

YEAR IN REVIEW



by PARNIKA GODKHINDI

Photo: Madeline Kim

And to you, the reader. I thank you for journeying with us this year, for *reckoning* with us, for inquiring about the world around us. Next year, I encourage you to continue showing enthusiasm and support for the paper. And if you appreciate independent thought, integrity, and originality, then please consider joining the Seventh Guard in September. *The Reckoner* needs more people like you to sustain its legacy of excellence.

Parnika Godkhindi
Editor in Chief

There will always be a lot going on, but there's one thing you must remember: **FOOD!** Like Professor Lupin always said, "Eat, you'll feel better."

- You can get condoms for free at Guidance.
- Be yourself!
- Don't be afraid to take risks. If you want to join DECA or sports or anything, do it! You'll regret not joining so many things that you wanted to because you were afraid. I was afraid to join teams and do so many things, and I regret it and I hope you guys take the risks.
- Friends come and go, but the real friends stay when things get tough. Keep in mind that if someone left your life, don't dwell on them; you'll find so many others who will stay even when it gets tough. Good luck with all of the rest of your high school years. :)
- Support events in Garneau. If you want to relieve stress, I find them to be the best place to be.
- Be happy, don't stress, and never lose hope.
- Step out of your comfort zone.
- Be yourself and smile more!
- There are many ways to enter a pool, but the stairs are not one of them.
- Be nice! Being mean for popularity will not get you anywhere, as after high school, popularity won't matter. Enjoy high school while you can—it passes so fast.
- Stop writing on the bathroom walls.
- Get involved and put yourself out there, that's how you make new friends and discover the real world. Sports teams, clubs and other events are a lot of fun, and I can ensure you that you will not regret taking part in them!
- Your result is defined by your effort.
- Don't ever let anyone tell you that the sky's the limit when there are footsteps on the moon.
- Don't strive to fit in, strive to stand out.
- Put your heart into everything you do, and don't waste your time on things you don't believe in.
- Always work on yourself and make smart choices that will show results in the long run!



Meet 2017 Valedictorian Hosna Sahak

by AIMAN ALTAF

At Marc Garneau, the process of becoming valedictorian is very rigorous and thorough. This year, the student body selected Hosna Sahak to represent the Graduating Class of 2017. She will be delivering a speech at the Graduation Ceremony at Ryerson Theatre on 29 June 2017.

The selection process for Valedictorian consisted of three rounds. The first round involved the submission of a nomination form. The form required ten student signatures, two teacher references, and three reasons why the nominated person represents the graduating class. The next round was a filtration process, in which a committee of teachers and administration selected the five most deserving candidates. Finally, the candidates participated in an election round, in which the graduating class voted online for their Valedictorian. This year, elections took place from 1 June to 7 June, and the results were announced on 8 June 2017.

Hosna is a hardworking individual who spends much of her time working or volunteering. She also loves to read, paint, play soccer, and bake treats for her

friends. She is very involved in her community, and has always strived to make a positive difference through extensive volunteerism and involvement. At school, she has pursued many opportunities and clubs since Grade 9. She started by founding the MGCI Announcement Team and participating in the Spirit Committee. Later, she also founded MGCI Doctors Without Borders, helped lead the MGCI Cancer Society, and participated in the Social Justice and Equity Committee. In her community, Hosna is a volunteer at the Flemingdon Food Bank, a volunteer tutor in the Tutor Me Please Program, and a member of her library's Youth Advisory Council.

She feels that her high school experience has been "remarkable and monumental." It served as a second home to her and was the pinnacle of her character development. The main way she changed was through her increased leadership potential and ambitions. She remembers her transformation from a shy, reserved girl in middle school, into a more social and involved individual in high school: "Marc Garneau has not only helped me

with coping with my studies, but it has helped me become a better person in terms of integrity and building community."

After graduation, Hosna hopes to continue her education at the University of Toronto's Life Sciences program. She aspires to become a general surgeon who helps those in underprivileged areas and war zones. She also hopes to found her own organization to heal suffering around the world, and create sustainable health care systems for developing countries.

For people who hope to become the Valedictorian of their year, Hosna encourages them to serve as role models to their peers, and contribute to the Marc Garneau community. "This will help you become more acknowledged, trusted, and respected as an individual and as a friend," she says. Hosna also strongly believes that students' high school experiences will be improved if they pursue leadership initiatives, discover their interests, and make true friends. She refers back to her experience as a Grade 9 student, saying she started high school as a reserved and studious individual. How-

ever, she was able to make her experience extraordinary by contributing and getting involved.

Hosna says she is "very honoured and proud to be representing the Graduating Class of 2017." She is thankful to those who believed in her and her potential, and takes her task as Valedictorian very seriously. She hopes to deliver an inspirational speech which will recall the memories of the graduating class and emphasize the significance of their experiences. She wants to tell her class that "this is not the ending, but the beginning of a whole other journey."



Photo: Anthony Chang

Define 'Refugee'

by KHALIDA ELSADATI

'Refugee.'

What do you picture when you see the word? I pictured it to be a family of eight or nine running across a bustling airport. Or perhaps the blurred face of an impoverished young boy in a UNICEF commercial. The term *refugee* was a foreign and distant concept; a label for people much different than I, in places much different from where I had grown up.

It wouldn't be until my third year of high school when I would realize that my family and I had actually come to Canada as refugees.

Around this time last year, I was applying for scholarships, trying to assemble fragments of ambition and anxiety into a narrative. I settled on the classic immigrant tale of moving from a place that isn't North America to a place that is, and tried to embed a feel-good message of growth and hope in a language I had come to own. I spoke of the people that made Toronto feel like home with an unabashed optimism. In reality, however, I knew very little of the circumstances that had brought me here.

You see, my family moved from Sudan to Canada when I was three years old. My father raised my four sisters for much of my childhood, and spent his days working jobs he was overqualified for. He had once been a lawyer and political advocate. Now, he was content with a simpler life, perfectly embodying our image of the 'good hardworking immigrant.'

He was, and still is, my biggest hero.

I remember sitting in my sister's car when she began recounting the circumstances that had forced us to leave Sudan. The night we spent in an in-between home after first arriving in Canada. The harshness of our first

winter. The day without power in our tiny three-bedroom apartment. I had always been someone with a very clear idea of my identity, but this news shook me to my very core. No longer was our story one of simple immigration. It was something more...twisted.

This realization made me question the way we look at refugees in this country. Although we all love the story of the underdog, we prefer one that does not make us feel too gloomy. While we eat up stories of the resilient immigrant family, we turn a blind eye to the thousands of refugees whose circumstances are dire. Even within immigrant populace areas, our perceptions of refugees are those of helpless, impoverished individuals who find their ways into Canada based on circumstance rather than 'merit.'

This problematic view fuels apathy towards refugees, rather than helping them.

In many ways, I'm thankful to have only learned about our past circumstances later in life. It has allowed me to think critically about the idea of identity, and the way we treat those around us. More than anything, it ignited my passion in advocacy for refugees in Canada and allowed me to, for the first time in my life, truly own my label.

'Refugee.'

This story above was written by an immigrant who attends Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute. The submission was part of The Reckoner's Coming to Canada Column: a column featuring the diverse and unique backgrounds of immigrants at MGCI. If you are interested in sharing your immigration experiences with The Reckoner, please contact the paper at editorinchief@thereckoner.ca. Guest submissions are encouraged, and will be made anonymous upon request.

Bowling Past Cities

by JEFFREY QIU

Finally, we brought it all together," said Mr. Hillman, coach of Marc Garneau's cricket team. After making it to the City Championship as South Region Champions, Garneau's team competed against the top team from the West Region, George Harvey Collegiate Institute, at Sunnybrook Park on 1 June 2017. For the first time in twenty-five years, MGCI was victorious and earned the title of City Champions.

Garneau's team dominated their league throughout the sport's late-spring season. With practices beginning in early May and a round-robin consisting of four games, the team only gave up one loss prior to playoffs. They then defeated East York CI in the regional semi-finals and continued their winning streak by defeating Greenwood College School in the South region finals. They also handily beat Lester B. Pearson High School in the semi-finals prior to the final game against George Harvey. With their successful run to cities, the team finished the season almost undefeated, with seven wins and one loss.

When asked about the team's success, the coach, Mr. Hillman, said, "I think the results are a testament to the ability of our students. Cricket is arguably one of our most popular sports, and in terms of overall success and skill, probably our best." Marc Garneau's cricket team has competed in the city finals several times in past years.

When asked about his thoughts on winning, Captain Arslan Khan said, "[Winning] felt really good. Last year we were in the finals too, but we lost. So this year, winning was great, especially in Grade 12. It feels good to leave Garneau with that trophy in my hand." Arslan

also expressed confidence in the Grade 10 and Grade 11 players defending Garneau's City Champion title next year.

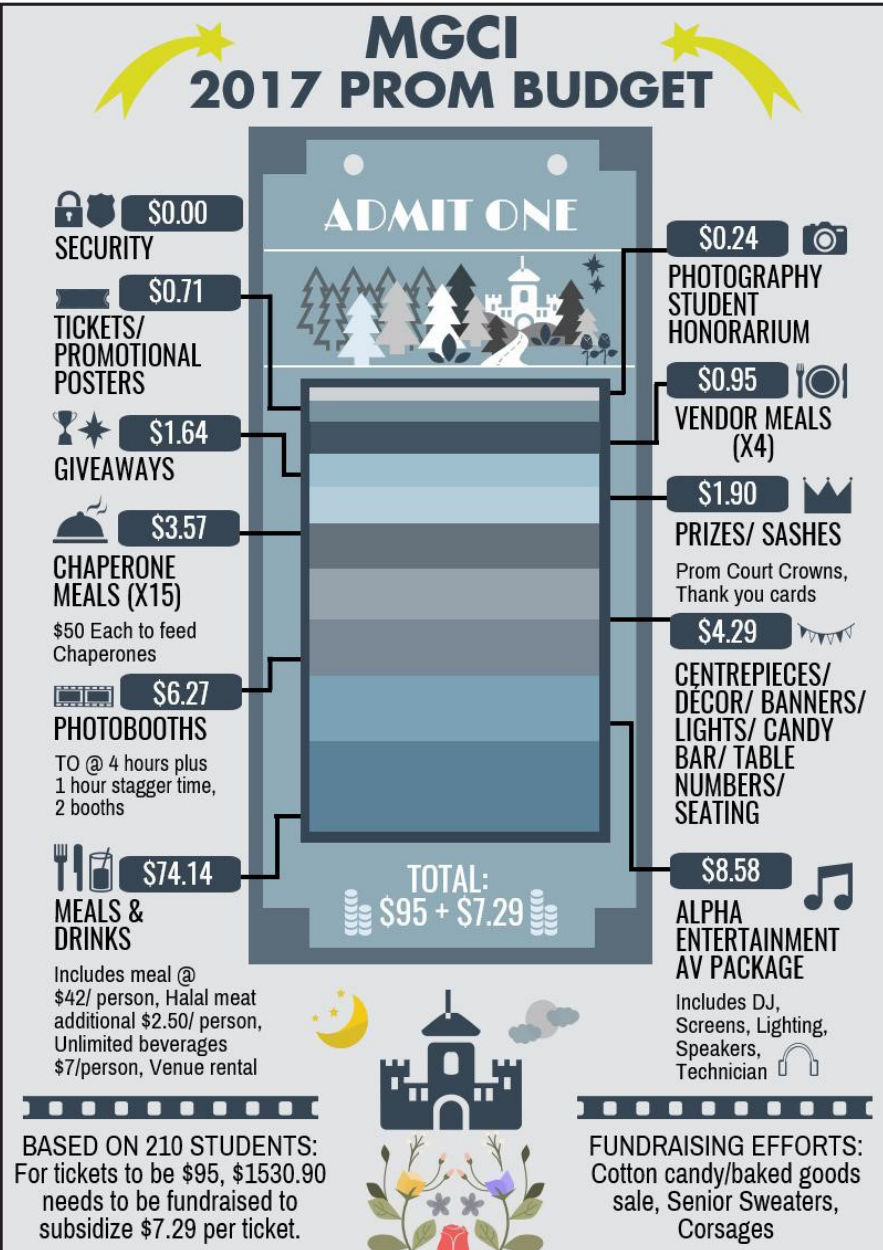
Congratulations to the following members of the cricket team for winning cities:

Daud Abbas, Mohammad Abdullah, Zain-Ul Abidein, Muhammad Adil, Abdul Basit, Aashir Javed, Shazaib Kamran, Arslan Khan, Areeb Mehta, Aatir Minhas, Faham Raees, Mohsin Sajjad, Hamza Talal, Saad Umar, Abdul Wasey Khan, and Wasiq Zia.

The Reckoner also congratulates Mr. Hillman, Assistant Ziyann Abbasi, and Manager Jarar Khan.

A Prom-ising Beginning

by RYAN LIN



Infographic: Hanlin Cheng

With summatives and exams just around the corner, graduating students of MGCI also have another activity to plan for: Prom. From 15 May to 2 June, tickets were available for purchase from the SAC office for the graduating class' last dance, taking place on 28 June.

To buy a ticket, students had to first fill out a contract sheet which could be picked up at the SAC office, or downloaded from Facebook. Ticket prices were \$95 for MGCI students if purchased before 26 May, and \$105 afterwards; guest tickets cost \$10 extra, and required an additional guest form. The ticket price included admission and dinner, with the choice of chicken meal, chicken pasta, or vegetarian pasta.

Prom Committee primarily advertised the sale through posters and social media, with several announcements made to remind students of the deadline. Some students felt that this was insufficient, with one noting that "the posters weren't eye-catching or effective." However, over one hundred fifty tickets were sold at the end of three weeks, with two hundred being the total number of tickets available. Out of the one hundred fifty, ten of these tickets were sold to guests.

Sana Hatia, the Grad Con-venor, said, "At the start, the ticket sales seemed to go a little slow but after that many people started to come and we were able to reach our goal of at least one hundred fifty ticket sales."

She also noted that although one hundred eighty ticket sales were required to break even, with staff ticket purchases and senior sweater sales, Prom Committee will be able to fund the event.

For many students, the pricing of the tickets seemed to be their primary concern. One student, who wishes to remain anonymous, said, "I think \$95 is a little ridiculous. I understand it's because we don't have as much funding as other schools...but I know a lot of people who had to rethink if they even wanted to go just because the price was so high." Several other students interviewed also cited the cost as the reason why they will not be attending.

Addressing these concerns, Sana responded that the pricing was outside of her committee's control, saying "There was no way it could've been under \$90 because of the cost for the dinner, photo booths, the venue, decorations, DJ, and everything else."

Ms. Lajeunesse, one of the teacher organizers for Prom, provided *The Reckoner* with a breakdown of what each Prom ticket pays for, which is included in the accompanying graphic.

Sana thanked the seniors who had purchased tickets, saying, "My Committee and I have tried our best to make it great for you guys, so I really hope you guys enjoy the event!"

BALLIN' FOR TURTLE HOUSE

by VARUN VENKATARAMANAN

On 7 June 2017, MGCI's Senior and Junior Boys' Basketball Teams competed in a charity game to raise money for the Turtle House Art/Play Centre. Roughly fifty students attended the game, raising about \$100 for the charity.

Officiated by Mr. Hillman, the game was played with four eight minute quarters. The first quarter was an even back-and-forth battle, but the Seniors came out on top with a 14-10 lead. They built upon their lead through the second quarter with a barrage of three-pointers, making it 32-17 at the half. The Senior Team would go on to win the game with a final score of 55-35. During halftime, a half-court shooting contest was held for students in attendance, with the winner receiving a \$5 gift card to Tim Hortons. There was also a \$10 McDonald's gift card for the winner of a dance competition after the game.

The event was organized by students Ali Bokhari and Subaani Mathy, as well as Mr. Sharp, Mr. Hillman, Ms. Woodley, and Mr. Nizitch as a project for The Global Mosaic Institute to fundraise for the Turtle House Art/Play Centre. Tickets were \$2 each and sold at lunch in the days leading up

to the game. Attendees were automatically entered into a raffle for a chance to win gift cards.

Established in 2005, the Turtle House Art/Play Centre is a "not-for-profit special arts program for children and parents coming from regions of conflict." They hold art programs including painting, pottery, ceramics, and musical concerts in neighbourhoods with significant refugee populations, such as East York, Don Mills-Sheppard, and Victoria Park Village.

The event was a big hit amongst those who attended. One student, Sajanath, said, "The game was a great experience and a cool way to raise money for a great cause."

Ali Bokhari, an organizer, said, "There were some initial rough patches in organization, but the enthusiasm of the team made it happen. For the first ever charity sports event at Garneau, I think it went great." He acknowledged that the timing of the event may have stopped people from attending, as it took place during Ramadan and summative projects. Ali also mentioned that SAC hopes to organize more charity sports events at Garneau next year.



Debate Column: TORONTO PRIDE PARADE

by AREEBA ASGHAR and KHARI THOMAS

Should the City of Toronto revoke funding for the Toronto Pride Parade?

On 31 March 2017, the Toronto LGBTQ Policing community penned a letter to Toronto City Council, asking them to reconsider the \$260 000 funding they grant to Pride Toronto every year. The letter came after Pride Toronto decided to ban police floats in the City’s annual Pride Parade, following demands from Black Lives Matter (BLM). Members of the black LGBTQ community felt uncomfortable with the way that the police force was represented in the parade. Pride Toronto decided to listen to BLM’s requests as it concurred with their mission to make all members of the LGBTQ community feel included in the parade [1]. BLM, however, will not be participating in Pride 2017, as they missed the deadline to register for the event [9].

YES

It’s ironic, isn’t it? The Pride Parade, an event created to promote inclusivity and acceptance within the community, is now headed towards a path of exclusivity. Banning members of the LGBTQ community from attending an event that celebrates them is hardly the right message, and should not be acceptable.

Now, Pride Toronto has said that members of the police community could attend the parade as regular citizens. But this is wholly unfair—why must the LGBTQ police community have to choose between parts of their own identity? Why must they shed their uniforms, a badge of their identity, to participate in an event that they have every right to be a part of?

In the letter addressing this concern, the police community pointed out that the City has certain responsibilities as their employers. As employees of the City, the police stated that they could “think of no examples in Canada where either a public or private employer has been a lead sponsor for an event their employees were asked not to participate in” [8].

BLM demanded Pride ban the police from the parade because “it could discourage marginalized communities from participating” [7]. But police officers are being hired for protection of the parade and will be in the vicinity regardless. If what BLM says is true, then will this not discourage marginalized communities from participating anyway? If so, why was there no push to remove police protection altogether? It is hypocritical of Pride to exclude police officers from the parade, while readily accepting their protection.

Police presence in the parade is inevitable. It’s just a question of whether they will be left to watch from the sidelines or be allowed to participate in an event that they offer protection for.

The City is not responsible for organizing the Pride Parade; that job is reserved for Pride Toronto. As such, the City cannot force the organizers of the parade to change their decision. They do, however, have the right to show their displeasure regarding the situation. The City has no real obligation to fund the event. Since Pride’s exclusion of the police community contradicts its own message of inclusivity, the City should reconsider the funding that it grants to Pride.

It is also important to understand that Toronto City Council—even if it does decide to cut the \$260 000 grant—is not abandoning the parade. The council supports the event with over \$1 million annually. If the City were to withhold the grant, the parade would still receive \$750 000 in support, a significant amount. This step, however, would compel Pride Toronto to reevaluate its decision to ban police floats and craft a more inclusive approach to solve their concerns regarding the police.

In fact, this proposal has already triggered talks between Pride and the police, giving them a chance to reach a compromise without any extreme measures [7].

As an event that promotes inclusivity and tolerance within the community, the Pride Parade has always been a source of pride for Toronto. And yet, its organizers have decided to take an action that goes against everything that the parade stands for. Banning police floats is not reflective of the parade’s cause and serves only to increase the rift between communities. All groups should be able to march together and accept each other without having to hide a part of their identities.

And if cutting a \$260 000 grant resolves these problems, then so be it.

NO

Why exactly does Toronto City Hall fund Pride Toronto? To show support for a community that was once repressed by the City? To ensure there’s a parade to keep the general populace placated and happy? Or something entirely different?

Likely, many councillors at City Hall would agree with the former. The Pride Parade isn’t funded just so the City can check off some annual quota for parades—there are less controversial ones which could fulfil that purpose. But despite safer alternatives, the Pride Parade continues to receive funding every summer. This leads one to believe that the funding is a show of support for the event, and the community it represents.

Which is why it’s so weird that all of a sudden, there’s been a big push to scrap funding after Pride decided to disallow police floats. Some people believe that Pride’s decision to exclude police, who provide free security for the event, was unreasonable, and is grounds to terminate all funding for the parade [2].

But the City wasn’t funding Pride so that every group who wanted to make a float could participate. If this were true, they wouldn’t have been pushing Pride to exclude Queers Against Israeli Apartheid only four years ago [3]. Similarly, the police aren’t providing free security because they want a float in the parade—it is simply a sign of goodwill to the community they serve.

People must remember that the Pride Parade isn’t run by the City of Toronto, but by Pride Toronto, an independent group. Regardless of whether you agree or not, ultimately, the decision was made by Pride to exclude police floats. It should be noted that Pride Toronto placed no bans on officers participating individually, only on organized floats featuring officers in uniform. Has the purpose of the parade changed? No. So then why cut their funding?

This is not to argue that the City shouldn’t have some basic expectations for the events it funds. It wouldn’t fund something like a neo-Nazi rally, something so contradictory to the values it stands for. But is police inclusion in the parade really so important that the City should be willing to cut funding, essentially withdrawing its support for Pride, for this alone? If so, then it’s strange that they have allowed Pride to run for the past thirty-four years, with the mayors themselves marching in the last twenty-two of them (ignoring Rob Ford), without any police floats [4]. In fact, they were only present for two years, 2014 and 2015, before they were banned [5].

Ultimately, people need to recognize that they aren’t the ones organizing the Pride Parade. Giving money, and then dictating how that money must be spent can hardly be considered a gift, or a sign of support—it’s simply hiring an organization to serve your desires. If the City truly gives money to Pride as a sign of support to the LGBTQ community, then it must allow them to make their own decisions on how it’s spent.



Illustration: Lila Huang

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‘Free’ Speech

by RAFIQ HABIB

The rise of Donald Trump has brought a revival in public activism. Anyone paying attention to U.S. politics has likely noticed the surge in activism and protests across the nation, during and after the election season. Be it the Women’s March or the March for Science, the vast majority of these demonstrations have been peaceful displays. However, there have been a few notable instances where protests have gone too far, bringing with them disturbing results and implications.

Take the recent fiasco at the University of California (UC) Berkeley: in February, right-wing editor Milo Yiannopoulos had his speech cancelled when some fifteen hundred people protesting his event were joined by one hundred and fifty “By Any Means Necessary” (BAMN) left-wing militants [1]. Riots broke out, causing over \$100 000 in damages, as police officers were attacked and properties vandalized. In April, a planned speech by right-wing media personality Ann Coulter was cancelled by the same university, for fear of campus safety, following similar demonstrations involving anti-fascist (an-tifa) protesters [2].

There are innumerable questions that these particular events bring up. For example, how hypocritical is it that BAMN, a group that was formed to fight for affirmative action [3], attacked police in a (successful) attempt to segregate and devalue those on the opposite end of the political spectrum? Doesn’t it seem just a tad fascist for an “anti-fascist” group to employ violence and fear-mongering to suppress someone whose ideas they disagree with?

The biggest problem here, however, is the implication this has on free speech on university campuses. By cancelling these two events, UC Berkeley set a dangerous precedent that devalues the ideas of those on the right and shows partiality to leftists. Are some far-right ideas that have come up recently just ‘fake news’ and factual nonsense? Yes. But the same can be said of some far-left ideas (although they have not had the ‘enviable’ position of showing up on the White House stage). Worse, it shows that universities are inclined to bow to pressure from disruptive, and sometimes extreme, members of the student body. And while student safety is inarguably the most important thing on a university campus, the lack of substantial effort by Berkeley to accommodate these speakers—who were invited by university-affiliated groups, no less—and to ensure that the events would proceed safely, is incredibly disappointing.

It is understandable that universities generally tend to lean to the political left in the social ideas they voice across campuses, and that this may have some impact on campus policy. However, this does not provide an

excuse to attack and damage one of the most fundamental tenets of any university: the guarantee that all individuals can safely exchange and discuss their ideas. When they were first created, universities served to unite scholars of various backgrounds to share their perspectives and gain new insights without repercussions. This exchange of thought allowed people to question their own ideas and form better ones, or to further reinforce their own convictions and beliefs.

This move by Berkeley is akin to a proclamation that freedom of expression for everyone is no longer valued at institutions of higher learning. It is now just a relic of a freer educational past that gives universities today a license to coddle students with their own ideas and cement the restrictive boxes of political correctness into their minds. And if this is to be the case (and I desperately hope that it is not), then why even bother with physical universities? Online courses can convey plain facts just as well as—if not better than—physical seminars. After all, the last thing we need is for universities to become echo chambers that further reinforce the views already held by some of their students, without allowing for discussion, debate, and freedom of thought and opinion. ■

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Letter to University Applicants

by KHARI THOMAS

Dear <insert honorific> <insert last name>,

Your application to our university has been reviewed, and unfortunately, we are unable to offer you a place in the program of your choice. We understand that this decision may be hard for you to accept. Hopefully, the following words will sate any animosity that you may develop towards our university, and make it seem like we actually care for all of our students and applicants.

With every passing year, competition for our program becomes more intense. Over 3 000 students applied to our program, and only 800 were accepted. That’s less than 50%. This makes you in the majority of students, so hopefully, that makes you feel comforted or something. Lots of other people are as bad as you.

You may have some resentment towards our selection process, but please rest assured: We have put much thought into making our decision, despite only looking at the average mark of your top six courses. We do realize that there are issues with this approach, namely that grading is inconsistent across schools. It is also true that many other programs take this into consideration, using supplementary applications, interviews, or other methods to more accurately assess the quality of a candidate. However, we have chosen not to take any of these approaches. Adding another step to the process would cost more money than we are willing to spend. It might put greater strain on you, the applicant. There may also be some merit in judging people based on how well they can game the school system. Feel free to come up with any additional reasons for why we don’t improve the selection process, and send them to us so that we can add them in for next year.

If you’re really desperate to get into our program, you can always try to transfer into it next year. Even though only the most talented people will get in, at least you’re giving Admissions Officers like me a job. If you do manage to get in, then you’re probably an example of our system screwing up, but hey, at least you got here eventually. Otherwise, we don’t really care about you, since you probably won’t end up as #1 in our program, anyway.

Thank you for applying to our university, and we hope that you come back with more money next year.

Sincerely,

John Smith
University of <insert name here>



Illustration: Amy Yan

The Reckoner

of Marc Garneau C.I.

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Music Review:

24K MAGIC BY BRUNO MARS

by RUKNOON DINDER

Half an Hour of party tunes that sound like the best bits of '90s R&B: 3.5 / 5

It's good to remember the improbable things in life. For example: "Uptown Funk" vocalist and animatronic sequined suit Bruno Mars once sang the words "loungin' on the couch just chillin' in my Snuggie." Every part of it is retroactively bizarre: the idea that Mars, the embodiment of the "hardest-working man in showbiz" cliché, once attached himself to something called "The Lazy Song," that he once released music in 2010 that *sounded like* 2010. And now he goes for the risqué move of remaking '90s classics for people who were probably not born in the decade. He trips but manages to pull himself together for another stunner: *24K Magic*.

In a year when fellow musicians Drake and Kanye West have released sprawling, overlong albums while Beyoncé accompanied hers with a 60-minute film, this record's brevity feels refreshing. *24K Magic* features just nine songs and a fat-free 33-minute running time. There's not even a deluxe edition with extra tracks. Although *24K Magic* is shorter than any Stooges record, Bruno Mars still wears a lot of hats: giddy uptown-funk savant, bumping-and-grinding R&B time-traveler, Ashford & Simpson-esque quiet-storm baladeer. Keeping his third album short is also ballsy. After all, Bruno Mars isn't just trying to match 2010's *Doo-Wops & Hooligans* and 2012's *Unorthodox Jukebox*—both multi-platinum chart-toppers—but also globe-conquering Mark Ronson collaboration "Uptown Funk." But instead of going from genre to genre in pursuit of hits, Mars has crafted something compact and cohesive that feels like a proper party.

Illustration: Lila Huang

album. In a year when we've seen Linkin Park jump into full fledged pop to stay popular, Mars sticks to his roots and succeeds.

While his funk game is strong and swagger even stronger, Bruno's acclaimed hook-writing (which has garnered four Number Ones for himself and tons of co-writes on other chart-toppers) has seemingly taken a backseat. If it's intentional, it scans as cloying; if it's accidental, it scans as lazy. "Versace on the Floor" is the umpteenth tribute to Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing" in an era that didn't even need them from Wiz Khalifa, Nelly, Wale or Kygo. Lead single "24K Magic" is already dropping its way back down the charts, and it's not impossible to understand why when compared to the sugar-coated bombast of "Uptown Funk" or "Locked out of Heaven." "I'll rent a beach house in Miami / Wake up with no jammies," he winks playfully on "That's What I Like," but fails to capture the swagger that made "Uptown Funk" such a hit.

In spite of these misgivings, it's hard to stay mad at *24K Magic* for long. Few albums designed to sound like a party actually play like one; Bruno Mars has pulled it off with style. If "Uptown Funk" was a sliver of a theme-park version of funk, *24K Magic* is the rest of the park: rebuilt shinier, glitzier and safer, every element engineered to please, with a hell of a tour guide. It's not history, not even historical fiction, but harmless fun.

24K Magic may not be the most glittering display for Bruno Mars the pop star, but fans can rest assured that it is a shining moment for Bruno Mars the producer, arranger, and nostalgia curator. ■

Father

by AMY CHEN



A BEHEMOTH Tale

by ERIC WANG

Illustration: Jeffrey Liu

I never could enjoy the great outdoors. Albeit beautiful, I found it too noisy, too muddy, and way too itchy. I regard myself as a scrupulously clean individual. My nails are cut to the flesh, their soft pads untarnished by dirt. My hands are rigorously washed with soap, without a streak or stain. So when dragged out to camp in the wilderness, the world became alien to me.

It seemed as if there was always something to do: pitch tents, poke the fire, fend off incessant gnats. As it became time for dinner, a small dilapidated tractor coughed its way towards the campsite, delivering cold pizza in featureless boxes. Regardless, it was time to wash my hands. However, the only thing around the campsite was an abundance of hand sanitizer.

No matter how much I rubbed or wiped, the soot and grime did not leave my hands. Abandoning all hope, I dejectedly munched on my meal.

My sour thoughts were soon dashed when a vital concern dawned on me: *Where are the washrooms?*

With my stomach satisfied, the cue shifted downwards. I heard groaning and bubbling as my bowels convulsed and writhed. I doubled over in pain, breaking out in goosebumps despite the heat of the summer night. Halfheartedly and broken-willed, I eyed the neat stack of lavatories. Waddling over, I creaked open the door of the green throne. A flurry of flies floated out, stunned by the wicked stench. It was almost as if they were foreshadowing what was to come.

My head poked inside the hatch. A rotten miasma poorly masked by the overbearing cheap smell of roses permeated the air. This wasn't a 5 star luxury hotel washroom!

But my intestines couldn't care less.

Focused, I clenched my eyes closed as beads of sweat ran down my temple, droplets playing into the dirt. In a desperate struggle with my lower half, it seemed as if my natural instincts were winning. A single tear forced its way out my eye. "Just dump and evacuate," I reassured myself. Repeating this mantra, I swallowed a breath and breached.

Even if I had to lower myself to such terrible conditions, I had to establish a barrier of cleanliness. Laying down a triple reinforced cushion of toilet paper, I hesitantly touched down.

The ensuing five minutes were tantalizingly slow. My nostrils curled from the odor and my ears rushed with blood. A few horseflies zipped around me with vicious glee, ready for their next meal. I began to feel faint. The ordeal was nearing its end and I reached up to grab some toilet paper.

At first I didn't notice anything really strange. The second time I pulled down on the roll, my hand was tickled by something furry.

I immediately recoiled back, wondering if it was a figment of my delirious imagination. A monster of a moth fell out, rudely awakened from its dark abode. It had decided to make itself comfortable in the enclosed overhang of the toilet paper holder.

At that moment, my heart was not the only thing that dropped.

"Oh s—" I exclaimed, expressing a word appropriate to the situation.

My insides went white with fear and I let out a scream. I lost all sense of rationale and clawed at the door. After fumbling on it twice to no avail, I realized it was still locked.

Pulling up my pants, I kept my gaze locked on the moth. Although off-balance, it was steadily coursing towards me, ready to take its revenge. Unbuckling the lock, I tumbled out and ran away, screaming gibberish.

I wanted vengeance. Armed with a can of insect repellent, I returned to take back my dignity. Busting open the door, I shook the can and unleashed its contents. Laughing maniacally, I accidentally tasted the toxins, coughing and spluttering from its bitterness. Alas, the moth could not withstand my continued assault. It teetered around and flew through the open door, signalling its defeat.

As it flew away, I closed the door contentedly. After finishing my business with the moth, I finally finished my own business, light as a butterfly. ■

THE END

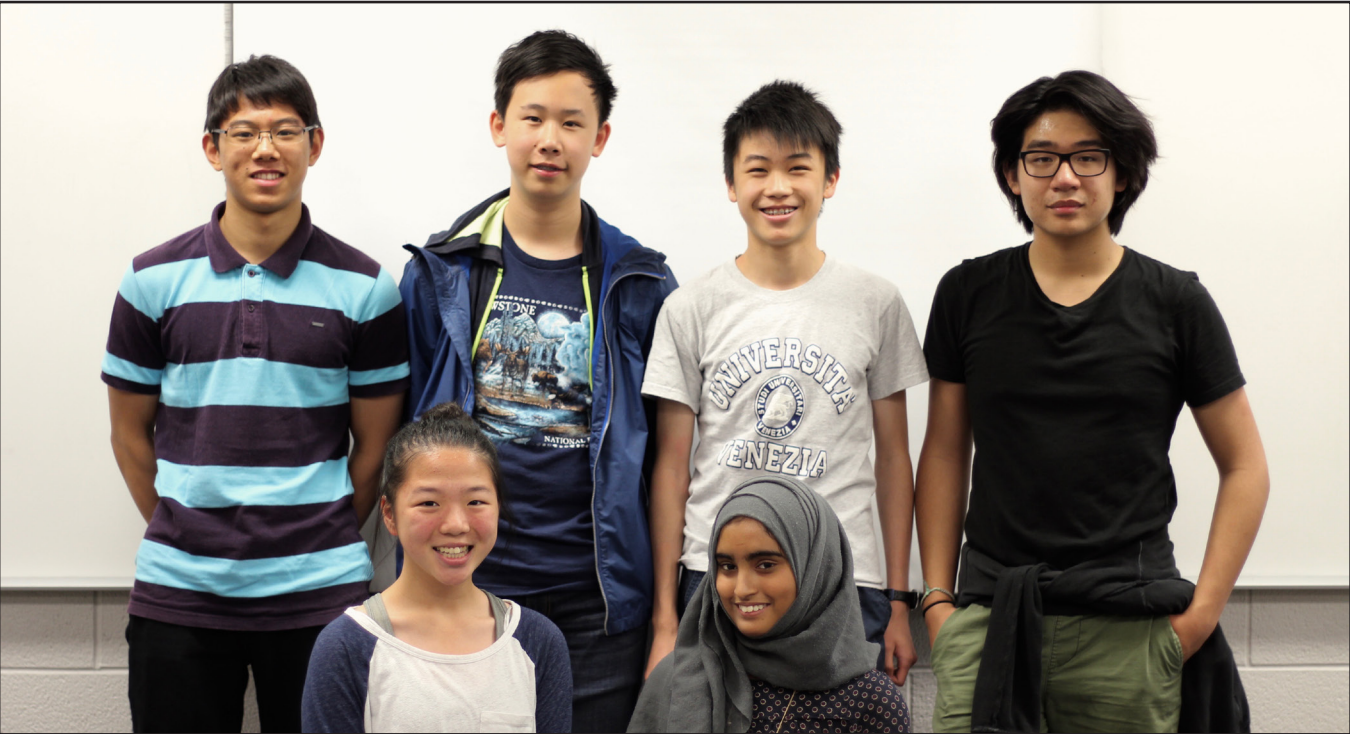
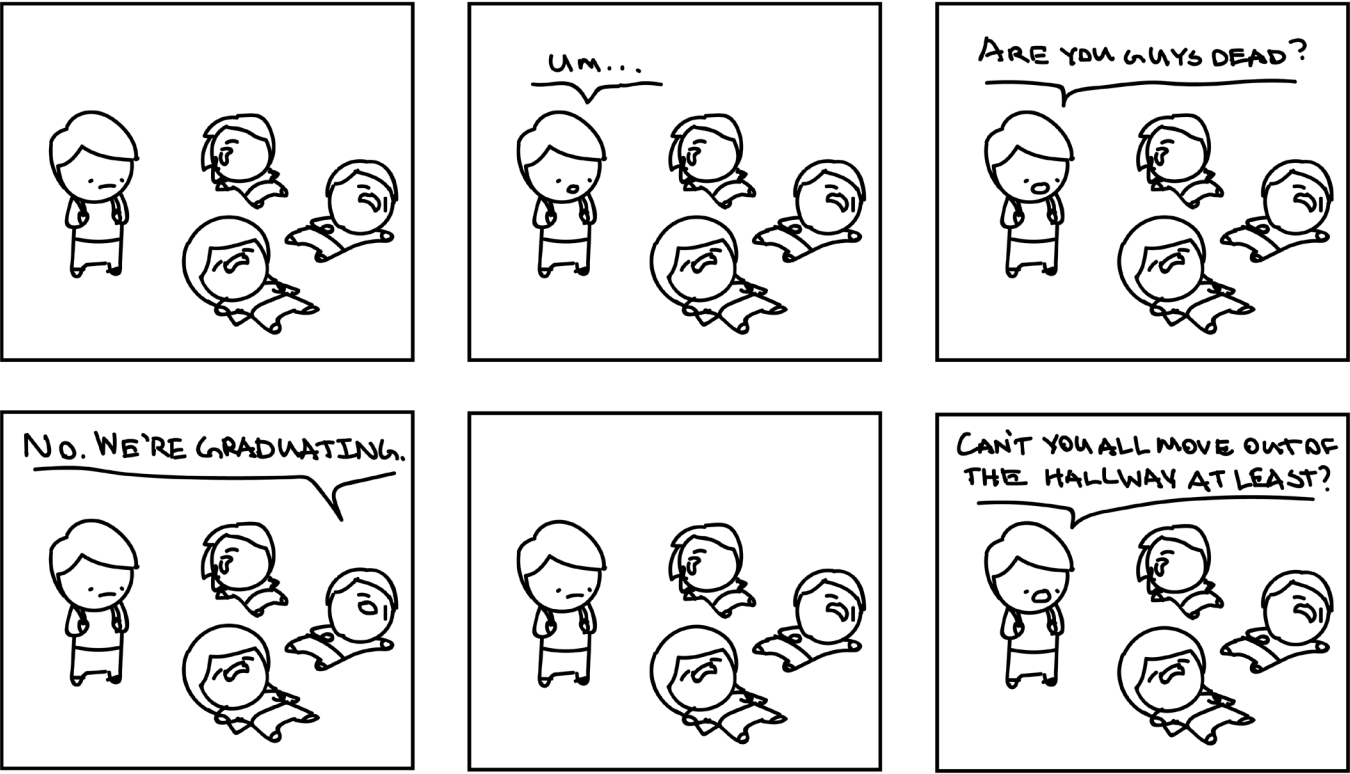


Photo: Cindy Cui

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