

Sir John A. Macdonald
 “We’ve Got You Covered.”

University Applications

Joseph Choi

The last year of high school is an exhilarating experience to be celebrated with friends and family. At this time, university applications open and, for many, this is a nerve-racking yet memorable moment.

To keep yourself on your toes, here are some important dates regarding university applications: February 21st is the target date for Ontario universities to receive all final grades available for 4U/M courses from the OUAC. May 4th is the target date for Ontario universities to receive all midterm/final grades available for 4U/M courses from the OUAC. For those wondering when to expect acceptances, universities make conditional offers of admission for most programs in March and late April after receiving grades in February and April. Students who do not receive early offers by this time should expect the universities to respond to their applications by May 27th.

In the meantime, many scholarship opportunities are available for eager and determined learners in the Grade 12 Guidance Google Classroom. One such scholarship is The Julia Riccobene Award of Excellence in Community Service; it is presented to those who demonstrate profound academic performance, a passion for the arts, and a need for financial support. In addition, universities often provide their own scholarships and academic bursaries, available on their respective applicant portals.

Some Grade 12 students have kindly shared their university application experience. Jessica Cyopick applied for psychology at McMaster, Ryerson, the University of Toronto, and York. She recounted her application process and shared advice for younger students: “Some advice I’d give is to read up on your programs and all the requirements needed for that course. Also, read up on the schools you would like to attend because some schools might be better than others for your program.” She also emphasizes the importance of not “waiting until the last minute to submit your university application because the earlier you submit, the more likely you are to hear back from the university sooner.”

Ciara Cyopick applied to the University of Ottawa, Carleton, the University of Toronto, and McMaster, all for political science. She explains that applying was not too bad aside from the fact that she had to learn to apply by herself. Fortunately for her, the website was simple and easy to maneuver. She advises future Grade 12s to “figure out what you want to go into before applications are open. You don’t have to know what career you want, but [it’s a good idea to] figure out what [program] you want to go into in post-secondary school. It makes the application process a lot easier.” Ciara also highlighted the importance of applying to a program based on what you inherently enjoy, as opposed to monetary rewards: “Pick a program that is interesting to you or that you like. Don’t pick a career or program [only because it] would result in having money because you’ll regret it later on.”

To all our Grade 12 students, we hope you hear back from the universities you applied to with a positive response and we wish you luck with all your future endeavours!

SMART Goals

Nikki Guo

A Quick New Year's Resolution Check-in!

Set any New Year's resolutions this January? Evaluate your progress by using the SMART goals framework!



S SPECIFIC **M** MEASURABLE **A** ATTAINABLE **R** REALISTIC **T** TIMELY

Is my goal clear? How can I measure progress and success? Is my goal within reach when considering time and resources? Can I achieve this goal? Does this goal have a timeline?

Additional tips for success:

Tell others about your goals for accountability!
 Have a purpose—know why you have set your goals.
 Reach out for help!



DECA Provincials

Joseph Choi

The COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately canceled many extracurricular activities. However, one club that is still going strong is DECA, an international business competition, spanning six disciplines including Marketing and Finance. Students come together to demonstrate their business skills and creativity, all in the pursuit of prestige and recognition. Despite being held entirely online this year, students at Mac's DECA Chapter resolutely prepared and trained for DECA Ontario's Provincial competition.

For those that are unfamiliar with DECA, Vivian Guo, the president of Mac DECA, describes DECA as the epitome of interpersonal and academic development. She explains, "DECA is perfect for gaining exposure to business careers through realistic case studies and written proposal challenges. DECA also allows competitors to develop and strengthen 21st-century skills that apply to any career path."

Judy Zhang, the Business Management and Administration cluster trainer, explains that joining DECA is a valuable experience. "I've further explored my passions and connected with students throughout TDSB and beyond," Judy says of her experience at DECA.

On the subject of adapting to a virtual competition format, Gary Su, the vice-president of Mac DECA remarks, "Going online is new to all of us, but our chapter is trying to make the best of it." Mac DECA members have been hard at work training online for Provincials. "I've been taking my free time to perfect my oral presentation and exam skills for this upcoming provincial competition. Although DECA competitions have been harder to prepare this year, they strengthened my adaptability skills to transition from in-person to online competition," Gary says, citing how he transformed these daunting times into an opportunity for improvement.

Mac DECA's other executives share their opinion on the virtual competition. Jefferson Fu, the Finance cluster trainer, remarks, "It is saddening to see DECA held online because many elements that made DECA fun are gone." Jackie Yi, the exam trainer, explains that COVID has been truly detrimental because "even if we qualify for ICDC, we do not get to travel internationally, so the incentive to try hard is diminished." Despite the deterrents brought upon by the pandemic, the executives emphasize that DECA is still a wonderful opportunity for development of modern skills such as communication and critical thinking.

All in all, Mac students have been unwavering in their efforts to maximize their potential and make the best out of these uncertain circumstances. Their hard work, despite the many setbacks caused by COVID-19, demonstrates the extraordinary resilience and perseverance of Blackscots.

Five Days of Freedom

Mac In Action: Lack of Education and Women Empowerment

Maliha Mahjaban

260 million. That is the number of children worldwide who cannot attend school according to an UNESCO report from 2018. While Canada remains largely unaffected by a lack of education, education is more often a privilege than a right for many around the world. All of us have the right to education and the opportunity to pursue higher education. However, children in various regions of Africa, Asia, and more, struggle to access schooling for fundamental literacy skills. Lack of education results in poverty, which promotes other issues such as unemployment, poor health, and gender inequality. Causes for a lack of education are plentiful, but factors such as gender norms contribute greatly to the lack of education worldwide in one major demographic: women.

Gender norms are a society's standards of acceptable and appropriate behaviours for women and men. Many gender norms prevent women's pursuit of education. For example, women are often expected to stay home and take care of all housework, while men are expected to become educated and provide income for the family.

Nevertheless, tremendous efforts are being made to combat gender norms. One such effort involves the empowerment of women in our society. In promoting women's autonomy through their rights and freedoms, more women can contribute to great advancements in many aspects, including economic independence, politics, and education. To celebrate this global movement for women's rights, March 8th is recognized as International Women's Day.

This year, MIA brought awareness to and further educated the MAC community about the lack of education and the need for women empowerment worldwide. As well, MIA addressed the need to empower women even in a developed country like Canada; gender inequality, while not at the forefront of Canadian inequalities, still leaves women scrambling to find their place. MIA celebrated their day of Five Days of Freedom by hosting an informative presentation abundant with statistics for the above issues. Then, MIA tested the participants' knowledge with a fun game of Jeopardy. We hope Blackscots will use this newfound knowledge to make a positive impact on the world around them. To keep up with future MIA events, follow MIA on Instagram @macinaction.



Photo Credits : Vivian Guo

MEAC: Environmental Injustice Across the World

Nancy Zou

Pollution, climate change and the environment have become increasingly relevant to not only the future of each individual, but also to that of the world. However, discussions on these topics often fail to explore the human inequalities that exist within climate change and pollution. Yes, as outrageous as it sounds, even seemingly impartial issues like climate change and pollution affect underprivileged groups much more.

The concept of environmental injustice addresses the disproportionate levels of environmental risk experienced by low-income neighbourhoods, the poor, indigenous populations, and communities of colour. Such environmental risks include heightened exposure to viruses and diseases, vulnerability to drug and alcohol abuse, and health-deteriorating levels of air and water pollution. Moreover, laws, regulations, and government programs that frequently fail to provide environmental protection for these communities further perpetuate this issue of environmental injustice.

For this year's Five Days of Freedom, the Macdonald Environmental Action Council (MEAC) has worked to promote awareness of this global environmental concern. Through the event that it hosted on February 23rd, MEAC held a presentation and Kahoot game to engage its attendees in gaining a better understanding of the environmental inequalities endured by disadvantaged communities around the world.

While it may not seem that a single individual can provide much of an answer to this international problem, becoming more aware of environmental injustice and its effects on people everywhere is a great first step to a solution. To learn more about the environment and MEAC's future events, be sure to follow @meac.mac on Instagram.

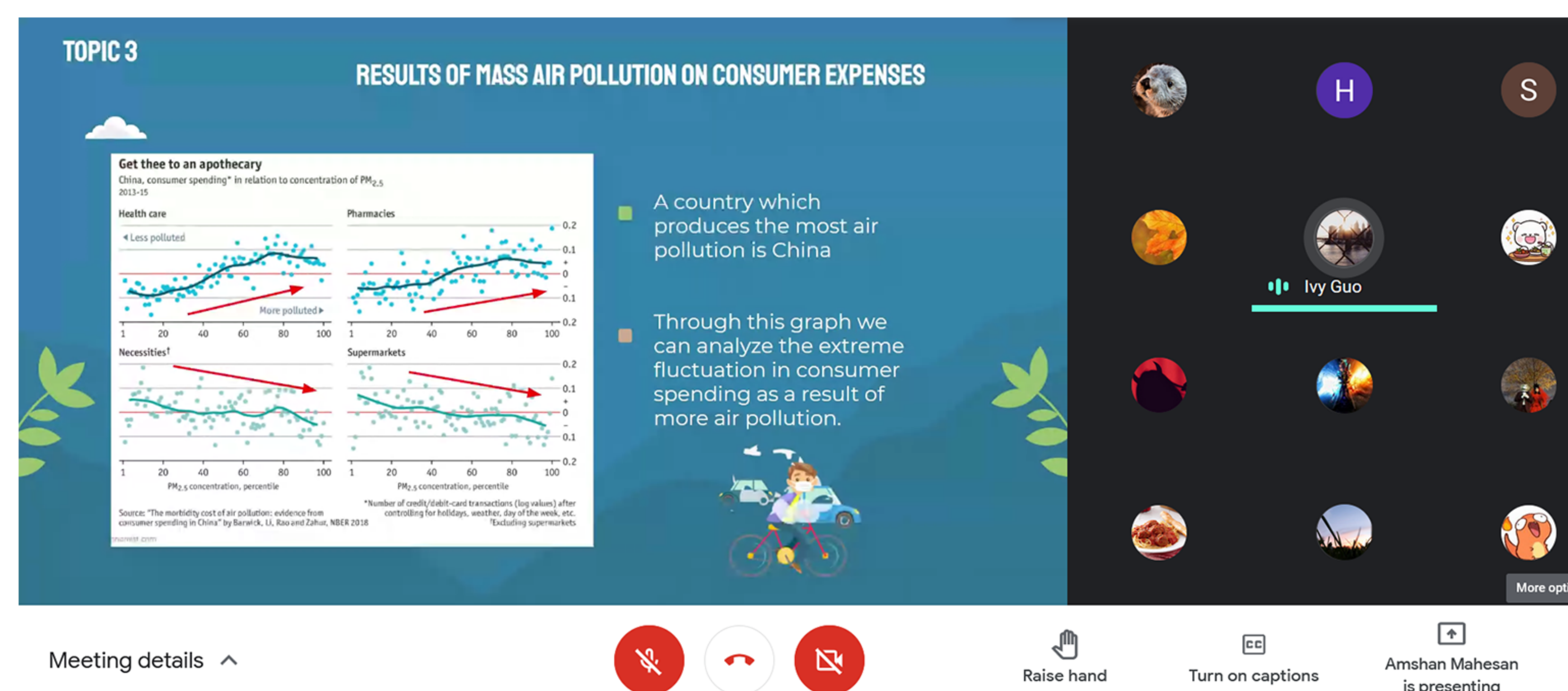


Photo Credits : Vivian Guo

Mac News: Academic Freedom

Karen Mitro

Do you worry that what you learn at school contains bias? Do you worry about being punished for expressing unpopular opinions in class? Currently, the issue of academic freedom is likely one that you do not think about. But as students at Mac, it is very important to your learning. To optimize critical thinking and improve your education, you should be free to explore topics and express ideas without interference.

According to the Middle Tennessee State University, academic freedom is defined as "One's freedom to pursue knowledge and express ideas without unreasonable political or government interference", mainly related to teachers, students, and educational institutions. By upholding academic freedom, educational institutions can independently choose teaching material and methods and choose what research is to be published and conducted. Students also have the right to study topics they are passionate about and reach their own conclusions.

As you enter higher education, the topics you choose to study and the positions you take on issues become critically important. Academic freedom is a controversial topic much discussed and debated, one about which people hold several conflicting opinions. Advocates say that with academic freedom, students and teachers are able to freely share ideas, hold intellectual debates, and devote themselves to discovering the unbiased truth. They assert that academic freedom is fundamental to a free, democratic society.

Critics, on the other hand, argue that these freedoms should be limited, questioning whether it is acceptable to express ideas that may result in dangerous actions. They ask whether opinions that may be extreme, offensive, and damaging to students and overall society should be allowed. The controversies of academic freedom go on and are of great interest to those who participate in them.

On Wednesday, February 24th, Mac News held this year's Five Days of Freedom to discuss the issue of academic freedom, its relevance, and its importance. The hour-long event consisted of an interactive presentation and a related online Code Words game. Through Mac News' open-ended questions, participants challenged themselves to an open discussion and exchanged their opinions regarding the widely-discussed issue.

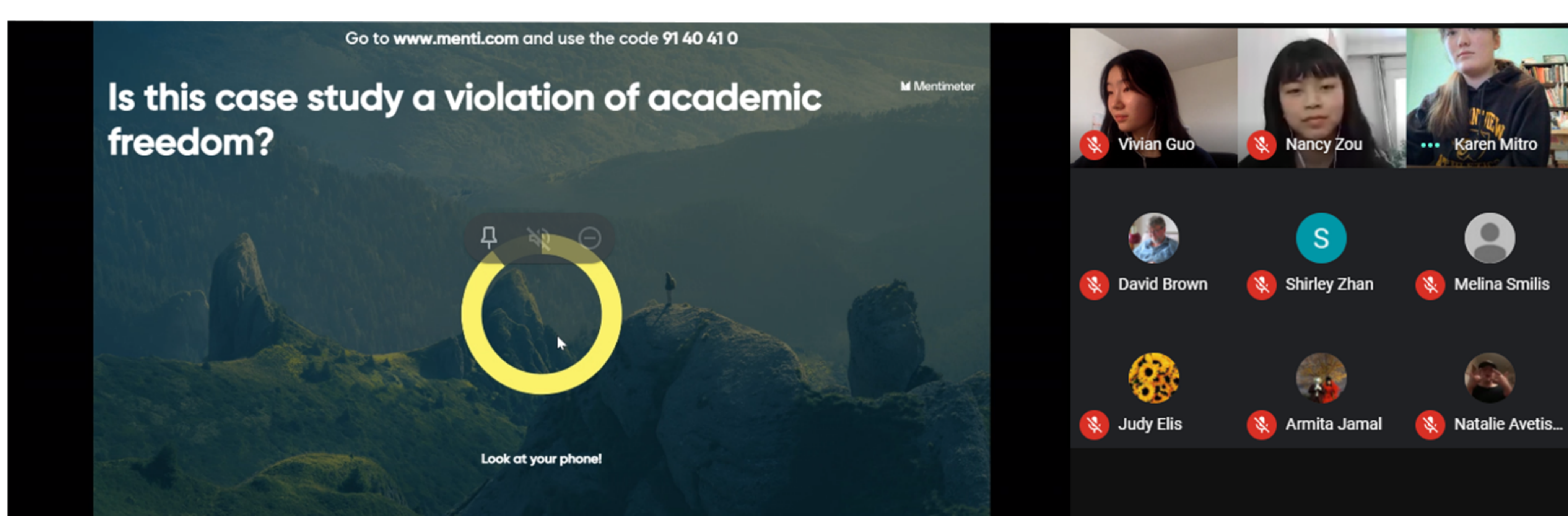


Photo Credits : Alisa Yan

Five Days of Freedom Cont'd

MACC: Cultural Oppression

Vivian Guo

In a time of rapidly advancing communications and transportations technology, the world is more connected than ever before. Globalization, the increased integration of organizations and individuals around the world, creates touchpoints for people from different locations and cultures. For example, schools host international exchange programs, businesses expand into foreign markets, and countries implement immigration programs. Each of these actions contribute to a more diverse cultural environment. Cultural diversity is undeniably a core characteristic of our society. Unfortunately, some cultural groups attempt to assimilate others out of a fear of differences in values and behaviours.

Cultural oppression occurs when a group is treated unjustly because of its social customs. Oppression comes in different forms and from varying sources. For instance, individuals may verbally oppress others through the use of discriminatory racial slurs, and governments may enact unfair laws that prohibit certain religious practises. Some actively disparage others; others do not realize the oppressive nature of their actions. Undoubtedly, there is a cause for concern when the oppression of one group by another becomes an unchallenged norm, and MACC strove to address this very issue within our school environment.

On the fourth day of Five Days of Freedom, Sir John A. Macdonald C.I.'s Association of Canadian Cultures (MACC) dived into the subject of cultural oppression. Blackscots learned about types of targeted groups, how groups are oppressed, mindsets of oppressors, and what is being done to combat this social issue. Participants also engaged in a fun game of Kahoot to solidify their knowledge. If you missed the presentation, do not worry! Follow MACC on Instagram (@maccdiversity) to celebrate MAC's diverse community and stay updated with future events.

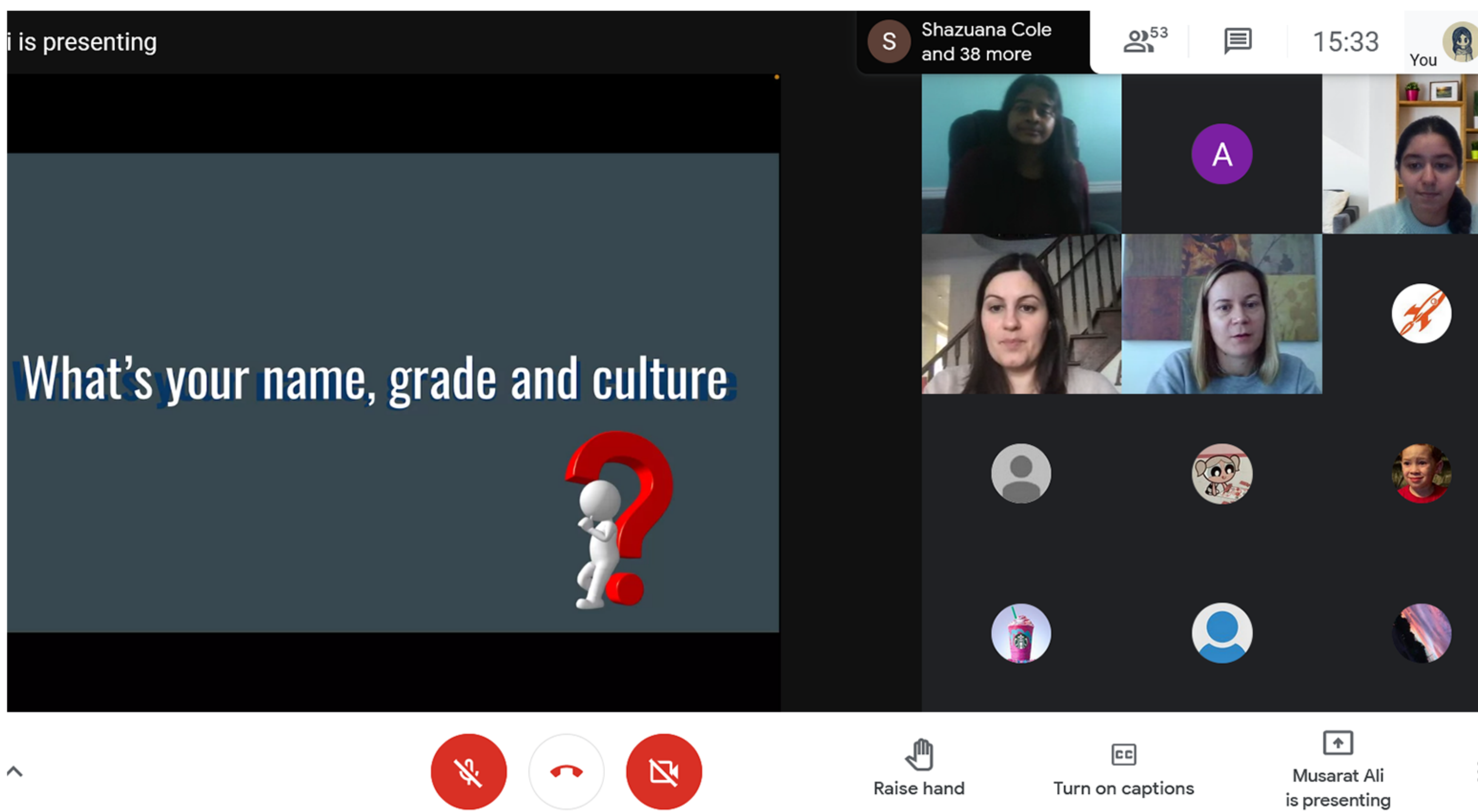


Photo Credits : Vivian Guo

MHC: Mental and Physical Well-Being

Alisa Yan

It is crucial to maintain good mental and physical health, especially in a time when we are often at home and socially distanced from others. Regardless of one's household environment, income, race, or age, mental and physical wellness is an important topic that needs to be addressed.

There is a definite connection between the mind and the body. For instance, regular physical activity promotes better sleep and improves mood, memory and brain function. As well, a healthy diet improves ability to focus and helps with symptoms of anxiety and depression. On the other hand, mental health issues such as anxiety can cause physical symptoms such as nervousness and restlessness, rapid breathing, feeling tired, and increased sweating.

Mac Health Council's event for Five Days of Freedom focuses on these issues as they are key to the council's purpose: to bring awareness and promote holistic wellness and living. Hosted on February 26th, Mac Health Council (MHC) event for Five Days of Freedom delivered information about mental wellness, physical wellness, and how one can maintain good mental and physical health. A few creative methods they used to relay the information included a Google Slides presentation, a video, a Mentimeter, a Kahoot, and a game of Jeopardy.

Melina Smilis, the vice president of MHC, shared her thoughts on the event: "Five Days of Freedom was a great event and I really enjoyed how the Health Council came together to talk about the importance of mental and physical health while providing ways to help! I think it's amazing how we've been able to come together virtually to talk about something as important as our health, especially now. Overall, it was a great way to connect with our community and experiment with the use of Jeopardy and Mentimeters to share relevant information in an interactive way."

To learn more about about your body and to stay updated on Mac Health Council's future events, check out their website (<https://sites.google.com/student.tdsb.on.ca/machealthcouncil/home>) and Instagram page (@machealthcouncil)!

"Anxiety Disorders." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 4 May 2018, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961.

Gomstyn, Alice. "Food for your mood: How what you eat affects your mental health." Aetna, Aetna Inc., <https://www.aetna.com/health-guide/food-affects-mental-health.html>.



Photo Credits : Vivian Guo

Mac Health Council's Website and Cookbook Launch

Alisa Yan

Staying at home has caused many students to develop unhealthy eating habits. Mac Health Council (MHC) members noticed this in their own diets which were negatively affected due to the lack of structure in quarantine life. "Healthy eating wasn't really a priority and fast food was an alternative [for a quick meal]," explained Geetha Ahimsadasan, the president of MHC.

To combat this change, MHC created a free cookbook with healthy, easy-to-make recipes that are cost-friendly and can be made with everyday foods found in the fridge. Two recipes that are currently in their cookbook are for Açai Bowls and Egg Salad Sandwiches. With more recipes on the way, the cookbook is definitely worth checking out on the MHC website!

MHC's website also informs students about the council's future events, such as their collaboration with Mac in Action for Five Days of Freedom. The link to the website can be found in MHC's Instagram bio (@machealthcouncil) or through this link: <https://sites.google.com/student.tdsb.on.ca/machealthcouncil/home>

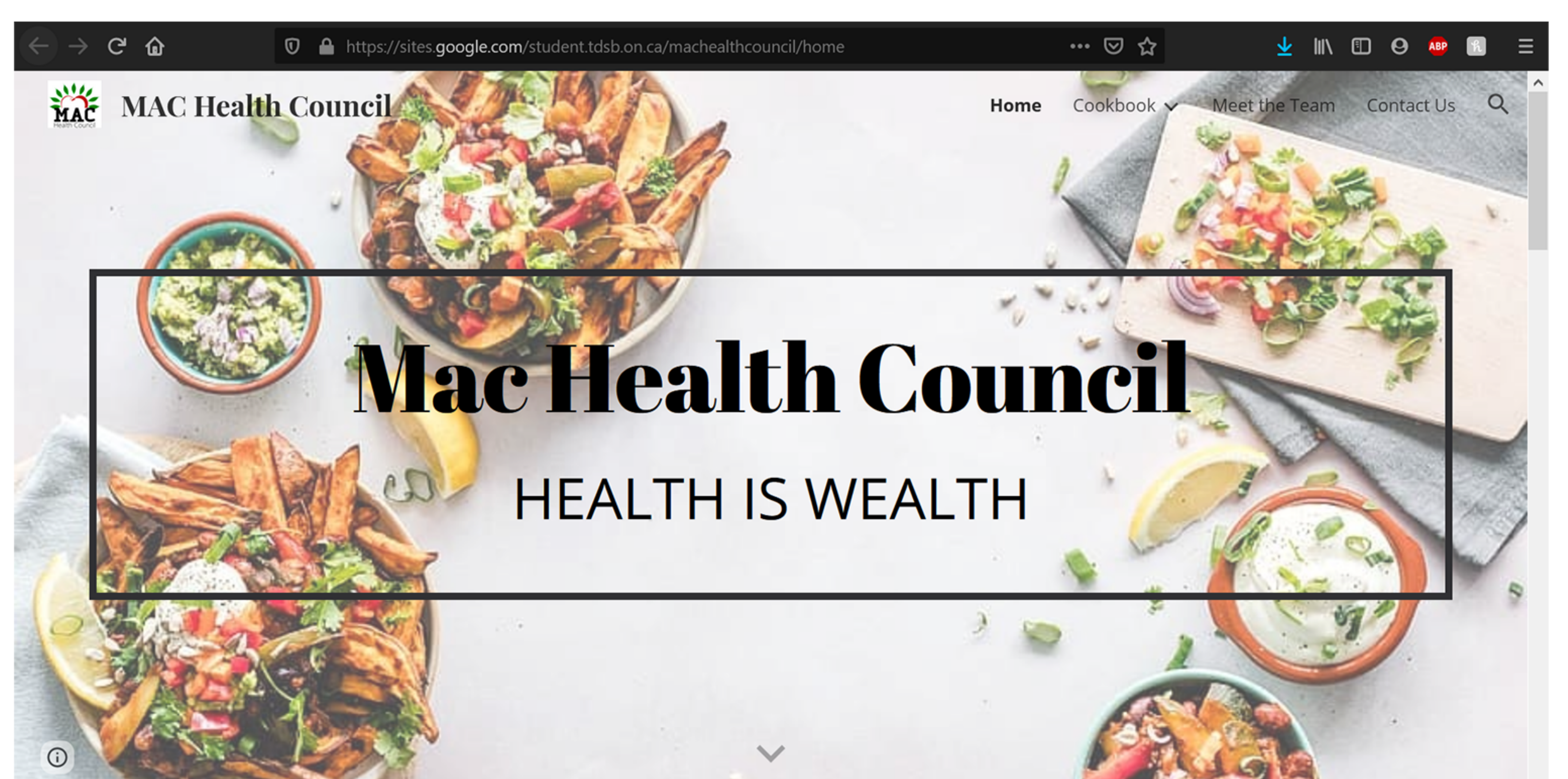


Photo Credits : Mac Health Council

Life Outside of Academics

Life in Quarantine

Joseph Choi

A year has passed since the transition to a new normal of masked meet-ups and distanced interactions. Despite the varying hardships brought on by COVID-19, MAC students demonstrated resilience by using quarantine as an opportunity to better themselves. Several MAC students shared their achievements during these unprecedented times.

Samir Rassuli, a Grade 12 student, exercised in quarantine and accomplished noticeable results. Since the beginning of quarantine in March 2020, he exercised intensively five times a week. "I used exercise as a way of turning stress into positive thoughts while doing runs outside," he said, noting how his consistent exercise helped him find hope and alleviate stress during quarantine. Samir also put a tremendous amount of focus on his diet and nutrition: "I had to sacrifice many foods I enjoyed and discipline myself to make the change." He lost 30lbs, gained a strong sense of discipline, and fixed his posture by stretching and strengthening his muscles.

Joy Li, a Grade 11 student, said that quarantine was difficult to become accustomed to at first. However, Joy used her free time during quarantine to upload and create content for TikTok, where she rose to fame over the summer. "It helped me cope with quarantine and social distancing," she explained, touching on the positive impact of technology on human connection while socially distanced.

Hossam Mahmoud, a Grade 12 student, explained that quarantine gave him a lot of time to improve his work ethic and learn the importance of perseverance and diligence. During quarantine, Hossam also found time to strengthen and grow many of his friendships. He and his friends talked about everyday activities, post-secondary education, and small things that he found valuable in life.

Although quarantine restricts day-to-day activities in our lives, the stories from these fellow students may inspire you to take further action on personal development. Regardless of how you spent the past year, give yourself a pat on the back; surviving a pandemic-riddled year is an accomplishment in itself!

The Journey to Starting a Non-Profit Organization!

Leilani Xue

During quarantine, the atmosphere of uncertainty has inspired many youth to start non-profit organizations. I had the honour of speaking to two Mac students who started a non-profit to guide high school students in their career paths and studies: Lingshan Zhang and Saakshi Jaju, two Grade 11 Mac students, who co-founded "BrightBearsInfo". They have kindly shared their backstory and advice for other Mac students who are thinking of starting their own non-profit!

Could you give a summary of your non-profit?

"BrightBearsInfo" is a student-led non-profit organization that aims to provide opportunities and resources for high school students worldwide to help with career exploration and discovering [their] passions. We know that high school can be a pretty challenging time, and looking for opportunities may be difficult, especially during a pandemic. Hence, we created BrightBearsInfo. We post weekly/bi-weekly opportunities that are beneficial to high school students to help them learn and gain experience while also discovering new things." - Saakshi Jaju

What inspired you both to start one?

"In May 2020, we noticed a [shortage] of opportunities for career exploration due to a lack of connectivity with students, [as a result of] the pandemic closures. So, we decided to initiate BrightBearsInfo and it has been a journey, to say the least, with challenges and roadblocks every step of the way. However, it was all worth it as we have found a passion that we not only commit to but enjoy." - Lingshan Zhang

What are some suggestions you could give to those who would want to start-up a NPO?

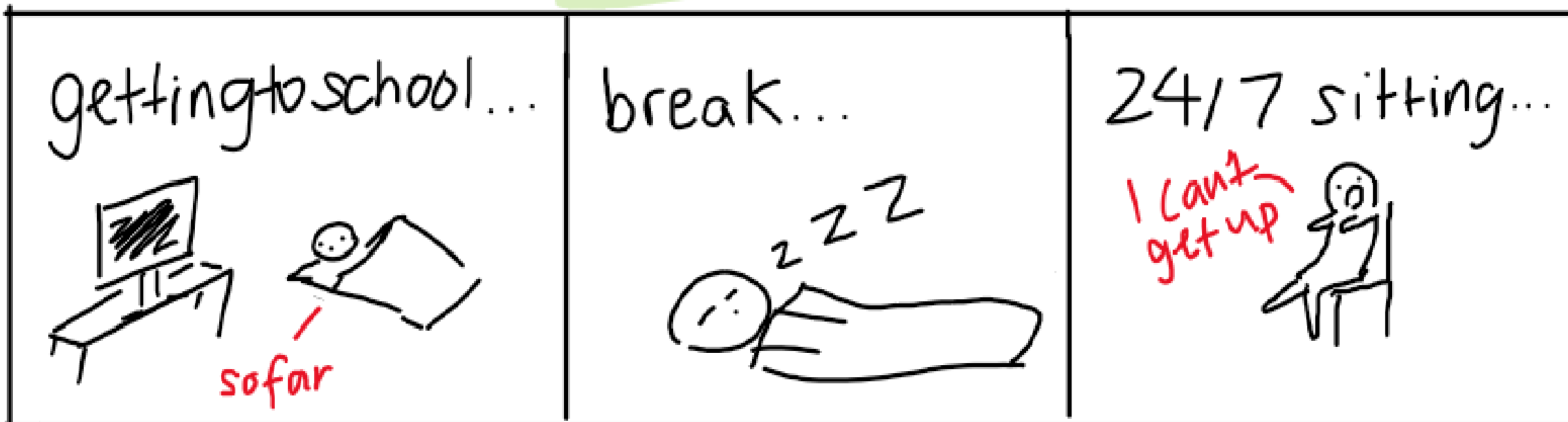
"As long as you have the confidence and passion, you can be a leader in any team. Your experiences are completely up to you. Finding a passion that you may enjoy is definitely hard, but once you find it, you can make a huge difference in your communities! Being part of BrightBearsInfo with an amazing executive team has helped us learn and grow from our mistakes. Our team was there for every struggle and success." - Saakshi Jaju

If you are interested in checking out BrightBearsInfo's events, they have started a monthly webinar series this year! For seven months, they will be inviting special guests to provide insight about different career fields and programs. They will soon be hosting university preparation workshops and an opportunities fair as well! To access more information, follow BrightBearsInfo on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, all @brightbearsinfo.

Hopefully, this interview has inspired you to crank up your creative gears and inspired you to start a non-profit organization as well!

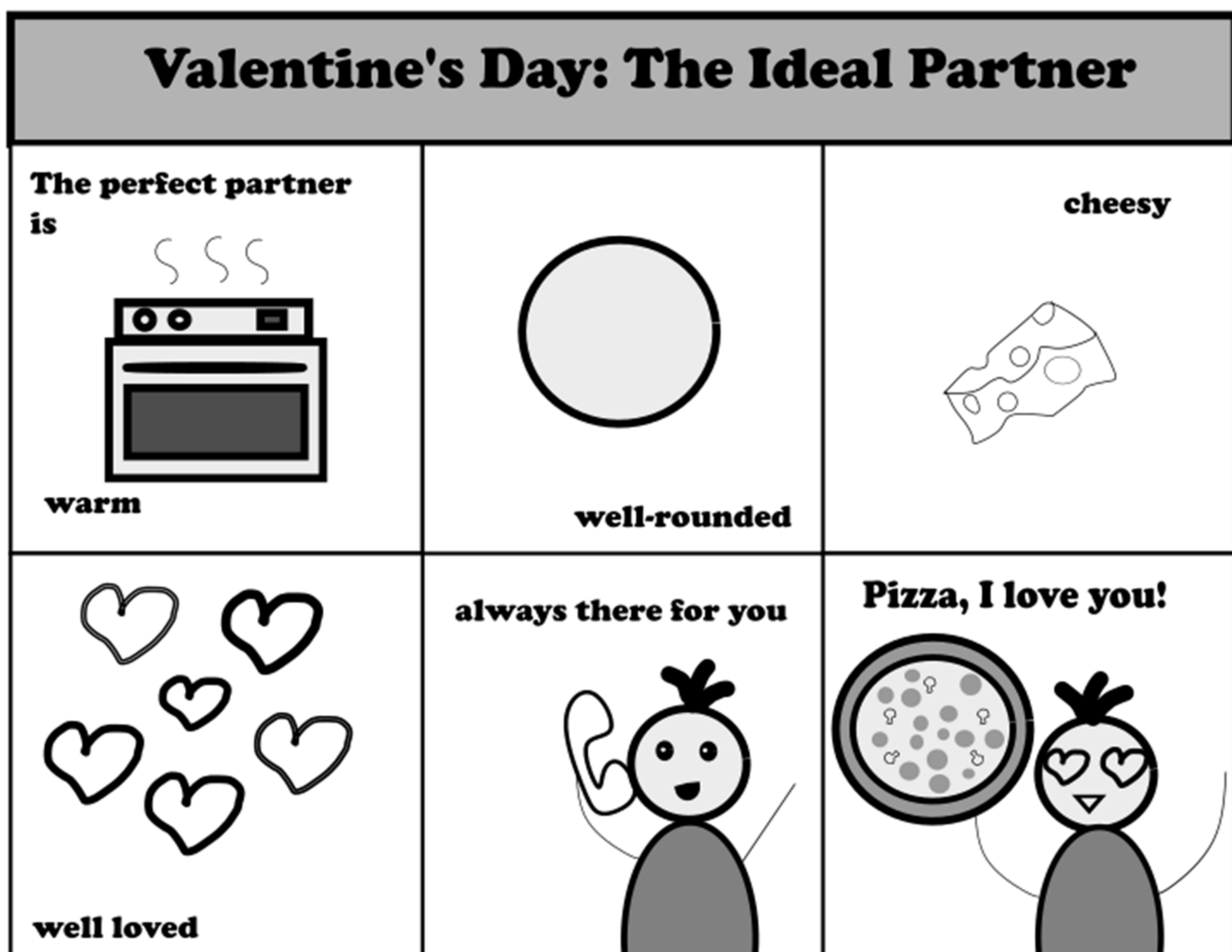
A day in a life of a Student

f.t. quarantine By: Leilani Xue



Valentines Day

Jenny Phung



Lunar New Year

Claudia Poon

