

The SJC Gazette

JUNE 26

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from the
Nest

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to grade 9
from our
garde 12s

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Meet your
presidential
candidates!

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flyby that
broke world
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The 2026 FIFA World Cup

A detailed rundown of
what might be the
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EDITORIAL

By: Mr. Salciccioli



Numbers represent a fascinating creation that we, as human beings, use as an attempt to make sense of, and order, our lives. We say things like, “there can only be *one* best,” “get into *pairs*,” and “the *third* time is the charm.”

Numbers are significant for us at the SJC Gazette, too, as this year we published *three* issues! This is the *first* time in my memory that we have achieved this feat

for *two* consecutive academic years. I am so incredibly proud of our Gazette staff of writers, photographers, layout designers, and editors – this is a truly amazing accomplishment.

Congratulations on a successful year of chronicling student life at St. John's College. You have made a significant contribution to the story that is SJC. To paraphrase the Group of Seven artist, Lawren Harris (born here, in Brantford, no less), a society that does not pass on its stories leaves no record of itself, and you have left a record that will be difficult to equal.



The Final Letter

By: *Maheen Wasif*

As the halls of SJC prepare to quiet for the summer, we sit down with three senior students – Anna Oshoyemi, Sarah Fudali, and Adrian Grant – to reflect on four years of growth, mistakes, and the community that defines us. From grade nine nerves to the threshold of the ‘real world,’ this is a final letter of advice to the younger grades and a reflection on what it means to truly dream.

A Message To The Past

If Anna could tell her grade nine self anything, she said “I’d tell her to take risks ... that making a mistake is okay, [in fact] she should make a lot of mistakes. I’d tell her to fail a lot of times [and] put herself in situations where she never expected herself to be [in].”

Anna notes that this would be her message because her younger self often “tried stuff out, and she was scared to fail, and [when] she did fail, she never went back. Or she never tried anything because she was gonna fail. So I think that that would be my message to her: I’d tell her to fail, and [that] it’s okay to fail, and [that] she’s in the right place to fail.”



Sarah echoes this sentiment of pushing through the unknown. “I would tell myself to not resist change just because it’s uncomfortable. That discomfort is where growth begins,” she says. Looking back at her early teens, Sarah remembers how the “overwhelming” nature of high school made her “want things to stay the same.” But as she got older, she “realized that accepting [change] is where you actually get to progress and evolve ... I think that’s really important for success.”

For Adrian, the message is simple: “Remember to stay genuine and prioritize the relationships in your life, including God.”



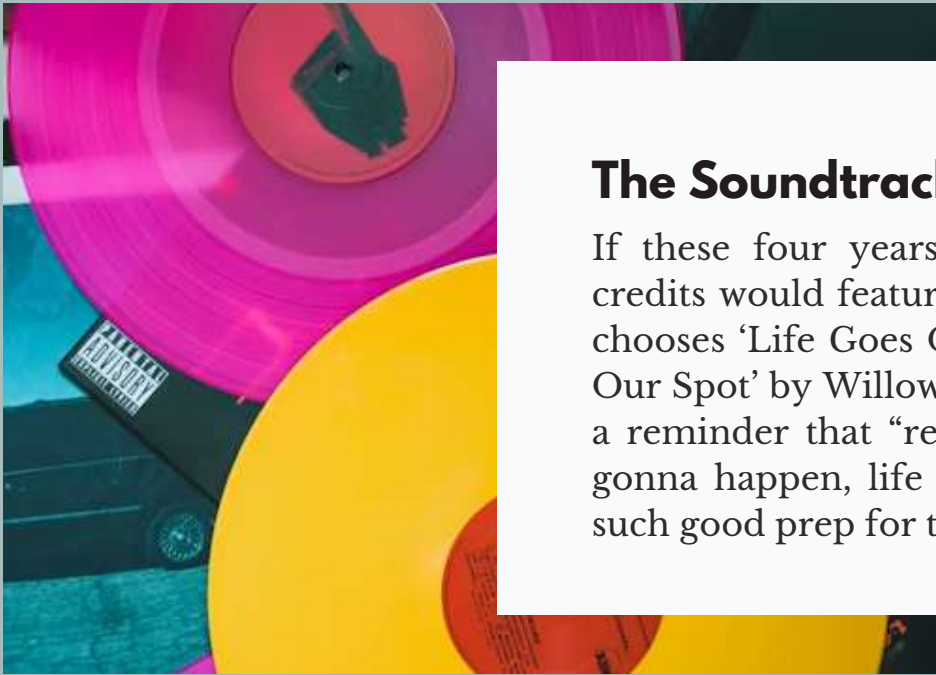
The SJC Spirit: A Culture of Community

When asked about an unspoken SJC tradition that younger grades should uphold, Anna points to the strength of the community.

“I just feel like we have this way of showing out for each other – sports teams, games, events. I know we sometimes like to complain in the moment that nobody’s coming to our events, and nobody’s doing this [or] that. But I’ll be very honest, we do a really good job at showing up for each other.”

She observes that this sense of connection has only grown during her time at high school. “The grade nines nowadays [are] friends with each other. ... I think that’s what we need more of. We don’t need that unspoken beef, and I think that that [community] is what we need to continue doing.”

Sarah finds that same community spirit in one of SJC’s musical traditions. “At the end of every school dance they play the song ‘Don’t Stop Believin’ by Journey,” she notes. “I think that’s a very nostalgic and sentimental thing – as a grade twelve, it brings you back to [being] in grade nine ... it kinda wraps your high school experience all together.”



The Soundtrack of Four Years

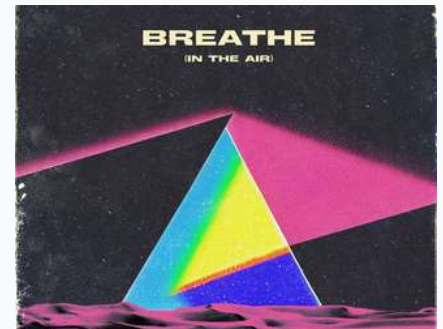
If these four years at SJC were a movie, the credits would feature a diverse soundtrack. Anna chooses 'Life Goes On' by BTS and 'Meet Me At Our Spot' by Willow Smith. The former serves as a reminder that “regardless of what we think is gonna happen, life goes on ... and I think that’s such good prep for the real world.”



The latter highlights the effort required to maintain friendships as students move onto different paths. “In high school... [it] is so encouraging to go on your own path,” Anna says. “Your friends might not necessarily be on the same path as you are. [So] it’s up to you ... to meet each other at your spot. And basically, make time for yourselves and to put effort into relationships.”



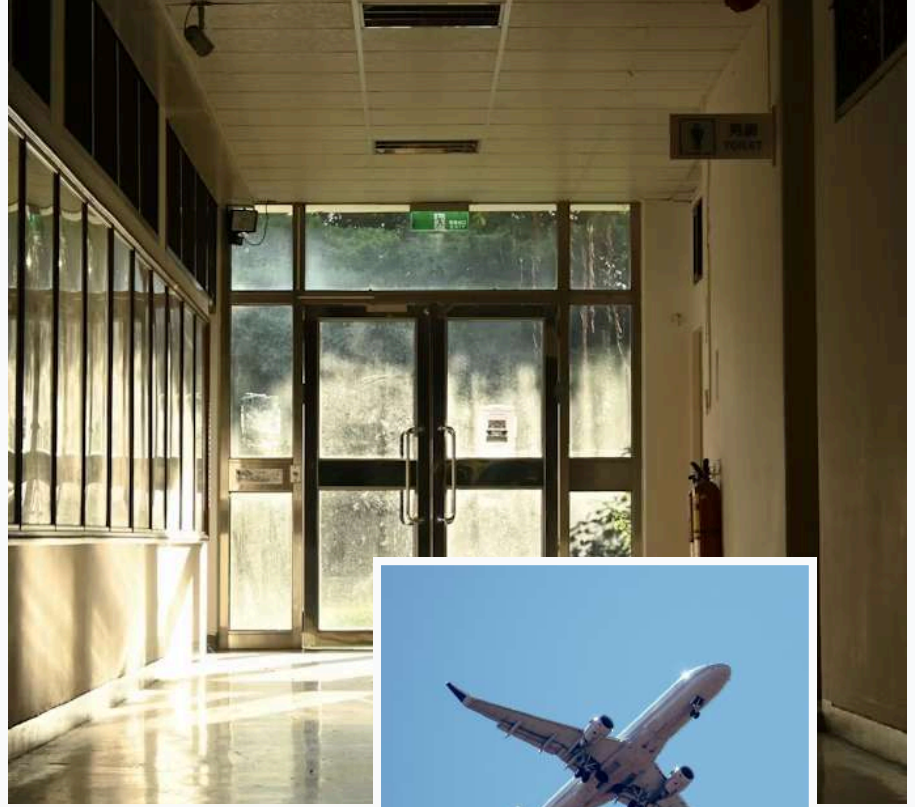
Sarah selects 'Hall of Fame' by The Script, a choice inspired by her personal signature, *ad altiora [tendo]* – Latin for 'I strive for higher things.' She sees the end of high school not as a finality, but as a beginning. “Yes, it’s the end of one chapter, but it’s [also] the start of a new one,” she explains.



Adrian looks to the classics, choosing 'Breathe (In The Air)' by Pink Floyd. To him, the song represents the journey of “discovering what it means to ‘look around and choose your own ground.’” He believes the “ground or person that we are caring enough to develop throughout high school is the foundation for the rest of our lives.”

The Evolution of Self

The transformation from grade nine to grade twelve was profound for all three students. Sarah recalls entering high school without a clear direction, joining a wide variety of clubs to find her way. “That really helped because I was able to figure out that I want to follow aviation,” she says. “Now I [have] ... honed in on that pathway. [I can now] fly a plane on my own.”



Adrian describes his evolution as a moral journey. “The most important change ... has been focusing on what it means to be a good person,” he reflects. By making mistakes throughout high school, he now feels “more prepared for what comes next.”

Anna, who describes her grade nine self as “intelligent” but “naive” and “scared to fail,” now embraces the unknown. “The grade twelve version of me is ready to take on the world,” she says. This courage led her to pursue her dream of committing to a school in the United States, despite being told it might not be possible. “I’m the only one that can shut my own dreams down,” she says. “If I get to a point where I get to touch the moon, I will touch the moon and I’d go further.”



Final Advice

As a parting thought, the seniors offer advice for those following in their footsteps. “Make sure that you’re dreaming,” Anna says. “Let your dreams be so impossible, that when you look up at them, it’s like, ‘Whose dreams are these?’” Sarah shares a practical message: “Start now, not when you feel ready ... starting before you feel ready is how you get there in the end.” Adrian leaves the younger grades with a call to personal agency. “Don’t let the world tell you who you are; take responsibility for the person you show up as each day.”

As May approaches St. John's College, so do the annual student council elections. During this time, students vote for the candidates they believe will best represent their grade; contribute to the school community; and address student concerns/ideas. An important position that many students run for is Grade 12 Co-President, a leadership role responsible for planning, organizing, and coordinating SJC's major events and activities throughout the school year, such as dances and pep rallies. This role offers students the opportunity to practice stewardship, advocate for their peers, and contribute to the student experience.

Throughout the April-May season, candidates Isabel Perras, Jessica Okhimame, Lily Park, Julian Ferraro, Paige Christensen, and Jude Toll have all been promoting themselves as the next "co-prez," whether it be through posters, pins, or social media. We've interviewed a few of these candidates asking why they think they are good fits for the future of SJC.

Isabel Perras' Interview

Q: What drives you towards presidency?

A: "What drove me towards going for student council president was definitely the fact that I had been heavily involved with student council already in my past three years. I have learned so much from the presidents before me that I now have a strong feeling of how things are supposed to be run, as well as things that I can improve based on past mishaps that have happened in council."

VOICES OF THE SJC CO-PRESIDENCY CANDIDATES

BY TRISTAN PLAKU



Q: How do you hope to make a positive impact on the school community?

A: "Part of my whole campaign for co-president is hearing other people's voices, with it being a big part of my student council video that I'm putting out on May 6th. In the video, I interview SJC students and ask them about what can be different at SJC. I feel like this was so important because this year the student council was very large, and as one group, we forget that we have so many other students we can represent. It was crucial to reach out to students and see their perspectives, since as student council, we pick a lot of the dances and decide what events we want to do, and connecting with students on a deeper level is more important compared to just doing polls on Instagram to decide dances/events."

Q: Ultimately, why should students vote for you?

A: “I think students should vote for me because I have already put my words into action. It’s one thing to make a video saying you’ll do something, but it’s another to actually follow through. With my involvement in SJC, including the athletic council, I have helped organize fundraisers that represent the school. Even if you’re not directly involved, you still feel like you have a place and are included. I think that feeling is crucial, because every student deserves to feel heard and able to make an impact, even if they are not directly a part of a club or leadership role.”



Paige Christensen’s Interview

Q: What drives you towards presidency?

A: “I’ve had the great experience of witnessing how our current co-presidents lead, and I was inspired. I see a lot of potential for growth in SJC’s student experience, given what I’ve witnessed in council and what I’ve heard from students. With what I learned from our prezzes and the potential I see for positive change, I believe that,

as co-president, I could spearhead the initiation of a better student community.”

Q: How do you hope to make a positive impact on the school community?

A: “I think the key idea is to start simple. We’re lucky to have lots of people on council to help out, so smaller changes enacted by different people add up. I hope to add more features to dances to make them more enjoyable, such as pushing for more immersive decor (it can be awkward if you feel like you’re dancing in your school cafeteria.) Other than dances, I’m hoping to shorten announcements using my connections with SJC-TV and implement monthly student suggestion days, during which student council members take anonymous suggestions outside the caf at lunches. Finally, I want to tie in different areas of the school to events – for example, maybe the concert band would be willing to play for the pep rallies. All of these things combined I hope will create a more exciting, student-centered SJC.”

Q: Ultimately, why should students vote for you?

A: “Tough question! I personally struggle with understanding how others see me, so this is my hardest one yet. I constantly try to be positive and friendly, and I live up to my commitments. Many Eagles view me from an academic perspective, but I hope they’ve come to trust me as well. I want them to know that there’s so much more to me than school. Yes, I work hard and am responsible – but I’m also a fun-loving, wildly creative, and ambitious person. That being said, I also know my limits. I don’t want to present myself as the perfect candidate because that’s not what I am, and I value honesty. But I hope that I’ve shown Eagles the real me – not as a candidate, but as a person they can trust: imperfect, but trying my absolute hardest.”

Julian Ferraro's Interview

Q: What drives you towards presidency?

A: "Being involved in student council in previous years has shown me how much happens behind the scenes to make school events and activities successful. It made me realize how much I genuinely enjoy creating a fun and positive school environment. I'm running for co-president because I care about this school and the people in it, and I want to help make next year memorable for everyone."

Q: How do you hope to make a positive impact on the school community?

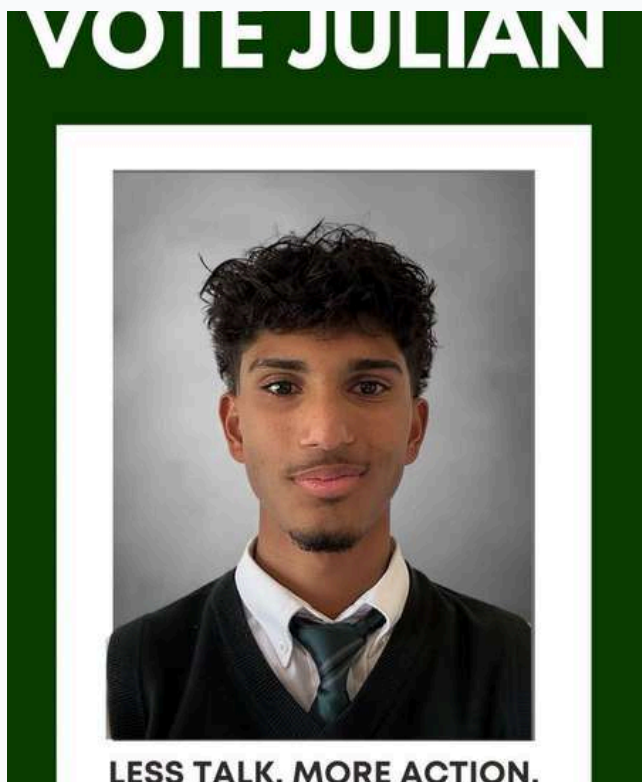
A: "I hope to make a positive impact by helping students feel more connected to the school and to each other. Whether it's through athletics, clubs, spirit weeks, or school events, I want to encourage more people to get involved and feel included. I think school is always better when people feel like they're part of something, and I'd love to help create that kind of atmosphere."

Q: Ultimately, why should students vote for you?

A: "I think students should vote for me because I'm someone who's already involved, approachable, and excited to take on this role. I've been lucky to be part of many different areas of school life, whether that's athletics, student council, or other activities. This involvement has helped me connect with a lot of different people. I want to represent students well, work hard, and make next year as fun and positive as possible."



Co-presidency is a vital role in our student council as our co-presidents mold the events and community at our school. The SJC Gazette applauds all candidates for their hard work campaigning and for participating in our interviews. We would like to congratulate the winning candidates, Julian Ferraro and Jessica Okhimame, for their success in achieving the role of Grade 12 Co-President. We look forward to seeing what you both have in store for the future of SJC!



SEMESTER II SPORTS

By Tristan Plaku

Over the course of the second semester, St. John's College has hosted many sports and athletic events, with student athletes and coaches working together to proudly represent SJC. Here are a few of the sports teams that have been active this season, along with a recap of their accomplishments, contributions, and efforts both within and outside the SJC community.



Boys Jr. and Sr. Rugby Team (@sjc_athletics)

Boys Rugby

The SJC boys' rugby teams have had a strong season full of countless victories and successful tournaments including the senior team's 35-0 win over BCI, and their junior team's close 22-19 win against ACS. On May 14, 2026, the junior and senior team captured gold, securing the AABHN Boys' Rugby Championship title. This victory has a huge significance for the senior team, as it marks their first title since 2018. Following these well-performed tournaments, both teams will advance to CWOSSA.

Girls Rugby

The SJC girls' rugby team also had a strong season, filled with high-standing games. With their season opener against Holy Trinity, where they secured an impressive 71-0 victory. Their performance at the quarterfinals was just as strong, defeating NPC 20-10 to secure a spot in the semi-finals. Apart from local matches, the girls' rugby team also had the opportunity to compete at the McMaster Tournament. There, they played three matches and won every single one, scoring 25-0, 10-5, and 25-0. The girls will move on to face BCI in their upcoming semifinal match.



Girls Rugby Team (@sjc_athletics)

Boys Soccer

The undefeated SJC boys' soccer team delivered an outstanding performance this season with scores including their 8-0 win over PDHS, an 8-1 victory against NPC, and a 4-1 win over the highly feared ACS team. Alongside their local matches, the SJC Boys' Soccer Team also won the St. Joseph's Invitational Tournament in Ancaster, earning victories of 4-0, 2-1, and 4-1. Their next match against ACS, will determine the winner of Brantford's High School championship.



Boys Soccer Team (@sjc_athletics)

Girls Soccer

The SJC girls' soccer team represented SJC in a positive light in the soccer world through their games including a 1-0 victory over MPSS and an intense 1-1 tie against ACS. On May 14, 2026, the SJC Girls Soccer Team captured the championship title and won gold at the AABHN Championship, following their 2-0 victory against MPSS in an amazing final match. Alongside the championship title, the team has qualified for CWOSSA.



Girls Soccer Team (@sjc_athletics)

Badminton

The SJC Junior and Senior Badminton teams gave their best effort at the 2026 season's tournament. Although the results were not what the teams would have hoped for, they are still proud of their efforts and plan to improve for the 2026-2027 season. We look forward to seeing what they have in store for us next year.

Lacrosse

The SJC Lacrosse Team has had a solid season throughout the semester with a notable match of theirs being a 7-3 victory against the Hagersville Hurricanes. On May 15, 2026, they competed in the AABHN Championship proudly representing SJC.



SJC Competitive Dance Team

The SJC Dance Competition Team had the wonderful opportunity to perform at several competitions throughout the semester, including Hamilton's Best Dance Crew and the Strive Dance Challenge. The team nailed the Hamilton's Best Dance Crew competition in March, where their combined scores placed them among the top five schools at the event. A mix of group routines as well as self-choreographed solos were performed, earning several awards, such as a student placing sixth for overall soloist. The team also performed well in their second competition: the Strive Dance Challenge. There, groups received strong scores with a couple of awards being granted, including a student earning third overall soloist, and the acro group winning seventh overall elite small group.



Competitive Dance Team (@dance_sjc)

SJC Exceptional Dance Team

The SJC Exceptional Dance Team had the amazing opportunity to perform their Block Party Dance Performance at Strive Dance. The audience greatly enjoyed the performance, and everyone had an enjoyable time at the event. The dance team received an overwhelmingly positive response from the audience as well. We look forward to seeing what awaits the Exceptional Dance Team in the future, as many more performances will be held.



Exceptional Dance Team (@dance_sjc)

Ultimate Frisbee

After an exciting season of Ultimate Frisbee, the SJC Eagles finished the season fifth out of twelve AABHN teams. The team also won the Throw and Catch challenge at the AABHN Championship.



Ultimate Frisbee Team (@sjc_athletics)



Student vs Teacher Hockey Game (@sjc_athletics)

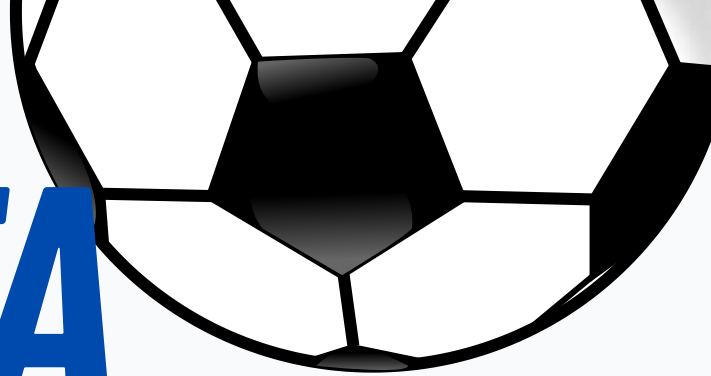
Student-Teacher Hockey Game

The third annual SJC Student-Teacher Hockey Game took place on April 7th, 2026, with members of the boys' and girls' senior hockey teams competing against SJC staff in a fun-filled and exciting match. Both teams played incredibly well, with goals being scored left and right. In the end, the teachers ended up taking home the victory, with a final score of 6-5. Overall, the series record now stands at 2-1, with the teachers winning twice and the students once. The MVP of the Game was Mr. Maitz, who scored a sheer four goals during the match.

**GO
EAGLES!**

BY: AVA HERGOTT

2026 FIFA WORLD CUP



WHAT IS THE FIFA WORLD CUP?

The FIFA World Cup is a global soccer tournament held every four years to crown the world champions. It's an exciting period for the forty-eight competing teams and their fans out there! In 2026, it is set to begin on the 11th of June and end on 19th of July, concluding with the final game to celebrate the champions.

FIFA stands for Fédération Internationale de Football Association. The FIFA World Cup began in 1930 in Uruguay, with only thirteen nations. Although that was the first authorized game, there were unofficial FIFA World Cup matches in the 1800's that only included a few teams. Additionally, in 1909 and 1911, there was the Sir Thomas Lipton Trophy. Prior to that, the soccer tournament was also included in the Olympics. The decision to establish the tournament was announced on May 26th, 1928, after Uruguay's 4-2 victory over Argentina in the finals.



WHERE IS THE FIFA WORLD CUP 2026 BEING HELD?

This year's FIFA tournament will be conducted across sixteen cities: Mexico (Guadalajara, Mexico City, Monterrey), the USA (Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New Jersey, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle), and Canada (Vancouver and Toronto). Canada will be hosting the men's tournament for the first time, having previously hosted the women's FIFA World Cup in 2015!

The first game is in Mexico City at the Azteca stadium (notably the first stadium to host games in three different World Cups: 1970, 1986, and 2026.) The opening match features Mexico versus South Africa at 3:00 p.m. on June 11th. The final will be held at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey at 3:00 p.m. on July 19th.

It will also be the first time since 1998 that the number of teams has increased—from twenty-four to thirty-two in 1988, and now to forty-eight in 2026. The teams are divided into twelve groups of four, with each team needing three wins to advance. The top two teams in each group, along with the eight third-place teams, will move on to eventually reach the knockout rounds: quarter-finals, semi-finals (four teams), third-place match, and the final. An impressive 104 matches are scheduled: 78 in the USA, 13 in Canada (7 in Vancouver, 6 in Toronto), and 13 in Mexico.

SAFETY CONCERNS AND TICKET PRICING

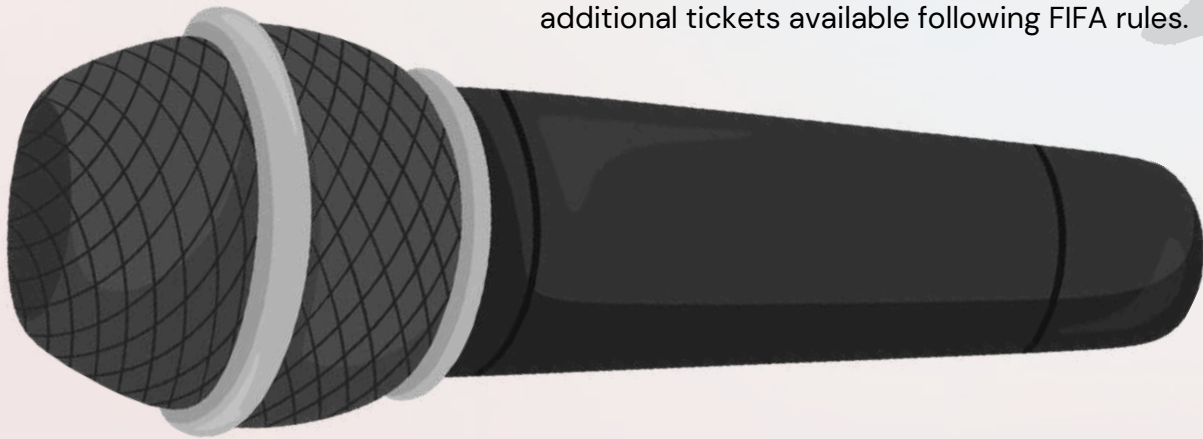
It has been publicly announced that there will be an adequate amount of security to allow safety and success throughout the tournament. Olivia Chow, Toronto's mayor; Gary Anandasangaree, the Minister of Public Safety; and Michael Kerzner, Ontario's Solicitor General, stated that there will be '\$145 million in federal funding to support enhanced security operations for the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Toronto and Vancouver.



This investment helps reduce costs for provinces and municipalities while ensuring public agencies have the necessary funds. The tournament is expected to create jobs, attract millions of fans and visitors, and add approximately \$2 billion to the Canadian economy—one of the largest sporting events Canada has hosted. Mexico, the USA, and Canada are improving their communication, transportation, and security to deliver an exceptional experience for visitors and players.



This year's tournament features the highest ticket prices ever! The price of tickets can vary depending on how close you are sitting to the field, but FIFA World Cup tickets can be pretty expensive, especially near the end of the tournament. For the final few games, tickets cost about \$11,000! And even at the beginning, tickets cost hundreds or thousands of dollars. Supporter Entry Tier tickets, aimed at dedicated fans, cost around \$60 in the US and \$88 in Canada. For the finals, Category 1 tickets—located at the lowest level—range from \$10,000 to nearly \$33,000, with other categories priced accordingly. Players receive a few complimentary tickets for family and friends, with additional tickets available following FIFA rules.



HALFTIME SHOW!

Additionally, for the first time in FIFA WORLD CUP history, there will be a halftime show, similar to the Superbowl, concluding the final game on July 19th, in MetLife Stadium! The highlighting cause is to support and raise money for the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund. This event hopes to fundraise for the access to excellent education and soccer for kids globally! The show is going to focus on major performers like Shakira, BTS, and Madonna. Surprisingly, the Muppets from Sesame Street will also be performing, starring key characters like Kermit, the Cookie Monster, Miss Piggy, and Elmo. Organizing the artists, themes, and perspective of the show will be Chris Martin from Coldplay!

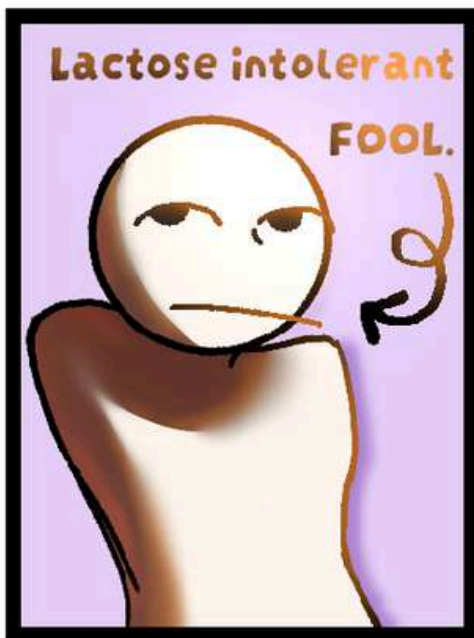
PRIZE MONEY

The prize money for the winning team is \$50 million; runners-up earn \$33 million; third place, \$29 million; and fourth place, \$27 million. All teams participating in 2026 will receive at least \$10.5 million, composed of \$9 million for participation fees and \$1.5 million for preparation. Winners do not receive the full participation amount but do get the \$1.5 million for preparation.

As the 23rd edition of the FIFA World Cup—co-hosted by three countries (Mexico, the USA, and Canada)—this tournament is the largest in history and will be such an amazing time for everyone out there, filled with excitement, nervousness, talent, hard work, and a tremendous amount of joy!

Comic Strip

By: Erin Frisk



COLLEGE AND UNI PICKS

By: Adande Harvey-Greene

Are you in grade 11 or 12 and stressed about which university or college to go to? Well, here are our top picks based on programs, acceptance rate, tuition cost, and student life!

McMaster University

Known for its renowned medical and health sciences programs, McMaster is an excellent choice for those interested in the medical field. Ranked among the top five universities in Canada and #1 for student support, McMaster offers an amazing academic and student experience. With over 100 undergraduate programs including business, engineering, health sciences, humanities, science, social sciences and many more! With an acceptance rate of about 60%, McMaster gives you a better chance than other schools in Ontario. However, some of their programs are highly competitive. For example, health sciences and engineering require an average of at least 90%. Housing at McMaster is competitive but guaranteed to first-year students with a certain admission average. McMaster University tuition fees vary by program and residency status, with domestic undergraduate tuition generally ranging from \$6,000 to \$8,000 annually.



Wilfrid Laurier University

Wilfrid Laurier is known for its excellent education and close community between students. Their standout programs include business administration, game design and development, law, and art. Undergraduate tuition for domestic students is roughly \$6,000 to \$9,000 per year. The acceptance rate for Laurier is about 73% according to UniScope. It is also ranked consistently high for student satisfaction and extracurricular involvement. Laurier also boasts Canada's largest business co-op program; it is extremely effective at placing students in accounting, marketing, and finance roles. So if you're interested in business, Laurier might be the right place for you.

Humber Polytechnic

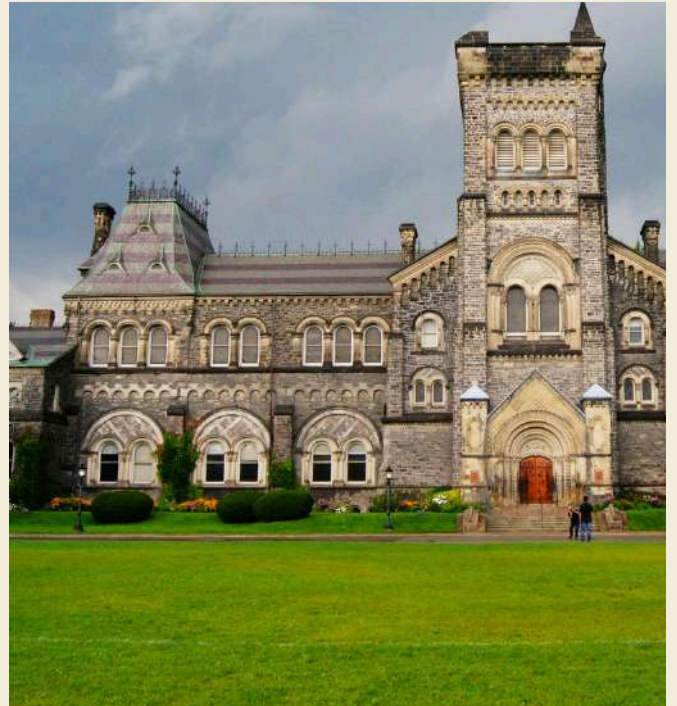
Humber Polytechnic offers a distinct third possibility between community colleges and universities. They offer over 200 programs which include bachelor's degrees, post-graduate certificates, and apprenticeship programs for business, health sciences, and the arts. The campus is found in Toronto and features modern facilities, vibrant student life, and access to various resources.

Western University

Western features one of the most beautiful campuses in Canada and pairs a high-spirited social life with top-tier academics, specifically in business and medicine. It is often stereotyped as a 'party school' but the academic seriousness, especially in STEM and business, is exceedingly high. Western has a top-tier residence system; residence life is a cornerstone of the Western experience. According to UniScope, the acceptance rate for Western is about 58%. Their most competitive programs include Ivey AEO, medical sciences, and engineering. Estimated first year Ontario tuition and fees are around \$8,000 to \$14,200. The total living cost is estimated to be around \$21,770 to \$27,340 if living in residence and \$14,580 to \$31,960 if living off campus.

University of Toronto

UofT is Canada's top-ranked university and a global academic powerhouse. The atmosphere is academically rigorous and competitive. The 'ASIP' (Arts & Science Internship Program) and 'PEY' (Professional Experience Year) in engineering are industry standards. The acceptance rate according to UniScope is 43%. Residence is guaranteed for first-years. Each subdivision has its own residence with unique traditions and culture. University of Toronto tuition fees vary significantly by program, campus, and residency, generally ranging from \$6,100 to over \$20,000 annually for domestic students.



Conestoga College

Conestoga delivers more than 250 full-time career-focused programs and has more degree offerings than any other college outside the GTA. As one of the country's top research colleges, Conestoga's applied research activities support student learning as well as help businesses grow, innovate and improve productivity. Conestoga College has campuses and training centres in Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, Ingersoll, Kitchener, Milton, Stratford and Waterloo. This college provides many spaces and facilities for students to learn, grow, and prepare for the workforce. Conestoga College has an acceptance rate of 85%, making it an accessible choice for applicants who meet the basic admission requirements. Although, certain programs such as engineering and nursing are more competitive.

As you can see there are many good universities and colleges with high quality education in Ontario offering a variety of subjects and degrees. There is no wrong choice!
Which one will you choose?

Coachella or Bieberchella?

By: Macey Thompson

If you are an avid music listener, internet user, or really just anyone who follows general media, you might have heard of the music festival sensation known as Coachella. Coachella is a popular music festival lasting over two consecutive weeks, three days per week and takes place in the Coachella Valley in California. The festival first took place in 1999 with headliners such as The Chemical Brothers, Beck, and even Rage Against the Machine, with tickets costing roughly \$50. Coachella wasn't initially a very big hit, but the festival hit a turning point in 2004 and 2012 when it became more mainstream.



There were 100 000 to 125 000 people watching Biebers set, including millions who tuned in on the live stream.



How Does Coachella Stay Relevant in Media?

Now, Coachella is a staple of musical culture, but it has also, as of recently, become a staple of another media space: the influencer space. Along with its famously wild lineup of acts over the years, including but DEFINITELY not limited to Justin Bieber, Lady Gaga, & Beyonce, Coachella has become an influencer breeding ground. Every sort of content creator likely has or will make an appearance at Coachella. Some to note being the Kalogera Sisters, James Charles, Alix Earle, Tara Yummy, and even the Kardashians have all made an appearance at Coachella at least once in the past years. These appearances make people eager to see the reviews of influencers on the food, experience, and the performances. Not to mention what they have ready in their wardrobe!

This year specifically, something happened, something changed. Everyone, and I mean EVERYONE, was talking about Coachella. TikTok feeds were filled with “I am so jealous I’m not at Coachella this year”. The main headliners this year were Sabrina Carpenter on Friday, Justin Bieber on Saturday, and Karol G on Sunday. However, one artist out of the list was responsible for the majority of the hype: Justin Bieber. This year, the media coined it as Bieberchella, and this seems to be a recent turning point in his career. Although yes, Justin Bieber is one of the highest-grossing male artists of our generation, in the past few years, his career took somewhat of a halt. He struggled with mental health, he got married, had a child, and in 2022 suffered severely from Ramsey Hunt Syndrome, which is a neurological disorder that paralyzes half of the face. These things caused Bieber to take a break from performing, and in 2022, cancelling his Justin World Tour altogether. This year at Coachella was his first large-scale performance in four years, and his first time headlining the festival. Large-scale is an understatement considering how big a crowd he had. Roughly 125,000 people were at each of his sets, and it is said to be one of the biggest performances in the festival's history.



How was the performance?

His 2026 set was, yes, successful but also fascinating. Journalist Spencer Kornhaber from The Atlantic says, “In front of a sprawling crowd at the most important American musical festival—with a daily attendance of 125,000—he spent a good deal of time ... browsing the internet.” He spent some of his set scrolling through old YouTube memes and old videos of his performances when he was younger. The crowd, although intrigued, laughed along and most enjoyed the free, unserious nature he brought to the stage. After browsing the internet, he played all of his hits, one in particular being important— that song being, Beauty and a Beat - Ft. Nicki Minaj. During the performance he switched up his vocals, bringing back his more youthful, higher-pitched, 2016 sound, which made the crowd go crazy. That clip of that portion of his set went viral on TikTok and had everyone saying “Justin Bieber is back to his roots,” and made people even more jealous that they missed out on such a special part of his recent career.

In conclusion, Justin Bieber is back and is better than ever. Going back to his roots and embracing nostalgia with his original vocals and nostalgic YouTube videos, he shared with the audience. This year, Coachella 2026, was not an event anyone wanted to miss, and it's clear why.

Readers' Corner

By: Oaikhinan Oghosa

The Hangman's Daughter

Author: Oliver Pötzch

The hangman's daughter is a historical mystery and thriller written by Oliver Pötzsch. It is the story of Jakob Kuisl, a compassionate hangman in 17th century Bavaria; Simon Fronwieser, the son of a local physician; and Magdalena, Jakob's clever daughter as they team up to solve the murders of children marked with strange tattoos. As the hysteria over 'witchcraft' is the root cause of these murders, the people blame a midwife and demand her to be executed before more children are killed. It is up to the team to find the real killer before the midwife is tortured and perished for her accused crimes.

This story is the first of an eight-book series and is inspired by the author's own ancestry of hangmen. It is a good introduction to the series. I really enjoyed the way the mystery was introduced, and how it had me questioning who the culprit was until the end. In these kinds of books, I normally figure out who the culprit is before the end, but with this book I had no idea which was huge for me. The characters were well fleshed-out and their motivations were understandable. The story kept me hooked with the motive for the murders. Although in some areas it seemed to be going on, that was easily worth the payoff at the end of the book. If you enjoy dark, atmosphere-driven historical fiction and murder mysteries I recommend this book, and the graphic historical realism for the time will hook you even more.

23 Happy reading!



Readers' Corner

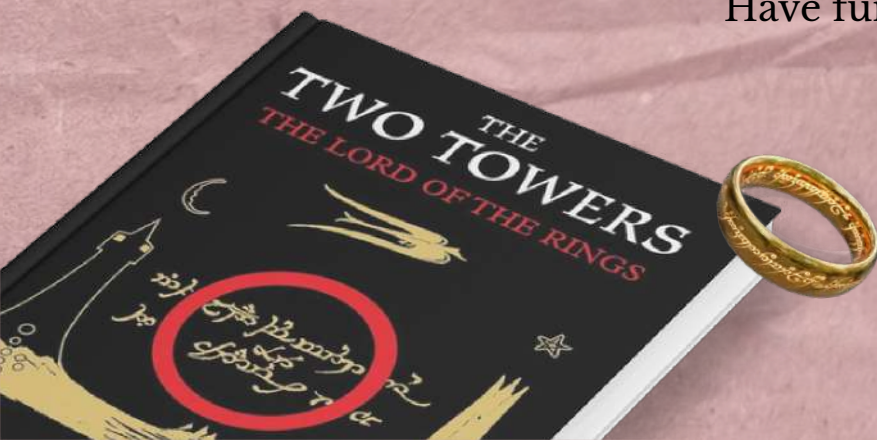
By: *Oaikhinan Oghosa*

The Two Towers

Author: J.R.R Tolkien

The Two Towers is an Epic Fantasy in the second volume of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. The story follows the split members of The Fellowship of the Ring as they face separate, dangerous journeys across Middle-earth. Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli pursue a band of Orcs. During their journey they rescue their friends and fight in a war, while characters Frodo and Sam continue their journey to Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring with a slimy guide called Gollum.

This book, being the second in a series, was better than I imagined and I loved it. Usually when I'm reading a book series the second book often falls off, but this book kept the pace and charm of the first book while raising the stakes. There were unexpected twists which kept me guessing and the end was a good transition to the third and final book in the series, The Return of the King. You could clearly see the trust and friendship between the characters, especially Sam and Frodo, just as the author intended. If you are not interested in slow-paced books or elongated prose you might not really enjoy this one, but if you are a dedicated fantasy fan, a patient reader, or interested in books that have serious themes and are highly character focused, I highly recommend this book to you! Have fun reading!



study tips

BY: OAIKHINAN OGHOSA
AND RAMISH KHAN

Have you ever spent hours staring at a textbook and still felt like you hadn't learned anything? It happens to almost every student, and usually the issue is just not knowing the most effective way to study.

With exam season approaching, learning how to study properly makes a big difference in how much you remember and how well you can perform on a test. Fixing your bad study habits now is the best way to be prepared and to be confident. Here are a few simple, but very strong strategies to help you study more effectively:

THE FEYNMAN TECHNIQUE:

This means taking a concept and simplifying it. Let's say you're trying to memorize the following:

'The anomalous behavior of water is its tendency to expand instead of contract when cooled from 4 degrees to 0 degrees. This forms a layer of ice on the surface of a lake or pond that insulates the water below, preventing it from freezing and preserving the aquatic life below. This is contrary to the general behavior of substances, which contract when cooling.'

As you can see from the written paragraph above, memorizing this would be very hard. A simplified version of the paragraph would be:

'Substances normally get denser as they cool, but between 0 and 4 degrees Celsius, water expands. This is why ice floats on water. The ice acts as a blanket that allows fish to survive during winter.'

SLEEP

Sleep deprivation drastically lowers your ability to concentrate, which makes focusing and acquiring new information hard. When we sleep, our bodies flush out toxic waste products and proteins that build up when we are awake. This is why we often feel refreshed and ready to take in information the next morning. Without sleep, we overwork our brains, making them unable to take in new information properly.

Instead of rereading your notes, get the information out of your brain. For example, when you finish studying, close your notes and write down everything you can remember. You could also explain the concept out loud, like you were teaching it to someone else. This makes it much easier to remember the information during a test, as you are memorising it without realising it.

ACTIVE RECALL

PERIODIC STUDYING

Instead of trying to learn everything in one massive study session, break your studying into smaller sessions over several days. Using a little bit of time each night reviewing what you learned in class is much more effective than pulling an all-nighter right before a big test/exam. This gives you time to process the information and for you to be much more confident in what you have studied.



SJC CONCERT BAND NATIONALS



By: Chimdindu Uzor

On May 11th to 12th, most members of the SJC Concert Band had the privilege to perform and watch other performances at the Annual MusicFest Nationals. Every member put in a tremendous amount of effort and dedication into preparing for this day. It was an amazing experience for the band as it was an overnight trip to Niagara Falls, and a great way for the graduating members to handoff to the anchors of the band - the remaining members continuing their high school education in the fall.



WHAT IS MUSICFEST?

“MusicFest Canada: The Nationals” is an annual invitation-only event that takes place in a different major Canadian city each year. Invitations are awarded to ensembles that receive a silver-plus or gold ranking from any affiliated regional festival or are personally invited by a MusicFest chairman. Over seven thousand students aged twelve to twenty-five from elementary schools, high schools, and universities nationwide perform for recognition as one of the country’s best ensembles in their various divisions. Each ensemble is evaluated by qualified adjudicators with various levels of music performance and teaching experience. Any other audience is welcome.

An ensemble performs in front of around four adjudicators, who evaluate them based on how well they know the selected music and the musicality of their performance. Rankings include Merit (participation award), Bronze, Silver, and Gold - the highest award reserved for ensembles who have familiarised themselves with their selected pieces and have played at a level deserving of excellence. After each performance, ensembles have a one-hour workshop with one of the adjudicators who evaluated them. Sight-reading a piece is also part of each ensemble’s evaluation.



THE FINAL STRETCH

At 2p.m., the SJC Concert band made their way to the Niagara Falls Convention Centre. The band arrived at 3:37p.m., checked in, and waited a little while as their performance was scheduled for 5p.m. and they would not have a warm-up room until thirty minutes before. The performance time arrived, and the band played wonderfully. Their first song was Spring March (arr. by Jonathan Dagenais), followed by Shimmer (arr. by Ryan Meeboer), then finally Copper Mountain Legend (arr. by John Williams).

The workshop that followed was very insightful. The first part was the sight reading section where the students were given five minutes to look at a brand new piece of music and had one try to run through it. The second part was an evaluation of the performance. An adjudicator pointed out some areas that needed improvement and the students were very open to her suggestions. It was a very interactive session and everyone left with newly acquired knowledge. Because of their good behavior, readiness to learn, and active participation during the workshop, the band received a special certificate of excellence.

A grade 12 student, Joshua Gutang, also got an honour award for his contributions as a member of the band.

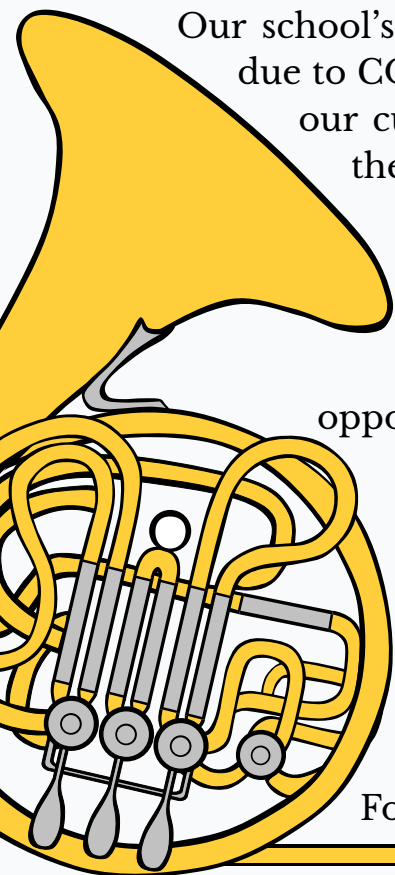
The students waited in anticipation to know what ranking they got, and were elated to discover that they earned a gold ranking!

Olivia Hamilton, a grade 12 student said, "I think we all should be very proud of ourselves. We played well, we practiced well. Overall, we got the recognition we deserved, and I feel our confidence during our performance was very good." Spirits were high and smiles were bright as the students went to take photos with their well deserved award.

THE ROAD TO NATIONALS

In February 2025, our concert band received a two-year invitation to perform at nationals after their outstanding silver-plus ranking performances. The band performed at Canada's Wonderland in May 2025 and used the invitation this year in May. The students were filled with excitement and anticipation as they practised every Wednesday this school year since October, and were eager to improve from their silver ranking at the Golden Horseshoe Festival Regionals in February of this year.





Our school's concert band really suffered due to COVID and social distancing, so our current graduating set became the backbone of the band. Sharing the view of the seniors, Josh Gutang said,

“Genuinely, nationals has been such a great opportunity. I am glad that, you know, from being the first batch of concert band members from grade 9 to grade 12 and starting the music program again, it was our group for the first time that won gold!”

For the first time since 2006, the SJC Concert Band has won gold at nationals! This is an exceptional feat for this year's students, and it is definitely an achievement to be proud of.



SOME ADVICE FOR ANYONE WANTING TO JOIN BAND

“If you have even an inkling, join band bro!” says Joshua Gutang. He says to not let “band kid” allegations stop you from joining band because it was a very important part of his years at high school. He also mentions that he would do it over and over again if given the opportunity.

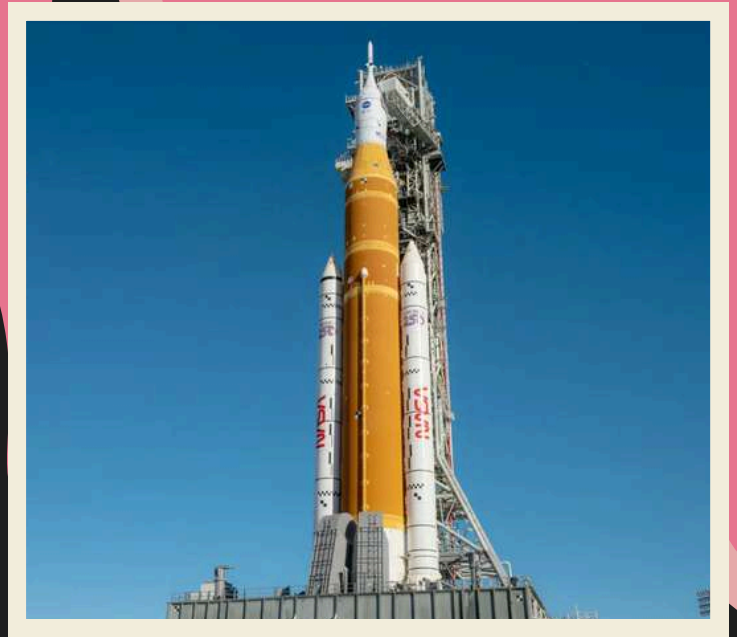
Olivia Hamilton expresses her hope that people take on the roles of the graduating grade 12s because she believes the concert band is a really good program to be in and can still stay that way in the future. She hopes the grade 9s immerse themselves in this wonderful program next year. Olivia herself is very grateful she did so and thinks these achievements can happen again.

So, what are you waiting for?

Sign up for band as soon as possible!!

The Artemis II Mission

By: Ainsley Diaz and
Una Magno



This year, the Artemis II mission made history by sending humans around the Moon for the first time in more than fifty years.

Launched by NASA aboard the massive Space Launch System rocket, the crew travelled in the Orion spacecraft on a journey that took them thousands of kilometres beyond Earth. Although the astronauts did not land on the Moon, the crew – consisting of Reid Wiseman (Commander), Victor Glover (Pilot), Christina Koch (Mission Specialist), and Jeremy Hansen (Mission Specialist) – was sent out on April 1st, 2026, with the main goal of orbiting the moon in order to test the Orion spacecraft's life support, navigation, communication, and propulsion systems with humans on board. Artemis II is part of NASA's larger mission to land humans to the moon's surface and support future human missions to Mars.





The Artemis II mission was NASA's first crewed mission to orbit the moon following the un-crewed Artemis I flight in 2022. The Artemis II crew trained for approximately three years for this mission which lasted only ten days. Before they orbited the moon, the Artemis crew was at a loss for words when it came to describing the view as they entered a total solar eclipse. "Humans probably have not even evolved to see what we're seeing," said pilot Victor Glover. "It is truly hard to describe. It is amazing."

Astronauts on the spaceship recalled seeing flashes from meteors hitting the moon, details on the moon's surface, and the planets of Mars, Venus, and Saturn in the distance. The mission broke the world record of the farthest humans have ever flown from Earth. All of this was done in a spacecraft that is only about the size of a small bedroom. Imagine sharing that space for days with three other people, as well as all the other things necessary to spend ten days in space. It makes sharing a room with a sibling seem not so bad after all.

One of the biggest moments for Canadians was seeing Jeremy Hansen become the first Canadian to travel around the moon. Watching someone from Canada take part in such an important mission made the whole event feel even more exciting and personal for citizens of our country.

For students today, Artemis II reminds us that exploration still matters. There are still new, unfamiliar places to go, new discoveries to make and questions waiting to be answered. The mission was inspiring to students who are interested in science, technology, medicine, robotics, photography and even journalism. Maybe one day, one of us will help build a moon base, help design a spacecraft, sit in the mission control room, become an astronaut, or write a



volunteer

BY KOSI ONUOHA

The Afro-CariBrant Festival is an event that celebrates the rich cultures and heritage of African, Caribbean and Black people living in the Brant and greater communities, featuring lively music, arts, dances, food, and crafts. Volunteers may choose from a variety of positions: Guest Services and Information, Family & Youth Zone, Marketplace & Vendor Support, Stage & Performance Support, Logistics & Operations, Marketing and Media, Volunteer Coordination and Security & Safety Support.

AFRO-CARIBBRANT

**September 5th – 6th
2026 at Lion's Park,
Paris, ON**

Visit

**<https://www.afrocaribrantfestival.org/volunteer-application/>
to apply**

Be a part of the 2-day St. George Apple Fest as a volunteer. Help with entertainment, set-up, sign installation/removal, donation collection, children's activities, vendor set up and take down, sanitation, information booth and more!

ST. GEORGE
APPLEFEST

**Saturday, September
19 and 20, 2026**

Email

**volunteer@stgeorgeapplefest.ca for more
info and application**

GLENHYRST SUMMERARTS CAMP

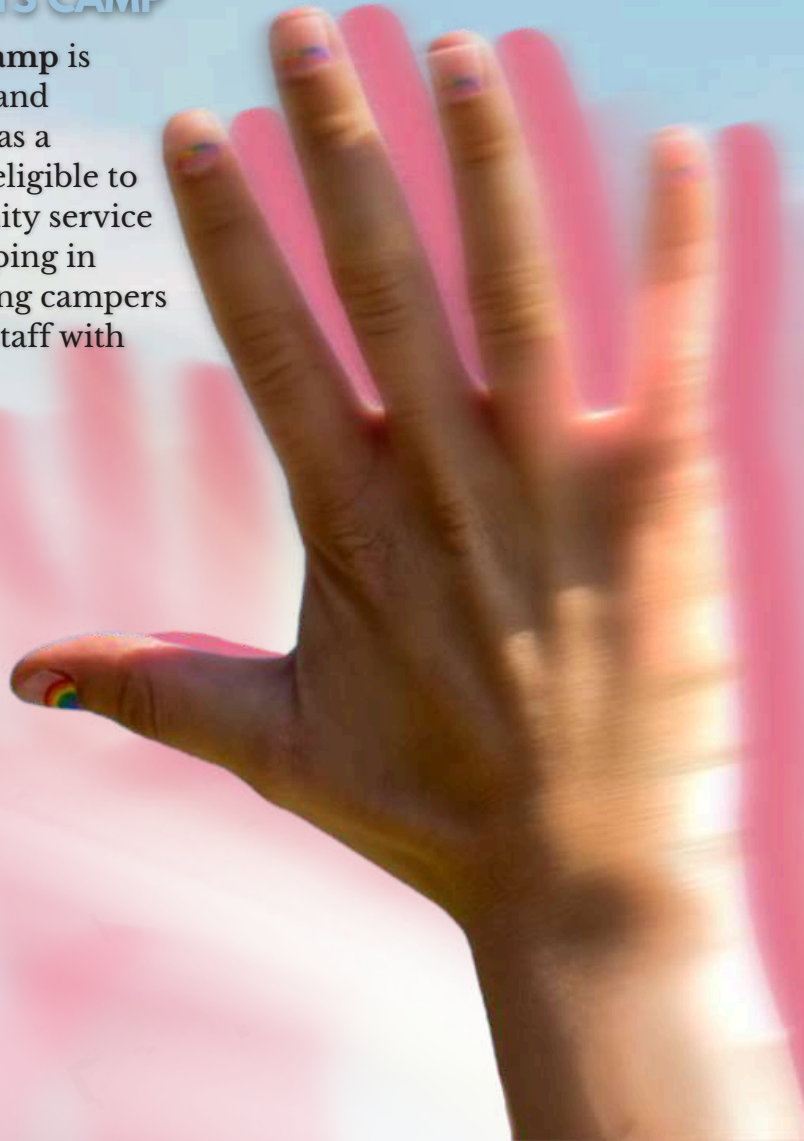
The Glenhyrst Summer Arts Camp is looking for artistic, responsible and creative high schoolers to assist as a Summer Arts Camp Volunteer, eligible to earn up to 40 hours of community service in a week. The role includes helping in daily clean-up and set-up, guiding campers in art activities and supporting staff with supervision.

**With available shifts from
8:00 am – 4:00 pm,
8:30 am – 4:30 pm, and
9:00 am – 5:00 pm at 20
Ava Road, Brantford, ON
during these weeks:
June 29th - July 3rd
August 4th – 7th
August 10th – 14th
August 17th – 21st
August 24th – 28th**

Email

**volunteer@stgeorgeapplefest.ca for more info and
to apply**

opportunities



Activities for The Summer

By: *Tristan Arneaud and Una Magno*

Summer is here, and school is coming to an end, and if you don't want to be cooped up in your house all day, consider one of these activities! Gather your friends and make the best of your summer break with these simple yet memorable pastimes.



A simple yet time-consuming activity.

Grab a box and print pictures at a nearby library or at home, add memoirs/gifts from each other, and a trinket that signifies something. Decorate with stickers, lace, bows, and colors!



Buy the materials you need and either embark on a little challenge (like switching art pieces after a certain amount of time) or paint a portrait of a friend!

A spa day focuses on many self-care activities, like face masks, painting your nails, and doing your hair. Light a candle, put some music on, and relax with your friends.



Easy, but it can get messy quickly. Purchase liquid glue, using borax, contact lens solution, or laundry detergent to activate the slime.



Make different colors, add charms, clay, fake snow, glitter, anything you desire!

Grab an old shirt, preferably white or light colored, and purchase tie-dye kits at Dollarama, Dollar Tree, Walmart, or Michaels. Remember to read about the type of fabric this tie-dye is best suited for!



Overall, you will need: a tie-dye kit, a piece of clothing — remember to consider the type of fabric — and rubber bands to scrunch it up.

Using a recipe online, making candy only requires a few ingredients: 3 cups (600g) granulated sugar, 1 1/2 cups (355ml) corn syrup, 3/4 cup (177ml) water, food coloring, and 1 tbsp (15ml) of cherry, strawberry, lemon, or other flavor extract. You can slice them into simple shapes or mold them however you desire!



- Each friend creates a Kahoot about themselves and finds out who knows who better.
- Take online personality quizzes with your friends and compare results!



- Make videos – Vlogs, mini movies, hauls, house tour, testing out life hacks, parodies...

A graphic with the text "Cook/Bake" in a black, cursive font. The background is a teal color with a blurred image of a plate of food.

Cook/
Bake

Think of a show or movie you and your friends desperately want to watch, and plan the food you want to eat. For example, Pizza is a versatile food that you can shape into any form you want. Put your creativity and cravings together!

Grabbing some emptied-out jars, embark on an adventure outside using the nature outside to fill the jar.



An earth jar is just like a little biome; you can create the land at the bottom using moss, pebbles, grass, then using shrubs, flowers, and rocks on top of it.



It's the same as creating an earth jar. Search for some unique flowers outside, and make a bouquet using twine to tie them all together in a bunch after collecting.



Although you could purchase cheap water guns at Dollarama, you can most definitely make your own, reusing plastic water bottles and poking holes in the cap.

A picnic could be held anywhere outside, your backyard, a park, or a conservation area. It's simple to put together a picnic blanket, food of your choice, and an optional picnic basket.

Go for a swim at a sports center, outdoor pool, lake, or at one of your friends' houses! Price varies to \$2 - \$7.50

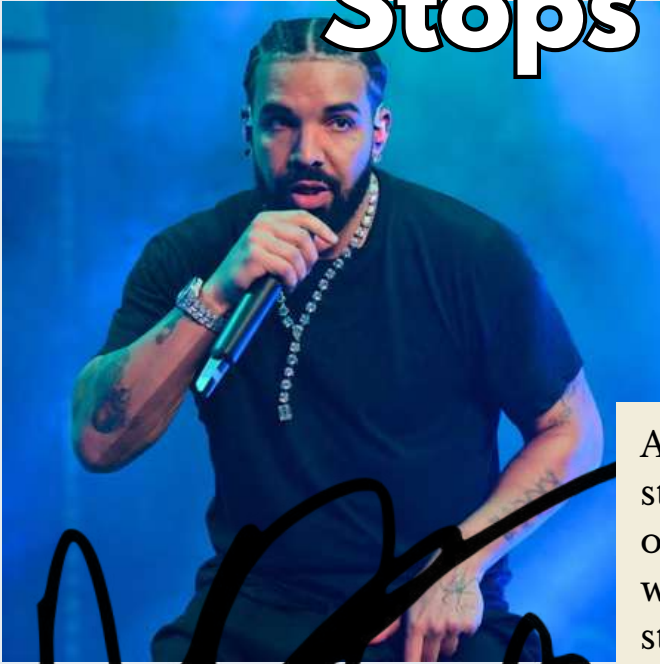
Search for a strawberry farm nearby and have a good time with friends!



Plan a visit to the drive-in movies and either purchase food beforehand or purchase from there. Roughly \$13 for 2-3 movies.

Usually, \$4 per liter.

The Friday Phenomenon: Why a New *Drake* Album Stops the Clock



By: Maheen Wasif

At midnight on Friday, almost everyone online stops what they are doing. Millions of kids wait on their music apps, social media gets filled with pictures of song lyrics, and group chats start going crazy all at once. To some people, it is just another new album. But for kids our age, a new Drake album is a huge deal. It is one of the only times everyone is looking at the exact same thing at the exact same time.

The Midnight Ritual

We live in a time where everyone gets shown different videos and songs on their phones depending on what an algorithm thinks they like. Because of that, we do not usually watch the same things anymore. But when it is midnight on the day Drake drops a new album, that changes.

Even if you love Drake or hate him, when he releases new music, everyone feels it. We are not just listening alone in our rooms anymore. Instead, we are all talking about music together in real time. These midnight drops are the best because they bring everyone together. Thousands of people are listening and reacting to the same songs at the exact same second.

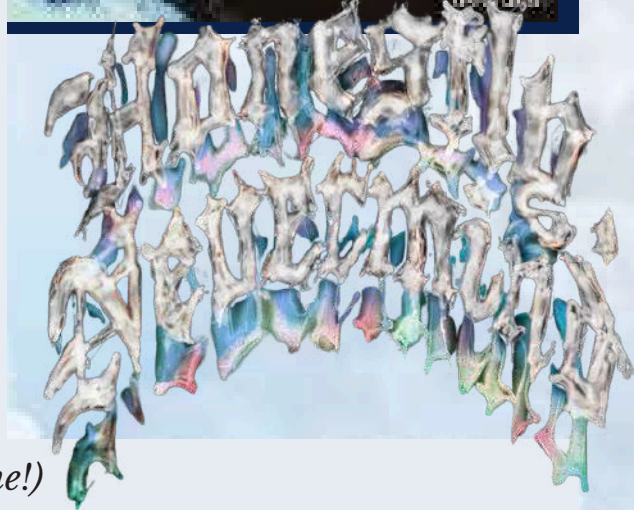


ICEMAN



Night at a Glance: The Streaming Spike

When Drake drops an album, music apps like Spotify and Apple Music get so busy they almost crash. In the past, his albums *Scorpion* and *Certified Lover Boy* got more than one hundred and seventy million plays in just one day! This shows that even though we have so many things to watch on our phones, we still love coming together for one big moment.



The Soundtrack for Growing Up (and Arguing Online!)

People keep listening because Drake is really good at singing about sad feelings while sounding cool at the same time. His music feels like a story about what it is like to grow up. He talks about friends, relationships, and trying to do well in school and life.

Right after the album comes out, friends start picking their favorite tracks. You have the slow, quiet songs for late nights when you are thinking, and the loud, fast songs for playing when you want to get excited. Because he has both kinds of music, his songs become the background music for our memories. They remind us of exactly who we were hanging out with during the school year.

Sometimes, people do not even like the new music. When Drake surprised everyone by dropping three albums at once—Iceman, Habibti, and Maid of Honour—a lot of people on the internet complained that it was too much music or that they didn't like the style, but honestly, that is the most interesting part of the phenomenon. Even the people who are complaining are still staying up until midnight to listen! The drama and the arguments are half the fun. Whether you think the new songs are amazing or a total miss, everyone is still sharing the experience together. His music becomes the background track to our memories, and the debates become the jokes we share with our friends at school.



Making Memes and Captions

For us, the music is only half of the fun. The other half is making memes and posting online. Drake does not just write songs—he writes captions for your Instagram or TikTok! Within minutes of the music coming out, people copy their favorite lines—or even the lines they think are funny or bad—and post them on their profiles. Everyone can join in on the fun. It feels like a big online party where everyone is sharing the same music and ideas.

Why We Stop and Listen

In the end, this Friday feeling is important because it stops us from feeling lonely. Sometimes the world feels very big and confusing, and it is easy to feel left out. But music drops give us a fun way to feel like we belong to a group. As we grow up, these midnight releases will be things we always remember. They prove that even though we are all different, a new Drake album is something that can still bring our whole generation together.

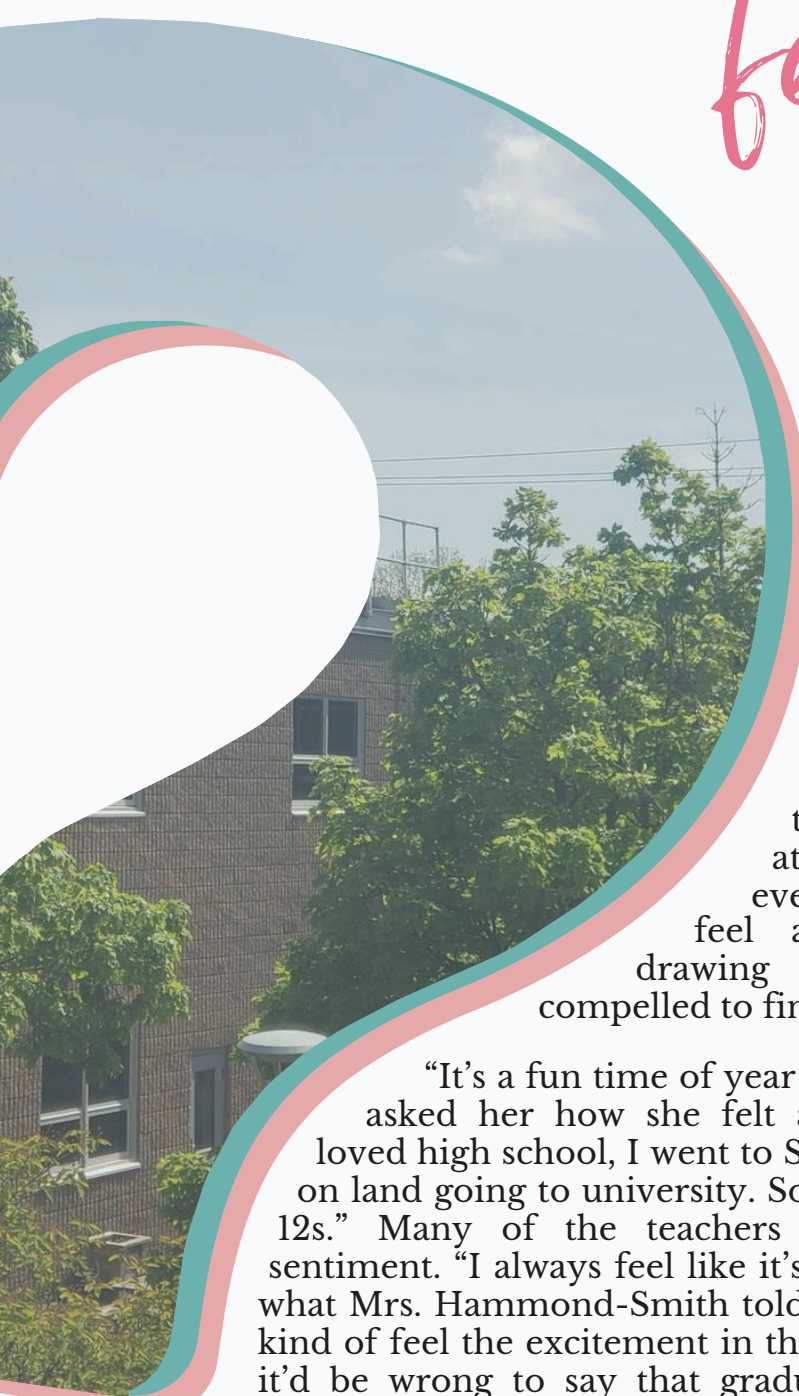


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TEACHERS

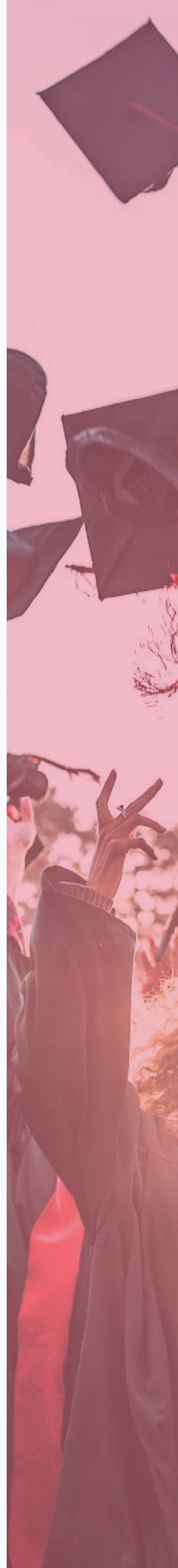
feel about
Grad?

By: Shiza Khan



As the weather grows warmer, the sun shines brighter, and we pass on from May to June, I can't deny that my time at SJC is coming to a close. Only a few weeks from now I'll be attending graduation – a night of academic recognition, celebratory speeches, and final goodbyes to SJC. But that's just for us students. What about the teachers – the teachers who have attended graduation five, ten, or even twenty times? How do they feel about grad? With the event drawing closer every week, I felt compelled to find out.

“It's a fun time of year to teach,” said Mrs. Todd when I asked her how she felt about graduation's approach. “I loved high school, I went to St. John's, but I also loved moving on and going to university. So it's fun to relive that with grade 12s.” Many of the teachers I interviewed held the same sentiment. “I always feel like it's an exciting time of the year,” is what Mrs. Hammond-Smith told me, and Mr. Salccioli agreed: “I kind of feel the excitement in the room as the year goes on.” But it'd be wrong to say that graduation is “all happiness on [the teachers'] end.” This is how Mr. Todd phrased it to me. “I'm so happy for the [students] ... to see them in grade twelve, and see where they're going, it's exciting. ... But as a teacher you know when they leave that your contact with them can sometimes become a little limited. ... You can't help [but] become close to them, and get to know them, and then off they go!”



As a parent, Mrs. Hammond-Smith shares similar feelings about her oldest daughter's upcoming graduation. "I feel really proud of her ... but I'm also – maybe a little selfishly – sad that that part of our time together is gone." And so as grad approaches, so does this "weird mixture," as Mr. Todd said, of feeling happy for the students but also a bit melancholy about them leaving.

Then comes the day of the ceremony itself. Watching students cross the stage, Mrs. Hammond-Smith says "I always just feel proud." Mrs. Todd, too, feels this sense of "pride" for the students. "It's a cool moment to let every kid have their time to really, well, shine. [They're] literally [under] a spotlight." Whereas Mr. Salccicioli and Mr. Todd mostly feel "relief" for the graduating class. "I hope that, as I watch them cross the stage, I've done enough to make sure that they are going to have the success in life that I hope they have," is what Mr. Salccicioli told me. While Mr. Salccicioli hopes for closure as a teacher, Mr. Todd focuses on the students' closure. "I'm glad to see them there because I think it's important to finish it out and have a nice closure."

When I asked Mr. Todd what he liked most about grad, that, too, revolved around the students. "[The] best [part] is to see specific students you know had some trying times [who] now get to walk across victorious." Mrs. Todd also enjoyed seeing specific students graduate. Watching students "who maybe [are] shy or ... really sort of introverted walk across the stage all by themselves, the spotlight's on them, it's just – it's a fun moment." Mrs. Hammond-Smith told me the best part was seeing families "celebrate the moment" as well. "My job at grad is usually to greet the families as they walk in the door ... So many parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and friends come in. And the expression[s] and their face[s] ... I think that's the best part."



Photo credit: BrantBeacon

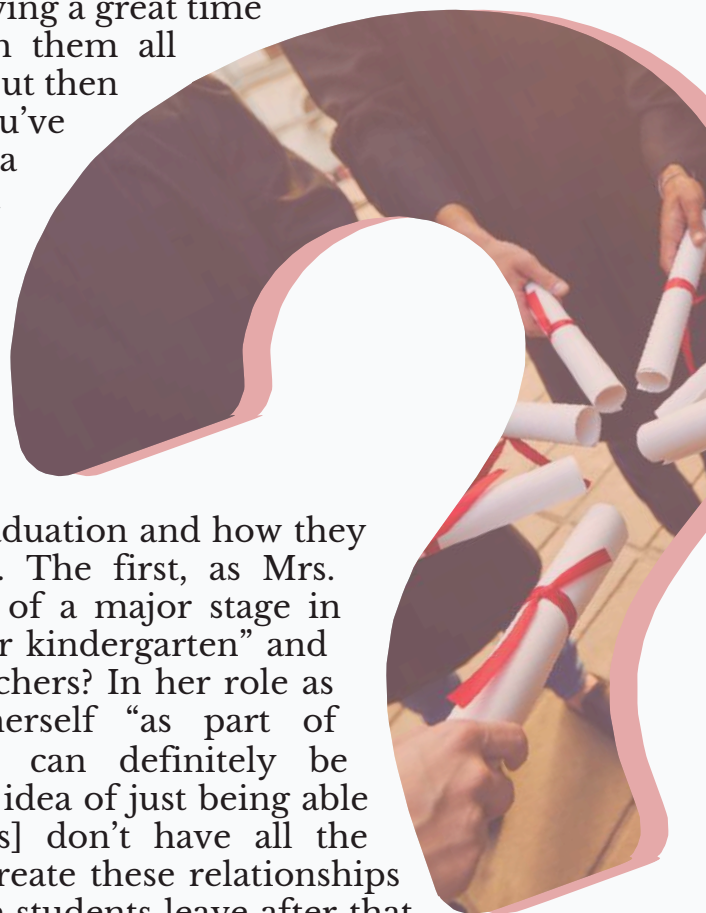
Mr. Saliccioli's view of graduation is a bit different as master of ceremonies. "Grad for me is a lot of work, so I look forward to the moment for the students and that they can recognize their achievements. ... The actual ceremony itself, it's a lot of work for me." With this responsibility, Mr. Saliccioli has a more practical take on the ceremony's most enjoyable moment. "The best part for me, because I MC it, is when I have gone through everybody's names and I haven't made a mistake. ... The worst part is when something goes wrong, and you're MC-ing, and you're like, uh-oh. There's no place to hide."

Although Mr. Saliccioli is the MC now, during his first graduation he "didn't know what to expect. ... I just kind of sat there and took it all in." Every teacher I interviewed didn't know what to expect during their first ceremony as a teacher. It was perhaps because of this that Mrs. Hammond-Smith was "kind of blown away by just [the] ceremony and the tradition" at her first SJC grad. "It was beautiful to see." Mrs. Todd, an SJC graduate herself, feels the same. "The traditional part of grad is neat to see – things that were the same as my grad, or things that were different."

Because Mrs. Todd started off teaching only grade ten classes, she said her first grad "was different because I didn't know [as many people]. ... But now it feels like, so many more students who walk across, you've seen them in the hallway, or helped them at Math Help or Science Help, or you've taught them." For Mr. Todd, it's also his understanding of grad that has grown over the years. "First grads, it was maybe all joy. Like 'oh wow, this is really cool, they're having a great time and I wish them all the best.' But then later, as you've been a teacher a while, it's a little

more like, 'oh – they're leaving now.' That's the main way that [grad's] changed is, maybe a bigger perspective on what it means, not just one night of celebration."

If grad isn't "just one night of celebration," then what is it? Listening to my teachers talk about graduation and how they feel about it, I came up with two main ideas. The first, as Mrs. Hammond-Smith introduced to me, is the end of a major stage in our life's journey – the stage you "start in junior kindergarten" and end in high school. What does this mean for teachers? In her role as one, Mrs. Hammond-Smith says she sees herself "as part of somebody's journey." Although "goodbyes ... can definitely be bittersweet," what's more impactful to her is "the idea of just being able to impact somebody's journey ... We [teachers] don't have all the answers but, in having those conversations, we create these relationships and then we're one part of that journey. And the students leave after that and then they continue that journey, hopefully finding more teachers or professors or mentors along the way that can help them kinda find their path in life."



The next thing that graduation stands for is something Mr. Saliccioli introduced me to. When I asked him how he let go of students, he said “I don’t have trouble letting go, because I don’t think we ever really do.” Pieces of other people – habits, mannerisms, ways of thinking about the world – become part of our own characters, part of the collage of who we are. Even if we don’t see those people again, we’ve already taken bits of them with us. As Mr. Saliccioli put it, “they become part of who we are.” So graduation also marks the beginning of how the people we met in high school will weave into who we are in the next phase of our lives.

With graduation only three weeks away, I asked teachers for their final thoughts. “I try to be as positive as possible,” said Mrs. Todd. “No matter what path you choose, you’re gonna get to be yourselves. And I think that that’s a cool thing. To reach your potential and figure out who you are.” Mr. Saliccioli also feels positive about graduation. “It’s time for [students] to move on to the next phase of their life. ... I’m happy for them. Happy for them and I look forward to seeing them – most of them – again when our paths will cross.” Mrs. Hammond-Smith, too, looks forward to hearing back from students. “Sometimes you get an email from the student ... and it might share an update on what they’re doing and I really like that.” Mr. Todd shares this enthusiasm about hearing back from students, although he won’t get those “daily update[s]” anymore. “It’s hard, in some ways, to let go, you know? But I try in second semester; I try to teach in a release-type way, to let go a little more so that you’re ready. ... Sadness isn’t the right word for me, it’s more like there’s a little hole there now, you know? As each class leaves. But there’s always another one coming September! That’s the nice thing about teaching; is [that] there’s always another group coming.” I like this view of graduation; not as a final ending but a recurring cycle. There is – and always will be – another set of journeys just waiting to begin, as we say some goodbyes and our teachers say a lot more.



More Than Just EVENTS

By: Maheen Wasif



**Why Coachella & World
Cup Matter to Our
Generation**

Every few years, the world stops for a ball and a gold cup. Every April, a deserted field transforms into a neon-soaked oasis of rhythmic songs. To a passerby, the FIFA World Cup and the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival might seem like polar opposites—one a grueling athletic competition rooted in nationalism, the other a curated spectacle of fashion and pop. However, for our generation, these aren't just dates on a calendar—they're a new cathedral of culture, shaping our identities and redefining how we connect in an increasingly digital world.



The Search for Shared Reality

We live in a fragmented era. Our algorithms feed us personalized content, ensuring that fewer people share the exact same digital experience. This is why events like the World Cup and Coachella carry such weight. When Argentina lifted the trophy in Qatar, or when Beyoncé's "Homecoming" changed the trajectory of performance art, we weren't just watching; we were participating in a global heartbeat, now integrating the 2026 tournament to make the piece more timely.

Now, as we look towards the FIFA World Cup, the excitement is even higher because it represents a massive, multi-national homecoming across North America, promising to unite different cultures in our own backyard through an expanded, more inclusive tournament than ever before. These events act as the "cooler moments" where millions of people are feeling the same emotion at the exact same second.





Coachella: The Digital Pilgrimage

For our generation, Coachella is less about the lineup and more about the "vibe"—a term often mocked but deeply significant; a pilgrimage of self-expression. In the desert, identity is fluid as you aren't a student or an employee but a curated version of your best self. The festival has become a primary of visual culture, where “aesthetic” ripples through fashion and social media feeds for months. It’s a place where the barrier between the performer and the audience is blurred by the quest for the perfect ‘aesthetic’ moment.

The World Cup: Nationalism vs. Globalism

The World Cup offers a different kind of place in a world that often feels borderless and chaotic – the tournament provides a structured way to belong. It’s one of the few times where Gen Z and Millennials lean into national pride with a modern twist. We see a version of "global citizenship" where fans from Morocco, Japan, and Brazil celebrate together in the streets of host cities. It proves that despite our differences, the language of sport remains a universal tongue for all.



Why It Matters to Us??

Ultimately, these events matter because they combat the epidemic of loneliness. They remind us that there is no substitute for the physical presence of others—the roar of a stadium or the bass vibrating in your chest at a main stage. They are the milestones of our youth, the markers by which we remember where we were and who we were with. As we look forward, these global gatherings will continue to be the mirrors reflecting our generation's values: inclusivity, expression, and a desperate, beautiful need to feel like we belong to something bigger than ourselves.

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OUR WRITERS,
EDITORS, AND
DESIGNERS!

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