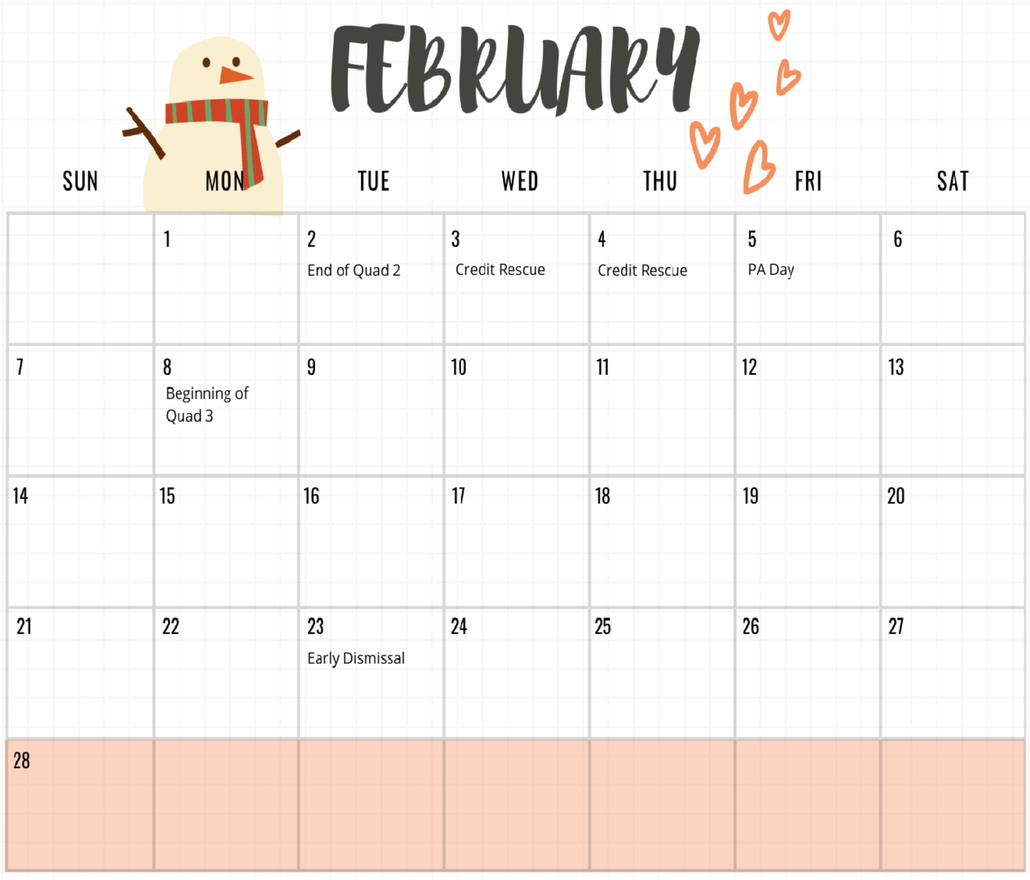
MAC NEWS

January 2021

Sir John A. Macdonald
"We've Got You Covered."



African Heritage Month

Maliha Mahjabin

Canada has been shaped into the culturally diverse and inclusive nation it is today through the contributions and achievements of courageous Canadians. Black Canadians, who fought enslavement and discrimination by advocating for equal rights and freedoms, contributed greatly to the country's development. In addition to their fight for equal rights, many Black Canadian soldiers made countless sacrifices for our country which date as far back as 1812. Black History Month is a time every year dedicated to recognizing, through various festivities and events, the contributions of Black Canadians.

In celebration of African Heritage Month, there are several online events you can partake in to further educate yourself on Black issues. On February 8th, keynote speaker Dahabo Ahmed Omer, Executive Director of the Black North Initiative, will hold a panel discussion regarding anti-Black racism activism over Zoom. Ms. Ahmed encourages Black leaders within our communities to share their lessons and experiences with the anti-Black racism movement, as well as strategies and resources to help others become more involved. On February 12th, there will be a film screening of the incredible documentary, Ninth Floor, followed by a question and answer discussion. This film depicts the protests against institutional racism at the University of Montreal. The film is based on reconstructed events surrounding the notorious racial conflict in modern Canadian history known as the Sir George Williams Affair. You can find the links to register for these events below.

https://antiracism.utoronto.ca/event/black-history-month-symposium/

https://antiracism.utoronto.ca/event/film-screening/

Going Virtual!

Aaron Anu

Two MAC Students 'Hack the North'!

Vivian Guo

A month ago, an email from Hack the North entitled "Congratulations, you are in!" turned up in my inbox; that email marked the beginning of an unforgettable experience filled with learning, accomplishments, and of course, some sleep deprivation.

Hack the North is Canada's largest hackathon, a programming and design-based competition where participants create, or "hack", a project from scratch. Competitors have thirty-six hours to prototype, code, and pitch a project to judges. The event is typically hosted in-person at the University of Waterloo. This year, over 3000 high school and university students across the globe connected virtually on Discord for Hack the North 2021.

Before the official competition period, participants could form a team--up to a group of four-- through slide deck introductions. I had the opportunity to work with Catherine He, the president of MAC Computer Science club, and two university students with whom Catherine He and I connected over Discord.

Hack the North also hosted GearUp, a series of workshops prior to the hackathon. These workshops were designed to equip hackers with technical skills for the hackathon and soft skills for career success. I learned to rapidly prototype a user interface in a program called Figma in GearUp's design series. As well, I gained valuable advice for curating resumes from RBC's sponsored career talk.

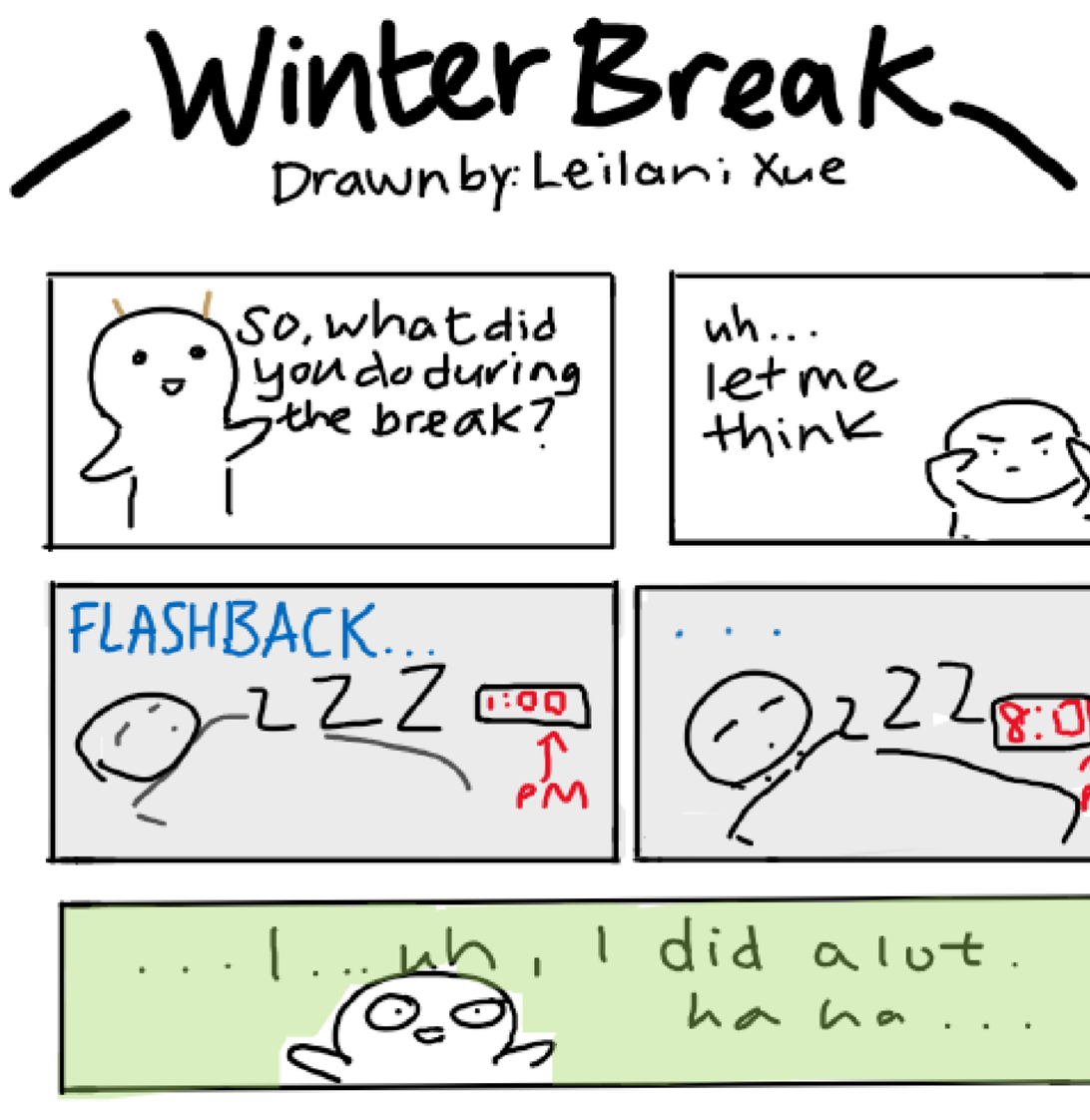
The official hacking period began on the evening of January 15th. Our team quickly delegated roles, hopped in a Google Meets, and got down to programming. Catherine He and I focused on visual frontend development while our teammates focused on incorporating sponsored technology in the backend. While programming, we encountered numerous challenges that furthered our understanding of web development. At the end of two sleepless nights, we progressed from a blank index.html file to a multi-page website, and from an empty video camera to one that detected users' expressions, movements and audio cues.

When reflecting back on the hackathon, Catherine He shared, "Hack the North was a very enriching experience! I learned a lot through the hands-on experience of working with my team to code a project in 36 hours."

Applications for Hack the North are open each year between October to November. Whether you want to code an innovative project or network with like-minded individuals, Hack the North is a valuable opportunity that you will not want to miss.

Winter Break

Leilani Xue



Extracurriculars

New Mac Club: MAC codeToday

Leilani Xue

In December 2020, Mac welcomed a new club called “MAC codeToday”. The founders and presidents, Saakshi Jaju and Mary Zhao, spent the summer of 2020 teaching coding and were eager to share their knowledge with our school! The name “codeToday” was inspired by camel case, a style of naming often used in coding languages. HTML basics will be taught for 10-12 weeks beginning the week of January 11th, 2021.

After contacting Mary Zhao, the Vice President of codeToday, I asked for their reasons for starting codeToday. She replied, “Coding and computer skills are important assets we believe everyone should have. However, for a lot of people, [learning to code] seems pretty daunting at first. Saakshi and I created this club so that more people become familiar with coding through learning with peers without feeling pressure or stress. We hope this will lead them to pursue coding in the future.”

Through hard work, the presidents and the executives of codeToday have been creating HTML teaching resources to be shared with their members. Anthony Truong, a Grade 9 student at Mac, spoke about his interest and experience as a codeToday member. He explained, “I enrolled in this club because I wanted to learn about programming, and fortunately enough this club delivered just that. The introduction into the club was great, plus the instructors are polite and are always there to assist you. My start was fantastic and my advice to anyone new to or curious about programming is that you should definitely give the MAC codeToday club a shot.”

The supervisor of codeToday, Mr. Fraser, also played an imperative role in starting the club, having provided input on the HTML content prepared by codeToday. I had the opportunity to ask him for his opinion on the club, to which he responded, “I think the club is a good idea. I really like the idea of making programming accessible to students who might otherwise never get into it. And, when I saw the students who would be running the club, I was confident that they would do a terrific job! I'm looking forward to seeing how students respond!”

With much hope and preparation, mentors and mentees expect that there will be plenty more to come in the approaching weeks in the new club, MAC codeToday.

Interviews with Elected SAC Members

Marian Farra

The Student Activity Council has been working vigorously these past few months, launching new spirit days and activities in which both the in-class and virtual Mac community can participate. As a member of the SAC, I had the honour of interviewing each member.

Saad Iqbal is the elected Grade 9 Representative of the SAC. When asked about his goals for the student body this year, he replied, “One of my goals is to make everyone enjoy this year. Since there is a pandemic, some students are unable to enjoy the year as they are overwhelmed with the workload. The next goal is for people to engage more in school spirit. Some students do not engage in school spirit events because they do not look at the social media pages we have. Another goal is to openly tell students to follow the pages and engage in the activities we have for them.” To improve school spirit among students, he said, “We can engage students in an Art Smiles project. They can make any art of their choice at home or school, and then share their artwork. Motivation is key, and to motivate students, we have to get ideas that they enjoy.”

Sachi Taploo is the Grade 10 Representative of the SAC. When asked about her goals, she stated, “Because of the unprecedented pandemic, many students have felt anxiety, stress and worry about the future. My goal is for the student body to have a more positive outlook on the school year. I want Mac to remember the good parts of the 2020-2021 school year!” When it comes to motivating the students, she replied, “One easy way to motivate students is to constantly hype up our spirit days. Although it’s harder to spread the word around compared to previous years, we always make posts to remind students about our events! So, don’t forget to follow us if you haven’t already!”

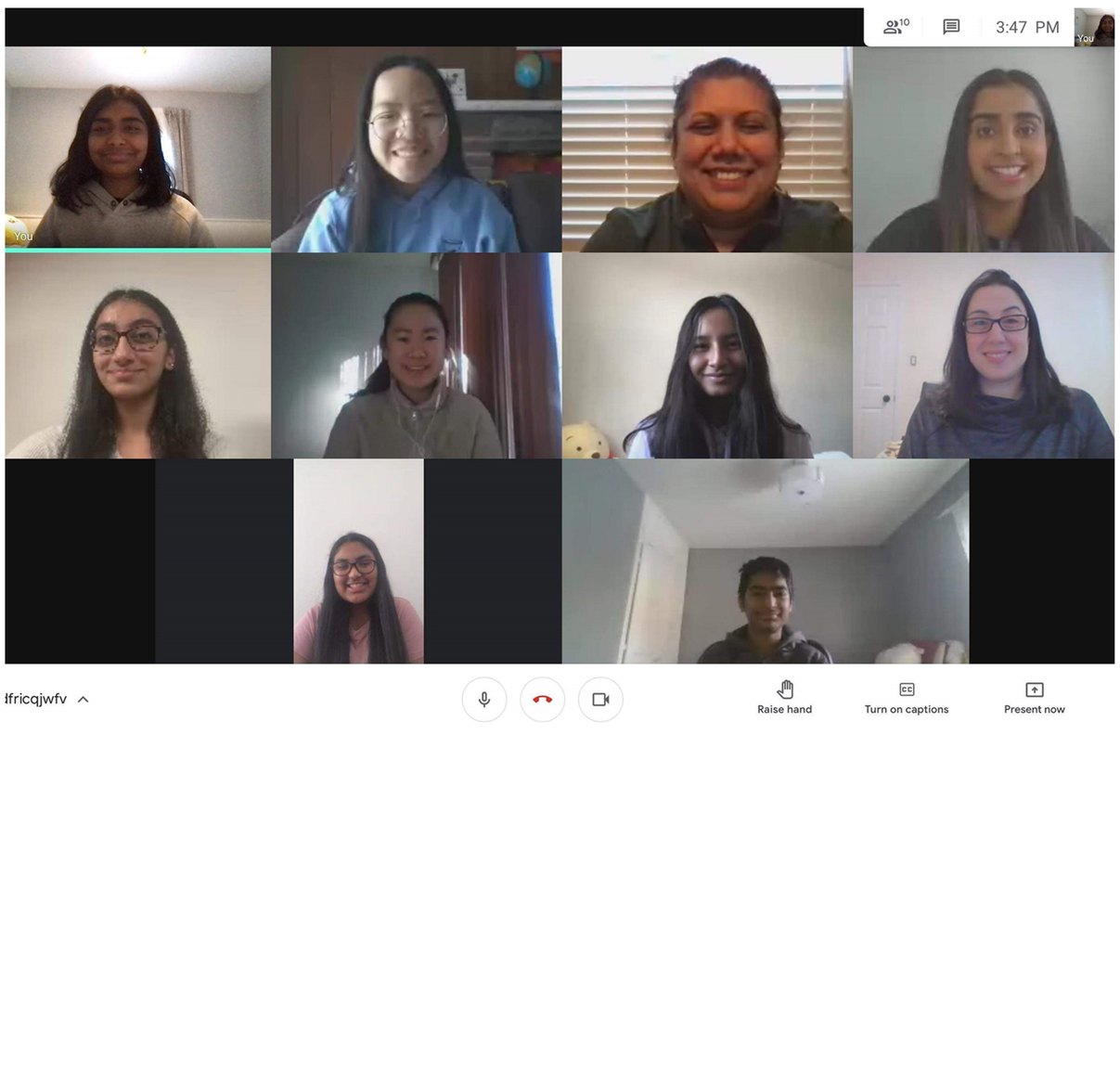
Judy Zhang is the Grade 11 Representative on the council. She mentioned, “We all need some spirit-boosters during these unprecedented times and SAC's events aim to do just that. As we have all shifted to the virtual world, our best bet is promoting school spirit via engaging and entertaining social media posts. Including students' photos on our platforms may bring about fond memories and a laugh to brighten someone's day. Otherwise, simply communicating and motivating the student body would be effective too.”

Samantha Abellera is the Public Relations Officer. Her goals for the student body include: “Coming together (in spirit—not physically) and having the best year we can despite the challenging circumstances. I want the student body to be able to enjoy the year and remember the good parts!” When asked about how she plans on motivating everyone, she stated, “One way to motivate the students is through hyping up our spirit days! We really try to spread the word about the spirit days we're holding to try and get as many participants as possible. We also make posts showcasing students who participated in spirit days to excite them for the next event and to motivate students who didn't participate to join in.”

Richa Duphare is this year’s Grade 12 Representative. When asked about her goals, Richa expressed: “Even though we are going through some unprecedented times, we can still make this year as lively as any other! My goal is to encourage the student body into participating in our events and spread positivity amongst everyone to ensure school spirit isn’t lost!” Her ideas for increasing school spirit include: “With the limited resources we have at the moment, spreading school spirit is something we make sure to do. Posting on each grade’s Instagram pages, promoting announcements at school for those who are in-school as well as planning the trendy spirit days are a few ways we motivate school spirit!”

The Vice-President introduced herself as “Jolina Panganiban, and Marian’s right hand lady”. She hopes to ensure that “All students find positivity and happiness during these tough times. I hope to see all students enjoy this school year. I also hope to see the whole school getting involved in these spirit days!” Her ideas for motivating the student body consist of “continuing to promote and create spirit days for the students to enjoy.” She goes on to say, “Participation is key in school spirit! Constantly engaging with the student body through our Instagram and encouraging involvement is a must!” Jolina also gracefully provided sneak peaks for upcoming spirit days. “Not to give too much away but we will have some classic spirit days that everyone loves, such as twin day, and some new ones that we’ve never had! Kind of like Halloween 2.0… keep an eye out for all our upcoming spirit days!”

If you haven’t been keeping up with spirit days and want to find out more about upcoming events and activities, make sure to follow @blackscotpride on Instagram! In addition, each grade representative has created an Instagram account for their graduating year. Visit @blackscots_2024 for grade nine, @blackscots_2023 for grade ten, @blackscots_2022 for grade eleven, and @blackscots_2021 for grade twelves to see more information!

MIA

Richa Duphare