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Blackscots’ March Break Plans

Selena Sarwari

March Break is a week-long spring vacation for students and teachers to unwind and take a break from all the intensity of schoolwork and teaching. It’s an escape to finally spend some quality time with loved ones and by themselves. Overall, March Break is much needed for students, teachers, and everyone alike!

But, what does one do over March Break? Now, that certain COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, we are granted more freedom than before. Still, what can we do now for fun? To answer this compelling question, I interviewed five Mac students from different grades and with different interests!

The first student I interviewed was Maria Evangelo, a bright and cheerful Grade 9 student, who has a love for reading and writing. She stated that during the break, she wanted to try to get ahead of and catch up on some schoolwork. She also explained that she would be travelling to Florida over the break to visit her extended family, which is something she couldn’t do before because of COVID-19 and its related restrictions.

Next, I interviewed Shayanaa Sriranganathan in Grade 10, who said, “During this break, I would like to take a break from school work and stress, to focus on myself more.” She also shared that during the break, her goal was to go on more walks and to spend quality time with her friends and family. Shayanaa said that despite the lifted COVID-19 restrictions, her plans overall would remain the same. However, she would like to spend some time visiting her extended family.

The third Mac student I interviewed was Kishor Suganthan, a Grade 11 student who enjoys reading. He said his plan for the break was to catch up on his schoolwork and assignments for science class! He also expressed that he wanted to take this time to relax and unwind, as well as partake in certain hobbies and interests he liked. Due to the lifting of certain COVID restrictions, he can now go out with and visit his friends and family more.

Vaibhav Gupta, another Grade 11 student, stated that he would use March Break as a chance to get caught up on school and get more sleep. In addition to spending some quality time with his family, Vaibhav said that he wanted to finish some TV shows that he had been binge-watching. He also planned on learning about some new technology-related activities, such as coding and 3D printing.

Finally, the last student on our interviewee list is Evan Chen, a dedicated Grade 12 student, who likes to play board games like chess. Evan wanted to take some time off to relax and enjoy some new shows he’d been planning to watch for a while, as well as to get a headstart on some assignments. He also said that with the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, he planned to visit shopping malls more often and spend quality time with friends.

To conclude, Blackscots, this is what your peers intended for March Break. We hope that you, like them, had a restful and enjoyable March break!

Music Council

YiLin Luan



Persian New Year (Nowruz)

Brandon Feng

This year, on March 20th, Persian New Year was celebrated by more than 300 million people. Persian New Year, also known as Nowruz, is about 3000 years old and marks the beginning of the Persian Calendar. Although the festival is often associated with Iran, a host of other countries also partake in the event, including India, Russia, Iraq, Turkey and Tajikistan.

While the holiday is celebrated worldwide in modern times, it originated in the geographical area of the Middle East and Central Asia. Persians in particular can be credited with the interesting and distinct culture that developed around the food, music, entertainment and language of the region.

Praised by the United Nations for the promotion of “Peace and Solidarity”, Nowruz is a festival that brings communities together to celebrate the arrival of Spring. For 13 days, dancing, large feasts and prayers take up most of the festivities.

Families will put together a “Haft-sin”, an arrangement of symbolic items. Seven items, each starting with the letter ‘S’ in the Farsi language, are placed neatly on a cloth. These items include the following: wild olives (Senjed), the fruit of love; vinegar (Serkeh) for patience and wisdom; sumacs (Somaq) to represent sunrise; an apple (Seeb) for beauty; grass (Sabzeh) for growth; garlic (Seer) for health; and samanu for strength. Other variations of the Haft-sin can also appear, such as ones exhibiting coins (Sekkeh) for wealth and prosperity, goldfish (Maahi-ye Qirmiz) for progress, and many other symbolic items.

With Mac’s diverse cultural background, many Blackscots celebrated the Nowruz this year. Grade 9 student Bahar Ghasemi explained that she spent the day with her family. She and her family celebrated by going out to dinner the night before and by constructing their own haft-sin at home. We hope all those who celebrated this holiday had a Happy Nowruz.

Greek Heritage Month

YiLin Luan



Students of Mac

Interviewing Mac's Class of 2021: Claudia Poon on taking a Gap Year before Psychology at the University of Waterloo

Karen Mitro & Nancy Zou

Our monthly interview series featuring recent Mac graduates has returned, with a former Blackscot and Mac News Comic Artist, Claudia Poon! Let's hear from Claudia and her experience with taking a gap year before she begins Psychology at the University of Waterloo this coming fall.

Why did you decide to take a gap year?

At the beginning of the school year, I decided to defer my offer because I wanted more time to prepare for university. While all my friends finish their first year of university, I struggle with the thought that I'm "behind" in life. But I believe it greatly helped me learn more about myself and my plan is to return in fall 2022 to pursue post-secondary at the University of Waterloo (Bachelor of Arts in Psychology).

What advice would you give to Blackscots interested in following a similar path to you?

My advice for Blackscots interested in taking a gap year is to stay passionate about your program. For example, my motivation comes from the enjoyment of analyzing and understanding how the mind works. And if you are planning to take a gap year, piling up some experience, whether it's getting a job or volunteering, can help strengthen your skillset.

How would you describe life as a gap year student?

My life as a gap year student has been very enjoyable. While keeping myself productive with activities such as taking extracurricular courses, learning a new language, and improving my art, I also make sure I have time for myself to relax. I spend most of my days planning for my fall term, going on walks, and watching dramas to occupy my time.

What do you recommend doing to finance your education?

I would highly recommend applying for any and every scholarship possible, as it can really help with avoiding large student loans and graduating with less debt. If you are living on residence, you most likely will be required to purchase a meal plan, and depending on the university, they may not be transferable at the end of the year. Along with going out for meals/leisure activities, it is very likely you will exceed your normal spending, so it's best to take advantage of scholarships. Finding a part-time job during the summer before you start university will also help with your budget and fund your living expenses and/or needs, like buying a new laptop or tablet.

What advice would you give to Mac students applying to post-secondary in general?

My advice to Mac students applying to post-secondary in general is to keep your options open and apply to more than one university and/or program so that you have backup choices for worst-case scenarios.

Anything else to add?

I just want to wish everyone the best of luck and don't burden yourselves too much; life is full of opportunities and I believe that your future will be successful no matter what path you choose. Take your time to decide what's best for you and go for it!!

We are so grateful for Claudia's insight and glimpse into her life as a gap year student — we all learned something new from this less-discussed pathway. Tune into our upcoming issues for more interviews into the lives of Blackscots after graduation!

3.14159...This is Pi!

Jatin Taploo

Pi (π) or 3.14 is used by mathematicians to represent the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. Have you heard of it? Well, this outstanding irrational number is a revered number in the field of Mathematics. With an unknown quantity of decimal places (over 31 trillion currently discovered), Pi has an intriguing history.

Why is this irrational number known as Pi? Like most mathematical symbols, the name is derived from Greek nomenclature. The name was first derived from Perimetros, the Greek word for circumference.

Circa 1988, Larry Shaw, a physicist and employee of the Exploratorium, declared March 14th as Pi Day, the same date as Albert Einstein's birthday. This is because the first three digits of Pi are 3.14, which shows in the month-day format as March 14 (03/14). It was later declared a national holiday in 2009.

Pi itself was calculated long before Larry Shaw's declaration. Archimedes of Syracuse calculated Pi, but the calculation was accepted in the scientific community via Leonard Euler's use of Pi (symbol) in 1737. Even then, the symbol wasn't used widely, until over two centuries later when it was adopted universally in 1934.

Due to the similarity in pronunciation between "pi" and "pie", some unofficial traditions of Pi Day include baking and eating pies. Coincidentally, the shape of pies are circles, which further relates it to the idea of Pi Day. Some schools and stores even have Pi Day traditions, be it school activities or discounts on pies. There are also various Pi competitions to instigate a global interest in mathematics.

Pi Day has quite the significance in the field of Mathematics. Mac's Math Club has also been involved with Pi Day, as they created activities for all mathematics lovers involving Pi and the Winter Olympics. The Math Club hosted an event where students completed a Google Form composed of ten Pi-related questions revolving around the Winter Olympics. The winner won a customized Mathematics T-Shirt! All in all, Pi Day has had great representation both in our school and across the globe. I hope you all enjoyed your Pi day!

References: <https://www.history.com/news/where-did-pi-day-come-from>

Mac Health Council's Nutrition Bowling



Photo Credits: Karen Mitro

Saint Patrick's Day

Vishva Sritharan

Salutations, Mac! We hoped you enjoyed your March Break, and the special holiday that occurs in the middle of it — Saint Patrick's Day!

Saint Patrick's Day is a worldwide celebration that occurs yearly on March 17th. This date brings prominence to the death of Saint Patrick. Saint Patrick was born in Roman Britain during the late 4th century (301 - 400 AD). At the age of 16, he was kidnapped and transported to Ireland to work as a slave until he escaped. St. Patrick returned around 432 CE, as he wanted to convert the Irish to Christianity. During his time in Ireland, he established schools, monasteries, and churches. There were also many myths and legends built around him. For example, he was said to have used the shamrock (clover) to explain the Trinity (which is defined as the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). When he passed away on March 17th, 461 AD, Ireland soon came to honour this day, with religious services and feasts. It became a worldwide celebration around the 1700s.

Nowadays, Saint Patrick's Day consists of parades, dressing up as leprechauns, feasting, and the colour green! How did you celebrate Saint Patrick's Day? Did you attend the Saint Patrick's Parade here in Toronto? Did you celebrate with family and friends? We hope you had a lucky Saint Patrick's Day, Mac!

References: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saint-Patricks-Day>
<https://www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day/history-of-st-patricks-day>