese “separatists.” By contrast, other states with high capital punishment figures—Iran, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Vietnam—almost never execute foreign nationals.

Still, even in China, executing foreigners is rare and typically requires high-level political assent. Killing four at a stroke is unprecedented in recent memory. The reason might be as simple as a bureaucracy on autopilot. But other dynamics may also have been in play.

The CCP cultivates a reputation for severity to show strength at home and deter challengers abroad. It is also one of a few autocracies that use foreign prisoners for geopolitical leverage. In rare cases, such as mine, the detention is politically motivated. In others, a foreign citizen may be detained for a different reason and then find their case instrumentalized after relations sour. When default punishments are so severe, the legal process becomes a warning in itself, even as pious assertions of rule of law maintain plausible deniability. Arrests, trials, rulings, and executions can all be timed to send signals.

Short of military force, nothing tells a government that it's in China's doghouse quite so viscerally as locking up or killing one of its citizens, and the threat that more might follow can further constrain behaviour and mute criticism. The CCP is utterly transactional and has no compunction about using humans as bargaining chips to extract concessions.

The party-state goes out of its way to mask the political calculations behind such cases—but the tools are there when it chooses to use them. Its Criminal Procedure Law contains guidance for handling criminal cases involving foreign nationals, including consideration of diplomatic interests. Internal guidelines allow senior court officials to monitor these cases closely, and CCP rules obligate judges to seek clearance from higher authorities before moving forward. And as in all bureaucracies, there are implicit incentives for underlings to anticipate what superiors want and act accordingly.

The Canadian executions reportedly took place in late January, around the time Trump called on US courts to carry out pending death sentences—he had previously spoken in favour of applying the penalty to drug trafficking—and began pressuring China to crack down on fentanyl precursors. Chinese officials would have concluded that Washington was unlikely to object if they killed a few drug dealers.

The party-state's views of Canada may also have played a role. Seeing Canadians as distracted by an election and weakened by a crisis with

Washington, its courts perhaps seized an opportunity to clear a case backlog exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdowns. Conducting the executions during the waning days of then prime minister Justin Trudeau's mandate minimized the impact on future relations.

A more pessimistic interpretation would be that the CCP employed a classic strategy of *xia ma wei*—an initial show of strength to psychologically intimidate—and deliberately moved the cases to their terminal stage to signal ire over Canadian moves on trade, investment, and foreign interference that obstructed Beijing's objectives. In March, China also introduced countermeasures against foreign sanctions.

For a decade, PRC police and prosecutors have been trying to get Chinese individuals in Canada they consider fugitives to return to face charges. For reasons that should by now be evident, the Canadian government has been increasingly reluctant to sign an extradition treaty or otherwise co-operate. This could have left Chinese

law enforcement officials ill-disposed toward an "unreliable" Canada.

Once the CPC upheld the death verdicts, only officials of the highest rank, primarily those on the party's Politburo Standing Committee, had the authority to intervene. Such officials are extremely busy and may not even have been aware of the cases. Even if they were, they would not be inclined to show compassion for drug crimes.

A final foreign policy implication is that while Xi might prefer better relations with Ottawa, he views Canada as a core member of an adversarial, American-led Western alliance and was unwilling to spend political capital to please a prime minister he disliked. And so the party-state gears ground forward to their pre-programmed, and fatal, conclusion.

**W**HAT CAN CANADIANS DO? Obviously, anyone contemplating going to China should stay far away from illegal drugs and read the latest travel advisory, which

warns: "Exercise a high degree of caution in China due to the risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws."

It's also important to recognize that the party-state has a unique interpretation of ethno-nationalism. These seven executed individuals were all naturalized Canadians of Chinese origin. At least four entered China with Canadian passports and received Canadian consular support—meaning that diplomats could regularly check on them, convey messages from family, try to deliver care packages, and signal to their jailers that mistreatment would draw official protest. At least two others used Chinese passports they had retained and were denied consular access, leaving them unreachable and more vulnerable.

Officially, the PRC does not recognize dual nationality for Chinese citizens. Article 9 of the Nationality Law stipulates that when PRC nationals move abroad and take on foreign citizenship, their Chinese nationality is automatically revoked. (There are exceptions for

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citizens from Hong Kong and Macao.) In practice, many émigrés do not formally make a declaration of renunciation and keep their PRC passports for travel to China. Doing so carries the grave risk the government will treat them as Chinese citizens. The party-state behaves as though it retains some authority over people who trace their origins to China—particularly ethnic Han, Tibetans, and Uyghurs born in the PRC, as well as Taiwanese, since Beijing considers the island a region province.

The dynamic is self-reinforcing. If other governments appear indifferent to how the PRC treats former citizens, the party-state may see that as permission to exert greater control over them and treat them more brutally than individuals it considers entirely foreign. This tendency further manifests in the transnational repression it inflicts on China's diaspora.

Canada's most notable example is Huseyin Celil, a Uyghur man who gained refugee status in Canada in 2001 and citizenship in 2005. The following year, while visiting family in Uzbekistan, local

police arrested him at China's behest and extradited him to the PRC, where he was sentenced to life in prison. Despite Canada's efforts, China has held him incommunicado without consular access, and nothing has been heard from him for a decade. The party-state's insistence that Celil is a citizen of China is absurd under its own laws.

There have been other such cases. In 2017, Chinese police abducted Canadian businessman Xiao Jianhua from Hong Kong, brought him to the mainland, and, in a closed trial, sentenced him to thirteen years for embezzlement. Australian writer Yang Hengjun remains in Chinese prison under a suspended death sentence. Americans David Lin and Kai Lee suffered lengthy wrongful detainment until their release last year. The Ministry of State Security arrested Australian journalist Cheng Lei, a presenter for China's CGTN, on trumped-up charges to punish Canberra for sins including calling for an investigation into the origins of COVID-19. She survived three years

in a detention centre that held multiple Canadians, including me.

And it continues. The Canadian Press reported that a Canadian couple, John Chang and Allison Lu, had been imprisoned in Shanghai in 2016 over a customs dispute related to their wine business. Lu was released in January 2017 but subject to an exit ban forbidding her from leaving China. Chang was sentenced to five years in prison and released in 2021. On April 5 this year, we learned that another Chinese Canadian businessman, Li Yonghui, had been detained for the past five years without trial under murky accusations of gathering funds illegally.

It's hard to tell whether these cases are legitimate or the sentences proportionate. Arrests and prosecutions can be influenced by personal revenge, corruption, business deals gone wrong, or even cash grabs by budget-strapped local governments, a recent innovation that the party's own *People's Daily* likened to "deep-sea fishing."

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**T**HERE IS LITTLE we can offer the families of those executed beyond sympathy and, if they request it, support. But for other foreign citizens still held in China, experiencing levels of suffering no one deserves, more can be done.

One notable case is that of Robert Schellenberg, arrested on drug charges in 2014 and sentenced to fifteen years in November 2018. The court reviewed his original verdict at a one-day hearing on December 29 and converted it to a death sentence in January 2019 while diplomatic relations were cratering over Canada's arrest of Meng Wanzhou. He has lived under that shadow for six years.

Global Affairs Canada acknowledges that approximately 100 Canadians like Celil and Schellenberg remain in detention or prison in China. Several thousand nationals of other countries share their plight. I was exposed to the reality of detainees as a diplomat in China, but I feel it far more intimately now that I'm part of a strange community of former prisoners, a global village of the once damned. I can tell you that execution in China is a gratuitous deterrent, because incarceration—involving punishing rounds of questioning, being kept in a room with lights on round the clock, and the withholding of medical care—already involves more suffering than any human deserves. (For heart-rending illustrations, read the accounts of former prisoners such as Kevin and Julia Garratt, Peter Humphrey, Matthew Radalj, and Cheng Lei. Study, as well, the horrifying reports of organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Safeguard Defenders. The latter recently released a handbook, *Missing in China*, which provides advice on how to assist someone detained there.)

Saving lives of individual prisoners requires a pragmatic blend of discreet, face-saving diplomacy, reciprocal gestures, and calibrated public attention that varies from case to case. Such advocacy is never easy, but if ministers, senior officials, and members of Parliament respectfully but persistently make clear that the well-being of all Canadians is a top priority, it can make a difference. In 2016, for example, China's then

premier Li Keqiang conveyed that China had granted clemency to a Canadian prisoner as a friendly gesture to Canada's new prime minister at the time, Justin Trudeau.

With Beijing seeking to recast itself as a defender of a rules-based international order and hoping to reopen high-level dialogue with Prime Minister Mark Carney's government, there's now room for the relationship to improve. It won't bring back these seven men, who might

## Saving the lives of prisoners requires discreet, face-saving diplomacy, reciprocal gestures, and calibrated public attention.

have lived if the timing of their cases had been more fortuitous. But it could be a rare opportunity to help Canadians and other foreign nationals still held in China.

The PRC defends its judicial system as a symbol of sovereignty and legitimacy. Directing isolated pressure, public shaming, and moral opprobrium at specific verdicts may only result in defensive digging in and doubling down. Canadian representatives can instead quietly frame clemency, transparency, and full consular access as part of a broader stabilization in relations and a cost-free way to create the conditions for more productive dialogue on issues Chinese officials prioritize. They can also indicate that unacceptable behaviour will have material consequences for relations with all aligned countries.

**E**ACH DIPLOMATIC INTERACTION is a chance to stress that rebuilding trust requires depoliticizing how citizens are treated and respecting international agreements—such as the Vienna

Convention on Consular Relations, which guarantees access to prisoners and court proceedings, and the Canada-China Consular Agreement, which allows detainees to receive care packages that include books and writing supplies. These are minor things to officials but make an enormous difference to detainees.

Depending on the case, persistent advocacy together with strategic leverage can drive meaningful progress: at a minimum, improved conditions of detention and access; sometimes, review and commutation of sentences; transfer of the prisoner to serve their sentence in their home country; even humanitarian parole. China has done so before. Advocacy is most effective when coordinated with like-minded governments that have citizens of their own to protect in China.

Meanwhile, Chinese officials could keep in mind that they or a family member could one day be prisoners too. Ambassador Wang might have been less sanguine about these executions if he had paused to reflect on the fate of his one-time boss, former foreign minister Qin Gang, who abruptly disappeared into China's carceral underworld in June 2023. I've known several other detained officials, and all of them were surprised to find themselves crushed by the machinery of their own state.

*The Analects of Confucius* offers timeless advice: "Do not do to others what you do not want done to you." And as Nelson Mandela (whose *Long Walk to Freedom* inspired me during my own confinement) said: "A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones."

A nation with China's potential for greatness can afford to be magnanimous. The way for the PRC to display true confidence, authority, and legitimacy is to show mercy and stay the executioner's hand. ★

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**MICHAEL KOVRIG** is the executive director of StrategicEffects. A Canadian former diplomat who served at the United Nations and in Beijing, he is currently working on a book about China.

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# Candy Crush

*Comedian John Candy was selling paper from his car in Toronto when a chance meeting changed his life*

BY PAUL MYERS



**J**OHN CANDY MET talent agent Catherine McCartney by accident. Striking up an awkward conversation after nearly knocking her over in line at the Eaton's cafeteria, he discovered that her talent office just happened to be across the street, next to Fran's Restaurant where he sometimes dined. McCartney later saw him at Fran's and invited him up to her office, where he shyly confessed to her that he had been taking acting classes with an eye toward becoming a professional actor. Charmed by Candy's baby face and disarming wit, McCartney was eager to help him get a foot in the door. In 1970, she happened to be casting for a television commercial in which a high school football player would expound on the virtues of Colgate toothpaste. She knew just who to send out on the audition.

Candy had played this character in real life, and after passing the audition, he found himself walking across a studio floor in full football padding to a locker room set where he joined

Canadian-born icon of American television Art Linkletter, whom Candy recognized from his 1950s television program *People Are Funny*. "My one big line was 'Oh sure, Casanova!'" Candy later told David Letterman on his *Late Night* talk show. "[We did] about a hundred takes of that."

Candy immediately felt at home on set and discovered an instant and easy rapport with the film crew, breaking up a long day with well-placed laughs between takes. The Colgate spot gave him confidence to ask McCartney to send him out for more commercials, and he booked a few. One was for Molson Golden Ale, and Candy was thrilled to see it running constantly during the CBC's *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcasts, where all of his old Neil McNeil High School pals were sure to see it.

Meeting frequently in McCartney's talent office, McCartney and Candy chatted about life, the universe, and everything, bonding over the sad coincidence of them both having lost their fathers at a young age.



“John had a quality of vulnerability,” McCartney later told journalist Martin Knelman. “He was young and awfully cute. John had the ability to make people feel special even if he had only known them a short time. Once he became your friend, he was always there for you, to listen and provide a shoulder to cry on.”

As Candy dared to dream aloud of fame and fortune, McCartney was ready to guide him where he needed to go. He continued to pursue work on the stage, taking on a supporting role in a Bill Glassco production of David Freeman’s savagely sardonic play *Creeps* at Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre, and other small parts. Candy was earning only \$40 a week, but he was now a professional working stage actor, happy to be paid at all. He split his time between acting and a series of aimless day jobs. These included selling paper products door to door for Perkins Paper out of the back of his beat-up brown Pontiac and also working part time at Eaton’s.

It was there in 1972 that fate once again crossed the threshold to meet him, in the form of a young actor named Valri Bromfield. “I went into Eaton’s to buy something and there was John,” says Bromfield. “He was so sweet and nice and funny. If somebody makes me laugh, I’ll just stand there and laugh, it’s like an addiction. And it’s deadly because you don’t care about anything else. Building on fire? ‘Oh, that was funny.’ John was like that. Everything he did, he just kept tripping over great, great lines, the next one came, and he was funny and we fed each other. He just seemed glowing and brilliant to me.”

Bromfield and her comedy partner, Dan Aykroyd, had recently moved to Toronto from Ottawa, where they had created a local television sketch comedy program called *Change for a Quarter*. They had shown tapes of the program to Toronto-born writer and performer Lorne Michaels, who had just left a CBC television sketch program of his own, *The Hart and Lorne Terrific Hour*, with Hart Pomerantz. While that series had aired for

only one season in 1970, Michaels was clearly going places, and his encouragement was all that Aykroyd and Bromfield needed to make the move to Toronto. There, they became regular performers at late-night venues around the city, such as the Platform, where a young entrepreneur named Andrew Alexander was the talent booker, or at the Global Village theatre, where an unknown Gilda Radner worked the box office.

Bromfield had also been performing for children with the Caravan Theatre troupe, staging plays in hospitals, schools, public parks, and a few indoor venues such as Toronto's Poor Alex Theatre, funded by a modest arts grant from the federal government. She suggested that Candy meet with Caravan's director, Stephen Katz. "Stephen had said he needed a big guy to play a king and a bunch of other parts," says Bromfield, "so I just told John, 'You know what? You should quit your day job,' which paid real money, 'and come make nothing with us. We all squeeze into one car and go do children's theatre. It'll be fun!'"

To Bromfield's surprise, Candy agreed to jump into his battered Pontiac and meet with Katz, who hired him on the spot. Candy cut an imposing figure and showed impressive range, handling roles great and small with equal finesse.

"John was just fabulous as this very stately king, and children just loved him," says Bromfield. "He'd try to break us up onstage or make us forget our lines, and we'd sneak in all this double-entendre stuff. We had a lot of fun, and the fun never left us."

Bromfield had been telling Aykroyd about Candy for weeks by the time she finally made the introductions one afternoon at her place on Yonge Street.

"I had been walking with my friend Marcus O'Hara," says Aykroyd, "and Valri yelled at me from a building she was living in. I went up to her apartment, where I met John Candy for the first time. He had that big brown Pontiac, and he was always beautifully turned out, a real clothes horse. He loved smart blazers and nice slacks, shoes, and shirts."

By now, Aykroyd trusted Bromfield's judgment about the people she brought into their ever-widening social circle within the relatively insular Toronto scene, and a shockingly high ratio of their talented new acquaintances seemed destined for bigger things. Many of them, including Radner, who had just arrived from Detroit, had been introduced to the circle through Marcus O'Hara, a social connector and the brother of Catherine and Mary Margaret O'Hara.

"We were all hanging out," says Aykroyd, "but Candy and I were in other careers when we met. I knew he had done theatre in high school, but he was right there in the working world; I was a mailman, he was a paper salesman."

By Candy's own admission, he had been a terrible salesman, routinely ranked last among his forty fellow hustlers. "I had a trunk that was filled with Halloween, Valentine's Day, Easter, Happy Birthday greetings from the Disney characters," Candy

later explained to *City Lights* host Brian Linehan. "While I was rehearsing... I was supposed to be on the road, and they finally caught up to me and fired me."

He took his boss's parting shot, that he "never should have hired an actor," as an unintended confirmation of his true calling and vowed he would never work as a salesman again.

"I finally realized I'm not doing anything else," Candy told Linehan. "I'm gonna stick with acting."

While a natural comic actor, Candy made no secret of his desire to also tackle a dramatic role like Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, but for now, he was content to do whatever theatre work he was offered, which included joining James Iwasuk's children's theatre troupe, the Jolly Jesters, to bring *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Treasure Island* to Toronto-area schools.

Still living at his childhood home in East York, Candy took on additional responsibilities for the Jesters, at turns stage managing, loading all the props and backdrops into a rented cube van, and driving the cast all over Metropolitan Toronto for the measly wage of \$65 per week.

In the fall of 1972, Katz tapped Candy to return to the Tarragon Theatre in Sheldon Rosen's adaptation of Carlo Gozzi's eighteenth-century Italian comedy *The Stag King*, about a king who awakens in an enchanted forest in the body of a stag. Candy was working constantly, but he wasn't getting rich, owing as much to the limited wages as to his burgeoning taste for the finer things.

"I've always lived beyond my means,"

Candy later confessed to the CBC's Peter Gzowski. "I always had an apartment that was great. I never did without. I probably had more fun then, but I don't look at the zeroes, I mean they're there... my accountant is still always screaming at me 'John, for god's sakes!' You know, I probably lend too much money to people."

**I**NCREASINGLY, CANDY FOUND himself socializing with the network of fellow aspiring actors he was meeting through Aykroyd, Bromfield, and O'Hara. In the 1970s, the Toronto bars still closed at midnight, and so, to accommodate their fellow bohemian night owls, Aykroyd and O'Hara launched a speakeasy at 505 Queen Street East. The 505, as it was known, was a late-night refuge, not just for actors and musicians but streetcar drivers, restaurant and bar workers, and nurses and doctors who convened to loosen up after their night shifts, far from the prying eyes of the parochial liquor board laws of Toronto the Good.

Legendarily, the 505 was also where Aykroyd would later meet John Belushi and dream up the Blues Brothers act after grooving to the Downchild Blues Band until the sun came up.

"The 505 was initially a storefront place that I rented," says Bromfield. "It was two doors down from a cafe where a guy

*He vowed he would never work as a salesman again. "I finally realized I'm not doing anything else, I'm gonna stick with acting."*

made pies at four in the morning, and Marcus came and lived with me in that house. Then Danny took it over and turned it into an off-licence.”

“It was a great environment,” says Aykroyd. “There should be a plaque on that building because all of the comedy stars and music stars [who] came through there. Also, there should be a plaque at 1063 Avenue Road.”

1063 Avenue Road was a rented house in the Eglinton-Lawrence neighbourhood of Toronto that would later come to play an important role in exportable Canadian culture. The Victorian detached brick house had initially been rented by aspiring actor friends Eugene Levy, Martin Short, and Dave Thomas, all of whom had met as students at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and were now part of the young Toronto cast of the post-hippie stage musical *Godspell*, which had become something of a phenomenon in local theatre circles.

*Godspell*, composed by Stephen Schwartz with a book by John-Michael Tebelak, had opened off-Broadway at the Cherry Lane Theatre in May 1971 and had produced a Billboard Top 20 single in “Day by Day” in the summer of 1972. That same year, a Toronto production opened to rave reviews and launched the careers of many of its cast members, including Victor Garber, Paul Shaffer, Howard Shore, Gerry Salsberg, Eugene Levy, Andrea Martin, Gilda Radner, Martin Short, and Dave Thomas.

Levy, Martin, Radner, Short, and Thomas were frequently among the revellers at the house on Avenue Road, along with Aykroyd and Bromfield, who soon introduced Candy to the clique. By this time, Candy was at last in a serious relationship. In 1969, he had met Rosemary Hobor, a young student at the Ontario College of Art, and by the time they walked through the door together at 1063 Avenue Road for what came to be known as the weekly Friday Night Services, their relationship status had been upgraded from steady to serious.

According to Thomas, the sheer brilliance of the talent at Friday Night Services sometimes fostered a competitive atmosphere.

“It was a social scene,” says Thomas, “with all these people connecting on their similar sense of comedy and making each other laugh. But sometimes it was also kind of scary because there was always a question of ‘Am I actually good enough to be in the company of these people?’ Because they’re really good.”

A typical night included performing songs and improvised skits. And everyone was obliged to take a turn at a popular game that involved riffing along with an Albert Brooks comedy album called *Comedy Minus One*.

“Albert had written scripts in the liner notes,” says Thomas, “and you would put on the album and read along with the scripts. Albert would say a line [on the record] and then it was your cue to do the next line. At the start of the bit, Albert gave you plenty of time to say your dialogue, then the pace picked up and you had no time at all. It was a fun game for us, and it created an opportunity for us to perform for each other.”

While Catherine O’Hara didn’t consider herself “deep in the circle,” she also felt welcomed by the *Godspell* crowd at 1063.

“It was really fun,” says O’Hara. “Andrea and Marty had done a lot of stage in Toronto, musicals. It was a really ridiculously talented crowd, and it was really exciting to be around them and to watch them with each other, and they’re all lovely people. The *Comedy Minus One* game became a kind of all-in-good-fun initiation ritual for first timers. Somebody would put on the album and go, ‘Hey you. First time here? Why don’t you come on and try this album?’”

Soon, Candy was taking a turn with the Brooks album, and in no time, he became a beloved regular at the Friday Night Services. In a 1989 feature for *The New Yorker*, writer James Kaplan summed up the talent pool surrounding the Toronto cast of *Godspell* as “one of those artistic nexuses that crop up now and then, like Paris in the twenties, Los Angeles in the thirties, London just before the First World War.”

As Shaffer tickled the keys of the house piano, Short worked out his generic lounge singer character, which later became his standing schtick on David Letterman’s *Late Night* when Shaffer was the bandleader.

“We’d have parties, and everyone would just get up,” says Short. “Paul would play, I’d sing, Gilda would sing. And we’d all just do songs from *Godspell*.”

Short, who met Candy for the first time backstage after a *Godspell* performance, recalls that Candy made it known that he had a low tolerance for the constant singing of *Godspell* songs at 1063.

“John thought it was insane. We were singing it all day, then singing it at night. I think it seemed obsessive to him,” says Short. “No one particularly thought they’d ever become successful outside of Toronto. It wasn’t like people were saying, ‘Someday we’re going to be in the movies,’ or something.”

By her own description, 1063 regular Jayne Eastwood was “already semi-famous in Toronto” as one of the stars of Donald Shebib’s influential 1970 Canadian independent film *Goin’ Down the Road* when she began showing up at what she calls “the best parties ever.”

“I remember that’s where Eugene [Levy] and [his wife] Deb [Divine] first hooked up,” says Eastwood, “and John and Rose were there all the time. I’ve never laughed so hard in my life. I don’t think any of us knew how famous we were going to become.”

Meanwhile, down on Queen Street, Aykroyd and Bromfield were excited about auditioning for an improvisational theatre company founded in Chicago that was about to open a Toronto branch. It was called the Second City, and it was about to change everything. 🏰

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*Excerpted from John Candy: A Life in Comedy by Paul Myers, 2025, published by House of Anansi. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.*

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**PAUL MYERS** is a Canadian writer and musician living in Berkeley, California. His books include *The Kids in the Hall: One Dumb Guy* and *A Wizard a True Star: Todd Rundgren in the Studio*.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

# Greenland's Resistance

*There may be only about 57,000 Kalaallit in the world, but we know how to fight off US imperialism*

BY LAKKULUK WILLIAMSON BATHORY  
ILLUSTRATION BY NINGIUKULU TEEVEE

**M**Y MOTHER'S paternal grandmother, Maaliaana, was born in Kangaamiut, in western Kalaallit Nunaat, sometime in the beginning of the 1900s. (Kalaallit Nunaat is an endonym for my motherland; Greenland is what the international community generally calls it.) She was the product of a one-night stand with a British whaler, at a time when ships filled with men from other places sailed up and down the Arctic coasts.

Maaliaana grew up as a beloved child and knew that her biological father was a British whaler. In our Inuit culture, babies are not born “out of wedlock,” and we consider that babies themselves choose their parents. Adoption is much celebrated. My great-grandmother was adopted by her Kalaaleq (Greenlandic) stepfather, Tobias Mouritzen, who loved her as his own.

Also part of our culture are aqaatit (singular aqaaseq)—pet songs, nonsense words, oft-repeated sayings, witty aphorisms, and exaggerated noises of affection, mostly directed at children but which often spill into adulthood and stick for life. Sometimes, people even

aaq (the verb for making these songs) themselves. Maaliaana would often say “tul-luuvunga, tul-luuvuuvunga” — “You can't get a truer Brit than me.”

As I had a father from Britain, like Maaliaana, my mom and aunts say that I have some of her looks and demeanour. I love the loops of similarity in the ways our minds and bodies work, in the way history echoes back and forth.

There are echoes ringing in my ears now. Because what we're bearing witness to in the current American endeavour to take over my family's homeland is not new. I am part of a family that has experienced—and resisted—both Danish and American exploitation of our people and lands for generations. The US tried to include Greenland in the Alaska Purchase in 1867, so one could argue that Denmark and the US have been fighting over the ownership of Greenland for over a century.

For a time, we even had a particular aqaaseq to remind us that the seeds of American imperialism in Kalaallit Nunaat were planted before the time of my great-grandparents: “Bang bang tonight ok ok.” This is the story of how we co-opted it, how we made it our own.

**G**REENLAND WAS a closed colony of Denmark from 1721 until after the Second World War, meaning that no outsiders were allowed into the country except for Danish colonizers and their designated visitors. This was a suffocating policy for Kalaallit, but it gave exclusive access to Danish missionaries and resource developers. Denmark, for example, had a monopoly on the extraction of minerals such as cryolite, which was key to the production of aluminum used in military weapons and brought in billions of dollars in profit.

During the Second World War, Greenland became a strategic asset for another reason: the weather there helped predict the weather in Europe, which in turn could shape military strategy. Allied forces sought to prevent the Germans from establishing weather bases on the island or from gaining access to meteorological intelligence. Even before the US entered the war, it patrolled Arctic waters, particularly along the coast of Greenland, to monitor German military activity. Denmark was by then occupied by Nazi Germany; if the Allied powers hadn't utilized Greenland to their advantage, the Nazis might have taken

over there as well. As such, Greenland briefly became a US protectorate.

The US wasn't necessarily protecting Greenland; it was defending its own interests. The rapid buildup of American military technologies in the early twentieth century coincided with rising

coasts of Greenland. The American presence continued beyond the Second World War, as the island was still a strategic place during the Cold War. In 1946, the US offered Denmark \$100 million (US) for the island but was rebuffed.

In 1951, Denmark and the US signed

northwestern coast and stockpiled nuclear weapons there, even though Denmark declared itself free of such weapons in 1957. In 1968, an American B-52 bomber carrying four thermonuclear explosives crashed near the base. All but one passenger survived, and the bombs detonated, causing significant environmental damage. Though most historical records are thoroughly unclear, one wonders how the long-term health of the Inuit who lived in the area was affected by radiation contamination, especially when people were exposed to everything from physically touching contaminants during the cleanup and from the animals that people hunt.

In 1992, Greenland took over control of the Kangerlussuaq air strip, which went on to become Greenland's de facto international airport. (A new international airport opened in Nuuk, Greenland's capital, last November, and is still experiencing some growing pains.) But traces of the town's military birth remain in the barracks—the North American 120-volt plug-ins for electricity and the nearly cookie-cutter similarity between the buildings there and in Iqaluit, which also owes some of its founding infrastructure to the US military.

While the Inuit in Kalaallit Nunaat began to organize for self-determination after the Second World War, Denmark worked consistently to maintain its ownership. In 1953, Greenland ceased to be a colony, though it was still administered by Danish officials. In a powerful artist- and student-led movement, Greenland gained *Namminersorneq* (home rule) in 1979; the people elect their own parliament, with a prime minister who leads a coalition government, though the island remains part of the Kingdom of Denmark.

In 2009, Greenland achieved self-government, overseeing its own education, health, justice, and infrastructure needs while partially depending on block payments from Denmark. (The documentary *Orsugiak: The White Gold of Greenland*, released in February, outlines how the block payments—about \$15,000 per person—pale in comparison to the



American imperialism around the world. The US Army built weather stations and established air strips in the towns of Kangerlussuaq and Narsarsuaq, as well as smaller bases on both the east and west

a treaty that allowed the US Army unrestricted rights to fly over or land in Greenland. In 1951, the army built the Thule Air Base (now known as the Pituffik Space Base) along the far

riches of Danish resource extraction there. *Orsugiak* was so controversial in Denmark that it was taken off the national broadcaster's streaming service.) Denmark maintains control of foreign affairs, monetary policy, citizenship, and military presence. There are ongoing debates among Kalaallit about whether to pursue full independence; many are still conflicted, as a good number have strong ties to Denmark through family and commerce.

Meanwhile, Denmark is still in denial about its own colonial atrocities, including the destruction of Indigenous spiritual beliefs and forced conversions to Christianity; the systemic isolation of Inuit that resulted in widespread poverty; the forced use of intrauterine devices and the resulting sterilization of Kalaallit girls (including my aunt); the removal of Inuit children (including my mother and many of her siblings) from their families for them to be sent to Danish schools; and forced relocation (including my family).

**M**Y FAMILY'S HOMELANDS are close to Kangerlussuaq, on the west coast of Kalaallit Nunaat, an hour-and-a-half flight from Iqaluit's twin American-built air strip. To this day, many of my aunts and uncles and cousins travel into the long, lush fjord (Kangerlussuaq means the Great Fjord) every August to hunt for the year's

supply of caribou. When the Americans first arrived to build the Kangerlussuaq air strip, Kangaamiut was the closest Inuit community, and so my great-grandparents and their peers got a lot of exposure to the first Americans in Greenland.

The arrival of the soldiers in Greenland brought a new wave of marauding white men to follow the explorers, whalers, and Danish colonizers before them. At one point, there were so many cases of American beer lying around that Inuit used them to hold their summer tents down. American men would come up to women in Kangaamiut and say the same thing to them over and over again. The saying was so common that it became a community joke, a sort of aqaaseq. Kangaamiormiut would dance with their babies, thumping their backs and bums to lull them to sleep, and sing the little American aqaaseq to them.

My mother spent many of her childhood summers in Kangaamiut with her maternal grandmother, Hanna, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. My little mom, with her square black bangs cutting across her forehead, would sleep in her grandmother's little bed with her, taking in the vision of her grandmother climbing onto her kitchen counter so that she could get the best light from her window for sewing. My mother's grandmother would often marvel at all the

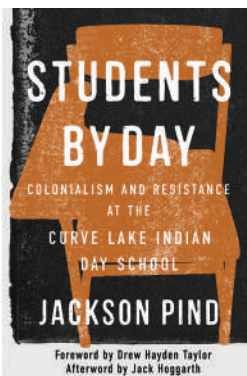
children and grandchildren she was surrounded by and would remark, "aaliuna suak ataatsimiit"—"To think this all came from one little fish roe"—referring to herself.

It wasn't until my mother moved to Canada, learned English, and perhaps even sang it to baby me, that she realized what that little American aqaaseq was: "Bang bang tonight ok ok. Bang bang tonight ok ok." American soldiers were soliciting women in Kangaamiut for sex, over and over again, in the same practised sing-song voice.

**I**N DONALD TRUMP'S first speech to Congress during his second term, on March 4, he said the US respects Greenland's right to rule itself. He also said that the US needs to take it over for security reasons. Then he said that the US will get the island "one way or another," to the approving snickers of his supporters. But Trump wasn't joking, neither this time nor, apparently, when he floated the idea of buying Greenland in his first administration.

As in Canada, Trump's imperialist interests have caused paroxysms of nationalism in Greenland. In March, Kalaallit Nunaat held an election like none other in its history; it was covered by international news outlets and marked by Trump loyalists flying in from the US while mass anti-Trump demonstrations

## New from MQUP



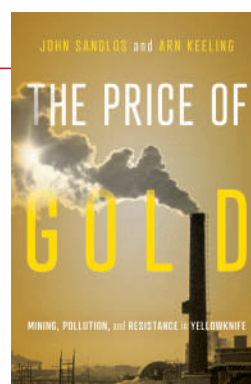
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Jackson Pind

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*Mining, Pollution, and Resistance in Yellowknife*

John Sandlos and Arn Keeling

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filled Greenland's streets.

Within weeks of Trump's speech to Congress and before Inatsisartut (Greenland's parliament) was able to negotiate a new coalition to form a government, massive grey Hercules planes were bringing advance security to Nuuk ahead of US second lady Usha Vance's planned visit. Thirty-three-year-old Jens-Frederik Nielsen, soon to be premier, of the Demokraatit Party dispatched statements to the Greenlandic newspaper *Sermitsiaq* that the US was being aggressive and unwelcoming during a time when the government had yet to be formed.

Soon afterward, US vice president J.D. Vance announced that he would be joining his wife for the visit. On the day they arrived, the new coalition government was formed, with Nielsen taking the helm, becoming Greenland's youngest ever premier.

In the lead-up to the Vance visit, the streets were filled with Kalaallit flags (designed in the 1980s by Thue Christiansen, an artist from Maniitsoq, where my family comes from) and cries that Greenland can never be sold: "Kalaallit Nunaat, Kalaallit Pigaat!"—"Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders!" The Vances wound up changing their agenda; rather than attempt a public relations appearance in a Greenlandic community, they scheduled a visit only to the Pituffik Space Base.

English has become commonplace in Greenland now. My generation of Greenlanders are completely bilingual, speaking Kalaallisut and Danish and also English as a third language. The next generation of kids in our family sometimes refuse to speak Danish, and some of them are nearly at the point of speaking English more often than Kalaallisut, at least among their peers. Americanisms slide into my cousins' kids' speech as they play together—something the parents refer to as "youtube-titut."

I live in a part of Inuit homelands that are experiencing the same language loss caused by the same forces of colonization that are hitting Kalaallit Nunaat right now, so I am apprehensive about young people's rapid switch to English.

At first, the use of English was a defiant challenge to the ubiquity of Danish as a colonizing language in Greenland, and its use was encouraged. Kalaallit used to credit the arrival of the Americans in the Second World War with the introduction of values such as independence, liberty, and freedom in the movement to discard Danish colonization. Now, the use of English has become necessary to protest the American takeover attempt. In a viral video, Josef Tarrak, a Kalaaleq rapper, tells an American visitor, "You don't give a shit about us." Kalaallit have been encouraging one another to turn their backs on any Americans who approach them on the streets and to boycott American products.

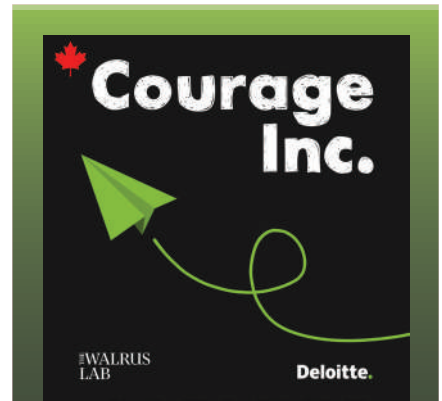
There are only 57,000 Kalaallit on this planet. But they join the many others around the globe protesting US imperialism. Against such a foe, you need hope to survive. Hope comes in the stories and the arcs of history that families tell each other, the ties of blood to the land, to the aqaatit—the little songs of love we sing to each other.

I now think of "Bang bang tonight ok" as an upside-down little aqaaseq, an Inuk claim on a phrase rife with sexual exploitation and racism, in the same manner that a word like "queer" was once a slur and is now proudly claimed by the LGBTQ2S+ community. I say it as a rallying cry, a reminder of our family's resistance to American imperialism.

For me, it joins the cries you hear at the mass demonstrations in Greenland today and all the others that challenge American imperialism: Kalaallit Nunaat, Kalaallit Pigaat; Land Back; Black Lives Matter; Say Their Name; Idle No More; From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free; Until We Are All Free, None of Us Are Free. Bang Bang Tonight, OK OK. 🇬🇱

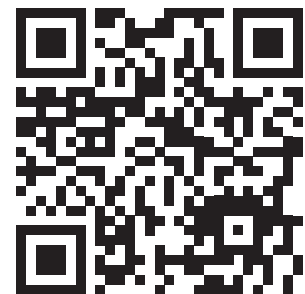
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MEMOIR



# A Son, a Scientist, and the Secret of Bioluminescence

*My father spent a career decoding how fireflies make light.  
As dementia sets in, he is grappling with life's final mystery*

BY ARNO KOPECKY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JULIETA CABALLERO



HERE'S A CHEMICAL REACTION that occurs inside fireflies that allows them to flash without burning. It begins with a compound called luciferin, a name rooted in the Latin words for “light”—*lux*—and “bearing”—*ferre*—which also tells you something of the devil.

Fireflies make their own luciferin, along with an enzyme called luciferase. They fit together like a lock and key. The key turns when a firefly adds oxygen absorbed from the air. Internal combustion ensues. A flash of yellow-green light is released, along with a microscopic puff of carbon dioxide and far less heat than you might expect. So little heat, in fact, that when chemists decoded this reaction in the late 1800s, they were immediately bedevilled by a new mystery that took decades more to solve: in typical acts of combustion, most of the sundered fuel's energy is released as heat. But when oxygen tears the lucifers apart, energy escapes as light instead. Why?



My father wondered about that question for much of his life. As he approaches death at ninety-two, reluctant and afraid, I find I'm dwelling on it too. He doesn't have a terminal illness, but his body and mind are coming apart like so many molecules of oxygen. If this were one of his experiments, it might yield a flash of illumination. Instead, it seems, he's heading into darkness.

My father can't recall what he did yesterday. His hands are swollen and tremulous. It takes him two minutes to zip up a jacket. One day in February, he wandered over to a friend's house in search of food, but the friend was in Mexico; it was twenty degrees below zero, and my old man was knocking on the door wearing just his housecoat (no zippers). He became stranded on that doorstep, too weakened by the cold to walk home, and would have frozen to death if a neighbour hadn't walked their dog by right then. Shortly before that, he'd checked himself into the emergency room four times in two months, wracked each time with chest spasms, terrified he wouldn't wake up if he fell asleep.

A life of scientific inquiry has not prepared him for the final mystery.

**M**Y FATHER LIVES alone in Edmonton, 800 kilometres away from my brother and me in Vancouver. He's been there since 1960. His house is a few blocks from the University of Alberta, where he taught organic chemistry for thirty-five years. It was there, long before I was born, that he began tinkering with the photosensitive chemicals that became a gateway to the mysteries of fireflies and glow worms and marine plankton—the study of bioluminescence.

The job came with a personal laboratory that I can still smell from my own childhood visits—sulphurous, a bit rank. But the chemistry department was a perfume factory compared to the odours saturating the Iowa farm where my dad grew up. He left for college straight after high school, though he never stopped going back. When we were kids, my brother and I piled into his battered station wagon each summer for the two-day drive to visit our uncle, who's still working that same farm, and learned the value of intense physical labour. The pigsty stench was unforgettable. So were the fireflies. Each dusk, a chorus of cicadas and katydids would call them forth, faint pinpricks of light winking on, almost tentative at first—one here, one there, swelling in number as the air darkened, until they filled the night like so many shooting stars in the corn rows. I collected them in jars, fell asleep by the intermittent glow they put off from my nightstand.

The problem with bioluminescence, from a human-application perspective, is that it doesn't crank out lumens like a light bulb. Still, it has revolutionized everything from

cancer research to gene therapy—you can inject firefly compounds into humans to make a tumour glow or light up DNA. But you'll never read a book by the shine of decomposing luciferin.

Who cares? Not I, nor Karl R. Kopecky. He was glad that his work contributed to “real-world” solutions, but happiest mucking about with the solutions he and his PhD students prepared in the lab. Theirs was a world apart, or rather a world within—a miniverse of atomic interactions manipulated by titanic hands to reveal the molecular structures operating far below our human scale of perception.

I still see those 3D models in his office: small solar systems made of Styrofoam balls connected by thin rods, like geodesic domes on acid. These are the molecules that everything—blood and plastic, air and granite—is made of. Ever wondered what benzene looks like to a proton? Arrange six balls (carbon) in a hexagon, attach a ball (hydrogen) four-fifths their size to each of those, and you've got yourself a hydrocarbon. Smash that for a great deal of heat without much light, the engine of modern civilization.

That engine provided my father with a good life, and for a long time, he didn't question it closely. He focused on work instead. Perhaps a bit too much. My parents split up when I was two, and my brother and I grew up in our mother's home. To stay connected with his sons, my dad threw himself into the strange sporting career we both chose: springboard diving. He didn't just drive us to the pool every day after school and become president of the club; he took lessons himself, learning front one-and-a-halves, back layouts, reverse dive pikes. He was well into his fifties by then and about as emotive as you'd expect a man who grew up farming in the Great Depression to be. This, we'd say today, was his love language.

He paid glancing attention to current affairs but was so devoted to work during his career that he never realized America stopped being a global good guy five minutes after Hitler died. Half a century later, at the dawn of the internet era, he retired and turned his critical lens on the news. The George W. Bush administration was preparing to invade Iraq under patently false pretenses, and my father was shocked. He took his country's foreign policy as a personal betrayal and became, overnight, a born-again radical progressive. Suddenly vegan, environmentalist, and pacifist, he took to wearing a black armband every time he went out to represent the mounting death toll in Iraq. A lifelong atheist, he preached climate change and Republican corruption at every social encounter.

I share most of my dad's politics, but his communication style—demanding empathy, bestowing none—only

*The mystery  
in question:  
How do fireflies  
turn the energy  
of combustion  
into light  
instead of  
heat?*

strengthened his opponents' world view. He was admirable and exasperating and remains so to this minute.

He refused to admit he was growing deaf over the past twenty years and rejected the hearing aids we kept urging him to wear. So the easiest way to communicate has been in writing. One day at the end of August, I texted to ask how he was doing. "I am in emergency with a heart attack," he wrote back.

A man who's having a real heart attack is unlikely to be texting about it, but that's still a disconcerting message to receive from your father. Turned out he was dehydrated. He forgets to drink water, among other things. A solitary figure, he's refused mounting entreaties to let my brother and me help him for well over a decade. His stubborn denial and continued survival felt like its own proof that he could manage—but contrary proofs have been accumulating, like dark energy, for some time.

At a Christmas party six years ago, a friend found him in the coat room, face down in a pool of blood. I was on the phone with him two hours later, listening to him slur from the hospital bed, both of us trying to work out what had happened. It took him months to admit he'd had a stroke, and he still avoids the word; he calls it "the faceplant" instead. He recovered, more or less, but was briefly weak enough to let his sons clean his house and hire someone to keep things tidy.

That didn't last long. He got his strength and speech back and chased the help away. He returned to his ways, at once unfathomable to me and terrifyingly prescient, a glimpse of one possible future: living alone in a condemned house that collapses in tandem with your body.

*Let us help you, dad.*

*I'm fine.*

**P**EOPLE WITH PARENTS who are hoarders can relate; anyone else would be shocked. A floor buried in papers dating back to the last century: junk mail, tax forms, letters from people he doesn't remember, chemistry reports he can no longer comprehend, a thousand magazines. Discarded clothing, empty oat milk cartons. Cardboard boxes full of rotting avocado skins and banana peels and apple cores—his version of composting.

The house still smells of smoke from the period when the furnace conked out and he burned wood inside for warmth. This in a city where winters reach forty degrees below. The windows are cracked, the plumbing is terminally screwed. For a while, the roof was leaking and he spread buckets around the kitchen to catch the water; then came the faceplant, and my brother put on a new roof. A new furnace arrived then too.

*Let us help you, dad.* He won't move out or let anyone in. I don't know how he's survived that place. The same way, I suppose, that he survived falling off the roof at eighty-four, or the faltering heartbeat that convinced him to walk to the hospital a year after the faceplant and get a pacemaker; his pulse was down to thirty. He's had several minor strokes since. He knows who we are, can tell you what day and year it is, but lives within a bubble of awareness that extends approximately half a day forward and back. I picture a man walking through a gathering storm, the snow getting deeper with every step, the wind blowing harder. He only hears me if I shout. He uses a magnifying glass to read his phone. He gets lost in his own neighbourhood.

I remember how it felt in the last few weeks of my wife's pregnancy, when we knew our daughter could



arrive at any moment. In that blend of certainty and uncertainty, time itself became pregnant. This is like that but in reverse. Same portal. He could die tomorrow or live another year. Maybe more. Every time he doesn't answer my call or respond promptly to a text, I wonder. It's been like this for years already.

Many lose their parents young or have parents who suffer dementia and other health catastrophes far earlier. People lose children, lovers, siblings. Those are tragedies. This, in a strange way, is something to celebrate: my dad has lived a long life, with a successful career. He got to see his two boys grow, develop careers, marry and have children. I got to have a father who loved me, taught me how to throw a ball and think a problem through. He's celebrated my victories like his own, all my life. We've both been lucky.

I've had to remind myself of that in moments when the tug of sadness combusts into anger, then settles into the ash of guilt. I'm angry at the man my father used to be for refusing to plan ahead, for letting it come to this. I feel guilty for the judgment. A phrase I can't stand keeps running through my head: he did the best he could with the tools he had. It's true. Now here we are. Should I let you live the way you want or force care upon you? Dignity or safety?

**I**N SEPTEMBER, I finally chose safety. Mice had moved in—a miracle it took this long—and squirrels were in the attic. He insisted a mouse trap would do. I showed him the mouse droppings on his pillow, in his food. He pulled out his magnifying glass. We called an exterminator. Got a social worker involved. I spent a week sorting, tossing, scrubbing, vacuuming. All against his will, but he was once again too weak to stop it. Maybe, I thought, he has been all along; maybe the weak one's been me.

I was vacuuming a path to his bedroom when a cut-out page of a stray magazine article got in the way. I picked it up, prepared to toss it into recycling, but a cursory glance revealed a title that made me pause: "Light of the first order." I dimly recognized the author's name, Cedric Mumford. I looked closer. The article was from the September 2001 issue of an obscure journal called *School Science Review*. I read the opening sentence: "Over thirty years ago, in the dusk of a Canadian evening, I was fortunate to take part in a unique experiment that linked chemistry with physics, and confirmed theories about one of the great unsolved mysteries of the living world."

I turned off the vacuum.

"In September 1965," Mumford wrote, "newly arrived in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, I began research for my PhD...under Karl R. Kopecky, an American chemist." I rustled through the detritus spread around me, found the other two

pages of the article, and read the whole thing twice.

Cedric Mumford, I now remembered, had been my father's greatest student. The mystery in question, of course, was that of bioluminescence: How do fireflies turn the energy of combustion into light instead of heat? Mumford's article described how he and my father discovered the answer.

By the 1960s, chemists had already theorized that another mysterious compound must be involved in a firefly's chemical reaction: dioxetane. When the lucifers are broken down by oxygen, the theory goes, their constituent parts form dioxetane for the most fleeting of instants; the dioxetane itself decomposes instantly, leaving no trace but a flash of light. Anyone could make a Styrofoam model of dioxetane—arrange four balls in a square, two each of carbon and oxygen, with two little hydrogens (or any number of substitutes) attached to each carbon—but the real thing was so unstable that it disintegrated the moment it formed. Isolating it in a lab was like trying to manufacture a snowflake in the desert.

Only far more dangerous. Dioxetane itself belongs to a highly explosive class of compounds called peroxides. Previous attempts to make it had destroyed many a chemist's apparatus.

"Explosions occur," Mumford wrote, "when an exothermic reaction generates heat at a faster rate than it can be lost to the surroundings." I thought of America when I read this. And I remembered how my dad, an otherwise calm man, would erupt in expletives every time we hit a red light when I was young; my parents' divorce was relatively recent then, but all my life, he never

spoke a word about it.

In 1967, Mumford succeeded in isolating dioxetane. He'd created a chemical soup that held the compound steady. This was an enormous milestone, but it still didn't solve the fundamental mystery of bioluminescence. "The dioxetane never exploded during my research," Mumford recalled. "That in itself was strange."

It was my father, delighted by his student's success, who realized what was going on. Dioxetane's structure was almost identical to another compound that chemists knew could be assembled by shining ultraviolet light on two pairs of alkene molecules; the light's energy was sufficient to meld the two alkenes into a single unit. When dioxetane fell apart, my dad realized, the same process must be happening in reverse. "The excitement in his face, as he came striding up the lab, announced 'Eureka,'" Mumford wrote. "It therefore became our immediate priority to test the prediction."

Mumford spent the whole day preparing a fresh batch of dioxetane. "That evening I returned to the lab and awaited both Kopecky and the gathering dusk." The darkness came, but not my dad. Where was he? "I rang his wife and learned

*It turned  
out that my  
father, at this  
climactic  
moment of his  
career, had  
decided to stop  
for a haircut.*

that he had left their flat hours ago.”

It turned out that my father, at this climactic moment of his career, had decided to stop for a haircut.

Mumford had a wife and two kids waiting for him at home. “I waited a while longer until the conflict of duties became unbearable, and then decided I would have to do the experiment alone.” He immersed a test tube of his dioxetane solution in a beaker of hot water. “As a faint violet glow began to appear, I blinked to be sure.”

When my dad finally arrived, the two men repeated the experiment together. “Kopecky’s excitement on seeing the glow was electric. Having done much of his own research in the field of photochemistry he immediately saw a range of further experiments to try.” To my father, this wasn’t the end of a long journey but the beginning of a new one.

**F**IFTY-SIX YEARS LATER, standing in the hallway of his house, I wiped my cheeks dry. “Look what I found,” I said to him later that day. It was a hot afternoon, and he was sitting at a shaded picnic table beside a splash park, watching my daughter and her two-year-old cousin dash about. I read Mumford’s story out loud to him at the top of my lungs. The whole park could

hear. He grinned the whole way through. He remembered.

By the end, his grandkids were listening too. They couldn’t understand a word but were drawn in by our laughter.

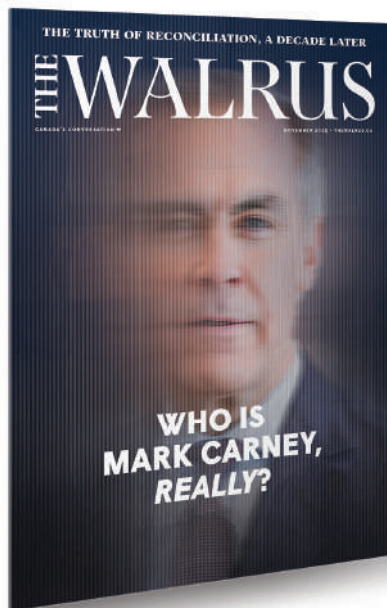
Truth is, I’ve hit the limit of my own capacity to comprehend my dad’s crowning achievement. As far as I can tell, the mystery hasn’t been solved but has merely transferred from one compound to another. What’s dioxetane’s secret? Why does *it* dissolve into light instead of heat? What exactly is light, anyway? What’s heat? What’s energy?

What’s life? The closer you look, the stranger it gets. Each revelation is a portal to a fresh mystery. I’m okay with that. I don’t need every question answered. But I do find myself longing for some kind of lesson. All stories demand a resolution, all experiments a revelation. I know how this one ends, but I can’t figure out what it means.

I’m sure my dad could relate. After all, the majority of his career wasn’t spent grinning and shouting “Eureka!” It was spent in tedious, uncelebrated toil. That’s a lot like writing. It’s a lot like most working lives.

We operate largely in the dark, small specks in an incomprehensibly vast sea of atoms and stars, our lives punctuated by bursts of illumination—sometimes our own, usually someone else’s. At the grand scale of existence, each life itself becomes one more flash of light. For a moment, it reveals something wonderful, by a glow so dim you need the dark to see it. ✨

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**ARNO KOPECKY** is a contributing writer for *The Walrus*.



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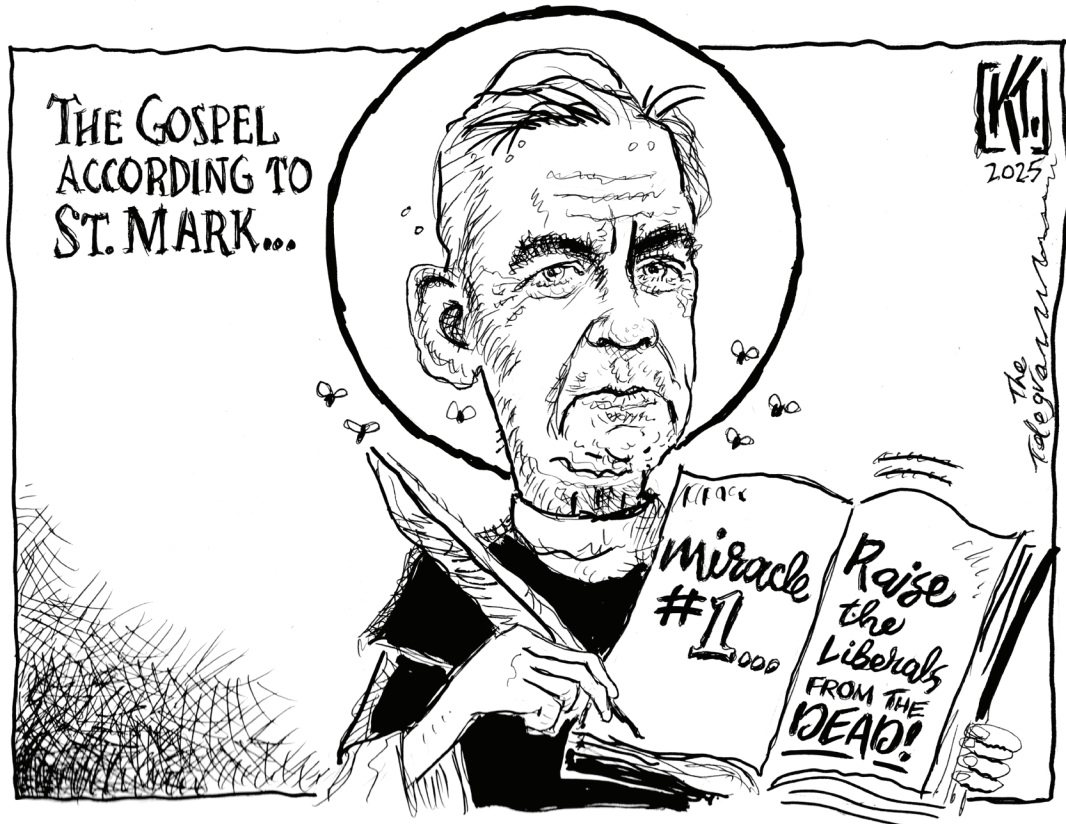
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VISUAL ESSAY

# Buzz Kill

*Political scandals and showdowns, one frame at a time*

FOR FOUR DECADES, starting in the mid-'80s, Kevin Tobin has been Newfoundland and Labrador's sharpest editorial cartoonist. He can collapse a week's worth of headlines into one perfectly barbed scene. From Donald Trump to the province's chronic doctor shortage, from Mark Carney's ascent to Putin's invasion of Ukraine, his thousands of caricatures for the *Telegram* have spared no target. Each one—signed "KT"—brims with satire, empathy, and the province's own unmistakable, salt-tinged wit. Almost always hovering in his panels is a tiny fly—his alter ego—taking it all in. Describing himself as a "notorious doodler," Tobin collects the high points of his years at the drawing table in his new book, *Fly on the Wall*. We've picked pieces that showcase his range: from the quick jabs to the slow burns. Paired with choice quotes, they offer a visual scrapbook of moments that have shaped Atlantic politics—and the country. ∞

—Carmine Starnino

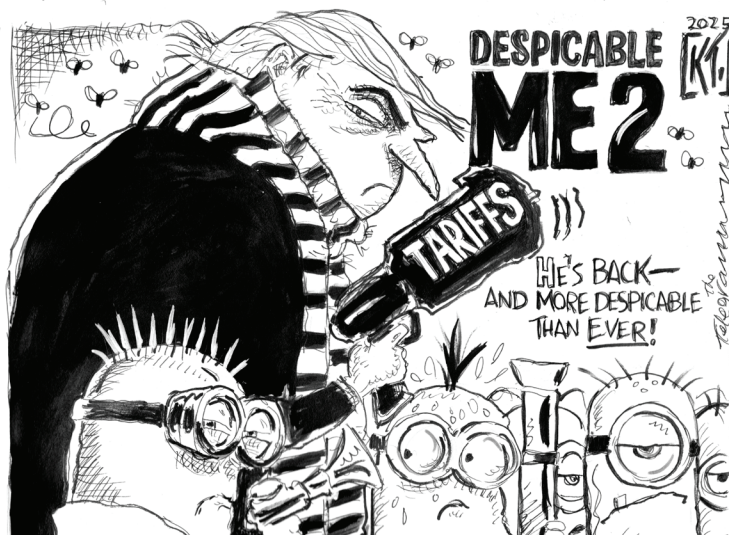


**“I HAVE FOND MEMORIES** of my father reading the *Western Star* daily newspaper after supper, and I particularly enjoyed the coloured comic strips in the Saturday-morning edition, the sweet smell of newsprint and ink coming from the pages.”



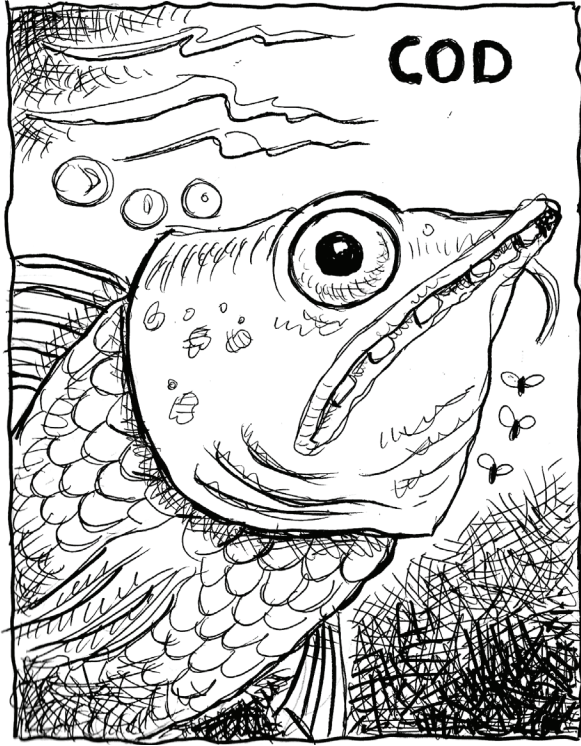
**“MOST PEOPLE** have heard the phrase ‘ink in the blood.’ It means to have a predisposition toward or passion for the written word and the way it captures life. For me, the ink in my blood is what gives life to the cartoons I draw.”

**“FLIES ARE INDUSTRIOUS.** Flies turn poo into stock feed, and they are live food and fuel for birds, frogs, and lizards. They serve as pollinators for a variety of plants. They also buzz around humans and cause us to wave our arms about to shoo them, thus encouraging physical activity.”

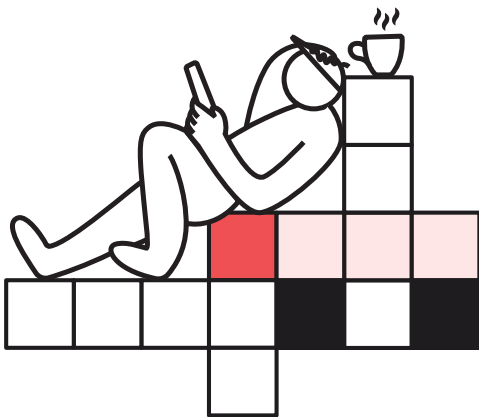


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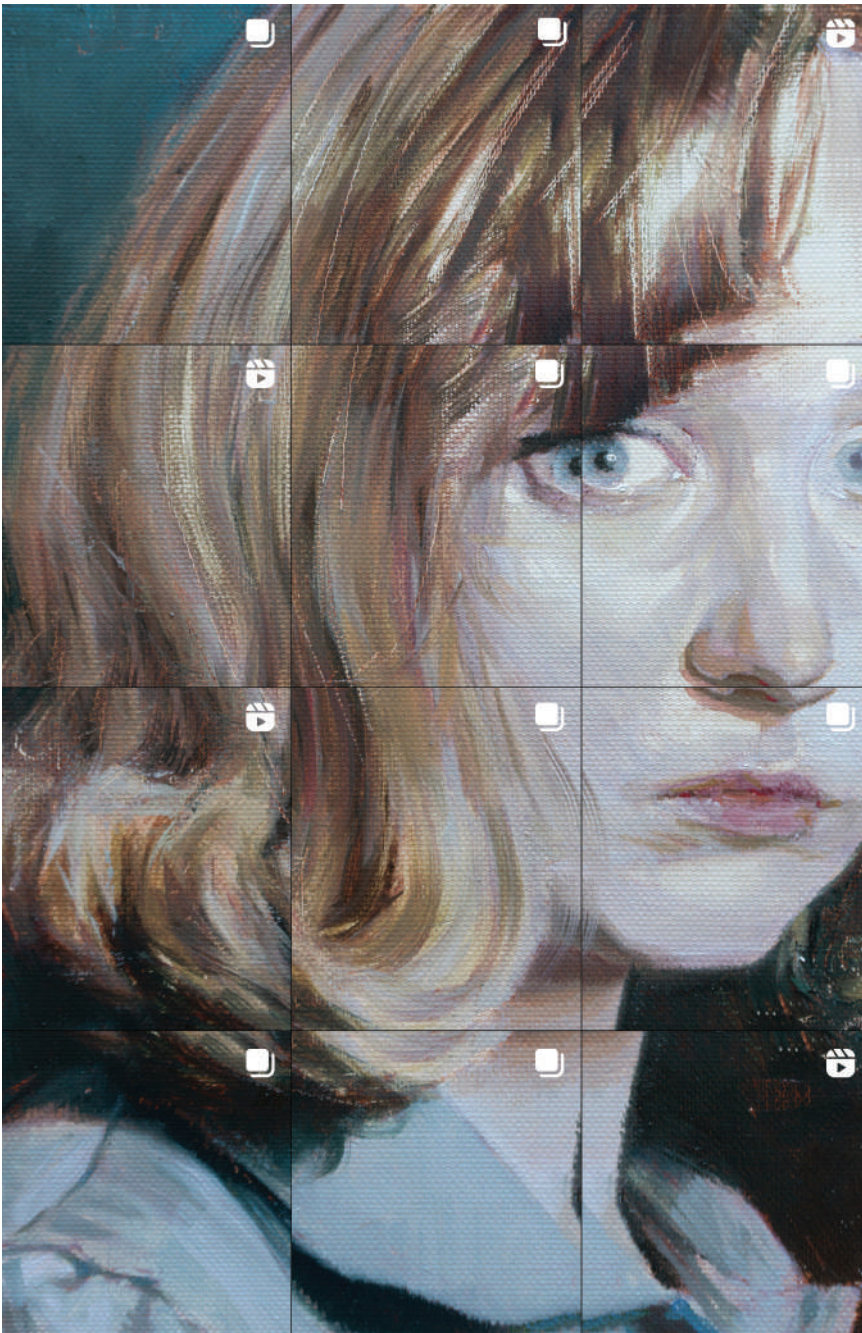
ART

# Painting in Pixels

*Sex, blood, and perfectly lit fruit. Welcome to art in the age of Instagram*

BY TATUM DOOLEY

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES LEE CHIAHAN



**W**HEN YOU GOOGLE the wunderkind painter Anna Weyant, the suggested searches are as follows:

“Anna Weyant Larry Gagosian relationship” (referring to her dalliance with the now eighty-year-old world-famous art dealer and gallerist her detractors say launched her career); “Anna Weyant Jason Isbell” (the more age-appropriate singer she’s moved on with); “Anna Weyant age” (only thirty); “Anna Weyant net worth” (somewhere in the millions, it’s speculated); “Anna Weyant art for sale” (certainly unaffordable and unavailable). It’s notable that when I looked her up, it wasn’t until the fourth or fifth suggestion that art was included. The flurry around Weyant has become less about her paintings and more about her.

It’s rare for a contemporary painter to get enough attention to garner online gossip, but Weyant stands out as an anomaly with an outsized place in the public imagination. Not only is she the youngest artist to be represented by Gagosian, the mega gallery owned by Weyant’s former beau, but her paintings have sold for millions of dollars at auction. (While Weyant grew up in Calgary, she’s never had a commercial gallery show on home soil. Instead, with a hop, skip, and a jump, she landed in the biggest art markets in the world in New York City.) On Reddit, posts about Weyant usually invoke mixed feelings: either “right place, right time” or “her art wouldn’t be selling for millions if she

wasn't sleeping with Gagosian." People don't know how to feel about the artist. There's a tinge of misogyny to all of this discourse—sometimes overtly and other times more insidiously.

Weyant has been part of a recent shift in the art world to figurative, representational painting—which aligns with the rise of identity-based art that gained prominence at the turn of the twenty-first century. Artists like Jennifer Packer, Jordan Casteel, Salman Toor, and Jenna Gribbon paint their everyday lives, capturing intimate scenes of their friends and lovers. This marks a return to the realist paintings of the nineteenth century—think Gustave Courbet and Jules Breton—combined with some conceptual strategies borrowed from postmodernism, like self-reflexivity and identity politics.

It's a style also informed by Instagram: just as the app's algorithm rewards images of people and faces, paintings of these subjects also tend to do well. Instagram has upended the way the art world operates, accelerating the speed at which an artist's career can grow and allowing artists to gain visibility. It's also changed the content of the work itself: images must be flattened from a living, breathing piece of art into a collection of pixels to ensure they look good in the tiny real estate of a grid.

In the past few years, I have noticed a new talking point in the art world. For the first time, when viewing a painting, people are concerned with how it compares to its online counterpart. "The painting looks better online," gallery goers will often say to me, if not: "It's so much better than on Instagram." For artists, this means a certain amount of opting in to the game determined by tech companies.

Painters like Weyant blur the line between influencer and artist, and she is equally adept at both. The roles of artist and influencer—one antiquated and one just emerging—feed off and inform each other. Artists currently must ask themselves: How do I ensure my paintings hold up when looked at in person? And what will my painting look like next to a Dove ad?

**F**OLLOW WEYANT on Instagram, where she has amassed a following of over 175,000—not only for her paintings but for people to see her outfit pictures, where she's dining out, and snaps of her similarly successful group of friends. The latter are often her muses. Eileen Kelly, the podcast host and sex educator, often sits for Weyant's paintings. For one of the December 2024 covers of *Vogue*, edited by Marc Jacobs, Weyant painted model Kaia Gerber. Weyant herself could be a model: thin, beautiful, and blonde. She wears designer clothes. Her teeth are perfectly straight and white.

### Artists currently must ask themselves: How do I ensure my paintings hold up when looked at in person? And what will my painting look like next to a Dove ad?

Weyant's paintings are similarly traditional and flawless. They take after the seventeenth-century Dutch masters—a contemporary version of Vermeer with stark chiaroscuro, anatomical accuracy, and deftly painted fabrics. The subtle colour palette is executed with precision, and the texture appears to have aged over time, so that looking at her work makes it feel as if you were looking at a painting at the Met. Weyant often sticks to painting realistic vignettes of everyday life: a rendering of a string of pearls on a monotone backdrop, a woman behind a window with the curtains pulled so only her perky breasts are visible, her side profile, mid-conversation, titled *Loose Screw*. In other paintings, Weyant drops her exacting style and paints the figures like cartoons. Throughout her work, there's a specific thread of feminine melancholy that's relatable, if not hyperbolic. By using her

life as content for her paintings, Weyant reclaims the attention she receives for her benefit.

Weyant isn't the only artist who imbues her paintings with autobiography. Chloe Wise and Jeanine Brito, both painters on a steep upward trajectory who happen to be Canadian, straddle the line between artist and public persona—digitally savvy in a way that allows their work to transcend the art world and enter the mainstream. People follow them without necessarily being part of the art world—each artist has collaborated with fashion brands, the likes of which include Jacquemus and Dior, and Brito and Weyant have had their paintings on the covers of books (Weyant has also painted a cover for *The Paris Review*).

The success has taken the form of tens of thousands of Instagram followers each—at current count, Weyant has 176K followers, Brito has 15.7K, and Wise rounds in at 211K—solo exhibitions around the world, and features in publications like *Vogue*, *Maclean's*, and *GQ*. The focus of these features often extends past their art and into their personal lives—with commentary about who they're dating or what their favourite snack is. By inserting themselves into their own work, artists are able to appropriate people's fascination with their personal lives and create a metacommentary. This type of agency has the added benefit of often increasing the market value of their work in an industry that prioritizes the artist as a celebrity.

Brito paints operatic tableaux, with her likeness woven throughout as the central character. Her use of dramatic reds, whites, and pinks creates a narrative reminiscent of blood-soaked fairy tales. Brito, who was born in Germany and grew up in Calgary, started to paint during the pandemic, quitting her job to focus on art full time. The move paid off: her work was discovered via Instagram by a top gallery with locations in New York, Los Angeles, and Bucharest. Brito's tight palette of St. Valentine's Day tones extends out of the canvas and into her wardrobe. There's a visual harmony at

play. Brito both paints her paintings and is her paintings. In 2023, she collaborated with fashion designer Nina Ricci on a collection that printed her paintings on a dress.

Similarly successful internationally, the Montreal-born Wise transposes her cool-kid friend group onto vaudeville tableaux: exaggerated and humorous situations that border on the salacious. Her online presence, filled with vacation hopping, parties, and fashion shows, is reflected in her artwork, offering viewers a chance to access that glamorous world through her paintings. Just as Instagram depends on social interaction through tagging and resharing, Wise paints her social group that's comprised of smiling, popular young women not unlike herself. (For the uninitiated: Instagram allows users to tag one another and reshare content, creating a flywheel effect that drives followers and, in this case, a growing art career.) Wise's Instagram persona verges on performance art that blends into her paintings. Her art practice often includes satirical sculptures of

designer bags as loaves of bread—perhaps a play on Fendi's famous Baguette bag. What is art and what is content continues to blur. I often wonder if these Instagram accounts themselves are an art piece, melding performance and paintings to create a long-term critique of our digital world.

Each of these artists paints realistic still lifes of objects that you might see carefully curated on the grid, like fruit and abundant bouquets that hark back to the original forbidden apple. Breasts abound, as do elements of the grotesque—femininity that is turned on its head and made abject. Brito does this through the presence of blood and knives, while Wise does it through costumes and unsettling portraits of people laughing. In Weyant's paintings, women's eyes are sometimes swapped for empty black orbs. This pull toward the obscene is fitting commentary from an artist criticized online so mercilessly. The push toward the grotesque acts as a shield against public attention; there's a power in what these artists paint and how they present

themselves—they decide how they'd like to be seen. They subvert some of the gaze oriented toward them by introducing elements of gore, grossness, and surprise.

Weyant, Brito, and Wise aptly use the convergence of the artist into a public figure, along with the increase of marketing on Instagram, and insert these social media tactics directly into their paintings to create an auto-fictional representation of their lives in paint. The paintings become metanarratives of the art world. On their Instagrams, paintings of friends are posted alongside photographs of said friends hanging out. A photograph of Brito staring directly into the camera sits alongside a painting of her doing the same. The merging of social media and fine art asks: Where does the art end and life begin? Is there really any difference? 📱

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**TATUM DOOLEY** is a writer and founder of *Art Forecast*. Her writing has appeared in *Artforum*, the *Globe and Mail*, and the *Toronto Star*, among other publications.

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## Imaginary Breakfast with Real People

BY VIVEK SHRAYA

*There's nothing for us in this country*, my Iraqi roommate says the second morning after my arrival in Kelowna, as he breaks bread into small chunks and dunks them in cold milk. *Except for daily drudgery at \$15.65.* He hands me a bowl of grapes and says: *Aren't there good schools in India?* I nod; he nods. We agree on things we don't fully comprehend. Running his hand over his thick beard, he proclaims like a prophet— *We are here to clean white people's shit!* *Do you know how to clean?* I shrug, my mind oscillating in a thick fog of longing and separation, propelled by a desire to escape or surrender. *I know a place where they will hire you, but you will have to make piss and shit your best friend. They even pay \$2 extra.* He forces a smile. In the kitchen, a clogged sink is slowly suffocating in a sludge of leftovers, and I dream of Tamor heaving and gushing from the foothills of Kanchenjunga, carrying no guilt of shifting places. The heaviness percolates in *drip, drip, drip* of decay. *If I were you*, he says, staring dreamily into space, *I'd finish school and go back to India.* *There's nothing for us...* His beard points eastward, to an imaginary homeland he gave up on years ago in hopes of escaping the *despairing and diabolic* ring that echoes from the shallow waters of Karbala and ends in the dregs of Tim Hortons coffee cups.

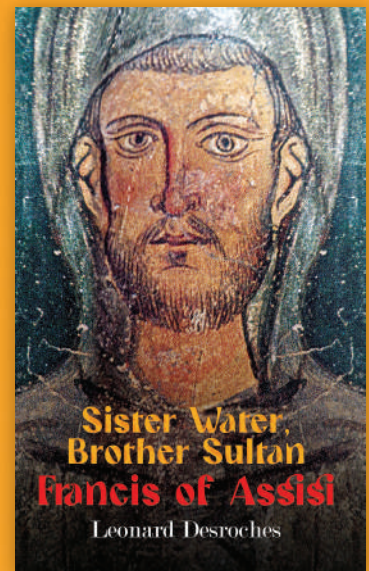
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From *Between Two Valleys, a Lake*  
(Anstruther Press, 2025)

Anticipate,  
Adapt &  
Stay Ahead  
*with Strategic  
Planning that  
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GAMES

# The Walrus Crossword

BY EMMA LAWSON

PRESENTED BY



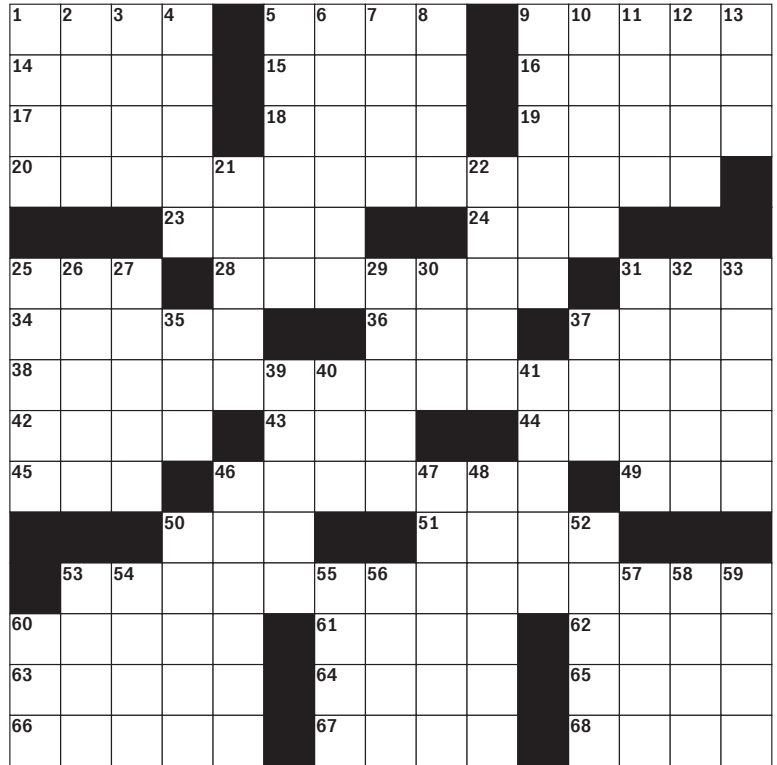
ACROSS

- 1 “Freeze!”
- 5 Direction to turn a screw to loosen it
- 9 Oxygen and neon, for two
- 14 Protagonist of His Dark Materials trilogy
- 15 Buffalo’s lake
- 16 Amazon’s virtual assistant
- 17 \_\_\_ mic night
- 18 Top notch
- 19 Cut the grass
- 20 What the road to hell is paved with, proverbially
- 23 Opposing
- 24 Not on
- 25 Contains
- 28 *The Syrian Ladies Benevolent* \_\_\_ (short story collection by Christine Estima)
- 31 Mathematician Lovelace
- 34 Group of eight
- 36 Earl Grey or Darjeeling
- 37 Authenticity, briefly
- 38 “Wow, fancy seeing you here!”
- 42 *Sonic the Hedgehog* developer

- 43 Chum
- 44 Higher in rank
- 45 Tribute poem
- 46 Form fitting, as a dress
- 49 Get hitched
- 50 Sticky gunk
- 51 “Hold \_\_\_ your hat!”
- 53 Requirement for many an online account
- 60 Not pricey
- 61 Olden days
- 62 Lion’s den
- 63 Lift with effort
- 64 Corrosion of iron
- 65 “At Last” singer James
- 66 Sat around and did nothing
- 67 Mine finds
- 68 Not us

DOWN

- 1 Tedious task
- 2 Teh, e.g.
- 3 Black and white cookie
- 4 Black and white bear
- 5 Simple shelter
- 6 Like some romance novels



- 7 Acceptable
- 8 High school student, typically
- 9 Make an activity more fun with points and rewards, say
- 10 Emotionally distant
- 11 Stitched up
- 12 Former flames
- 13 Sorrowful
- 21 Meta photo-sharing app, casually
- 22 Sum
- 25 “In what way?”
- 26 Needed a massage, perhaps
- 27 \_\_\_ fright (actor’s problem)
- 29 Where to find Michelangelo’s *David*
- 30 Long fish
- 31 Item in a quiver
- 32 Do a deep dive
- 33 Summed
- 35 Airport info
- 37 Corn unit
- 39 Utensil for stirring or scooping

- 40 Like someone experiencing road rage
- 41 Desires
- 46 Tapped playfully on the nose
- 47 Rough
- 48 Beginnings
- 50 Burial place
- 52 Particular baby bird
- 53 Storage building

- 54 Greenish-blue
- 55 Greek street food
- 56 Serve wine
- 57 Courtroom promise
- 58 \_\_\_ of passage
- 59 Small amount of Scotch
- 60 Life force in traditional Chinese medicine

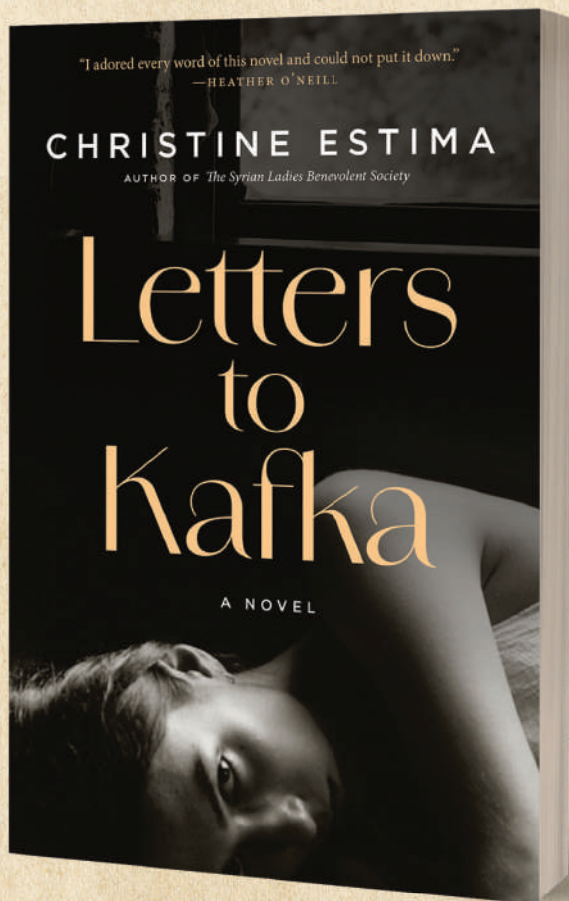
SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE’S PUZZLE:

T	R	O	Y		S	A	N	E	R		S	T	I	S			
R	A	B	E		E	L	O	P	E		H	O	L	A			
A	I	L	S		E	L	V	I	S		R	E	L	Y			
C	L	I	M	A	T	E	A	C	T	I	O	N					
T	A	G	A	L	O	G				T	O	A	S	T			
		T	E	A	L		E	C	O	N	O	M	I	C	S		
				M	A	W		H	A	R	O	R	E	S	L	A	P
L	A	D			H	A	R	V	A	R	D		S	M	S		
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O	P	E	N			P	A	N	S	Y		S	E	T	S		

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