PAGE FRIDAY

Vol. LXXXVIII N°23 | www.ubyssey.bc.ca | Friday, 24 November, 2006 | RIP Claudia & Trevor since 1918

WHITE PRIVILEGE

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So what?
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The Perfect Vagina

The hot debate over the rising trend of vaginal surgery.
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Forget Iraq, home is a *Harsh*er reality

HARSH TIMES
now playing

by Hannah Hardy
CULTURE WRITER

Sex, drugs, alcohol, cars and Christian Bale in a dirty white tank top—what more could you want in a movie? This is the story of dejected soldiers coming home from the war in Iraq to LA. It tells the story of Jim, an ex-ranger in the midst of LA living the life. This is a violent, disturbing thriller about the harsh realities of a rough neighbourhood that two US soldiers and best friends come home to, and the violence that comes between them.

This film is not boring. One minute they are talking about 'boning' an older woman and the next a guy's throat is being cut. There is no sitting and relaxing, the drama keeps you on the edge of the seat. Al majority of the movie takes place in a car and there is no complex storyline. It's a guy's movie that girls will love.

The acting in this movie is infallible. Freddy Rodriguez (*Lady in the Water, Poseidon*) as Mike Alonso, Jim's impressionable best friend, delivers a performance that borders on heartbreaking in the film's final minutes, and Eva Longoria proves she is more than just an amazing body gracing the cover of *Maxim*—her acting is pretty good too. And I wonder whether there is anything that Christian Bale cannot do. He's like a chameleon, able to disappear into any character in his films. His character is insane and even scary, but after his experiences abroad you cannot help but feel sorry for him. Throughout the film it is impossible to take your eyes off of him—there is just no telling what he will do next.

The script itself is made up of the same words, mostly "fuck dude this is fucked up," but its sharp-edged attitude is riveting. The cinematography, soundtrack and lighting are all amazing. The opening sequence is thrilling—you see a battle through night-vision goggles, an effect that is disturbingly chilling. Despite the 'in-your-face' violence that could turn even the strongest stomach, the film's love interest is surprisingly humorous with some quotable lines such as, "Navy sucks, army swallows."

You can't miss *Harsh Times*. Usually I hate these films but the characters were so amazing, and the acting so haunting that I want to see it again. Critics that have panned the movie across the board are just plain wrong—this film is not to be missed.

Behind *the Corporation*

Writer and documentary filmmaker Joel Bakan, left, discusses corporate practices with students after a presentation of his film, *The Corporation*, on Tuesday. Bakan is a UBC law professor and an internationally recognised legal scholar. Organised by the International Relations Students Association, the event gave participants the chance to discuss the role of corporations in society.
OKER CHEN PHOTO

'tweens

Social Welfare Then and Now
November 27, 12-1pm
Alumni Reading Room, Jack Bell Social Work Bldg (2080 West Mall)
Dave Barrett, former Premier of BC and MP, reflects on how culture and approach to social welfare has changed over the past 30 years in BC.

Museum of Anthropology Lunch
Every Tuesday in November, 11:30am-3:30pm
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AUS Karaoke Night
November 28, 7-10pm
Meekison Arts Student Space Buchanan D-140
Good music and bad times with the Arts Undergraduate Society.

AUS Gala
December 1, 7-11pm
Meekison Arts Student Space Buchanan D-140
Celebration of the fifth anniversary of the student space with bzzr, whine, and psyder.

Correction: In "Visual artists have a new location to display their work"[Nov. 21] the photo caption should have read "Artist Hwan Jahng's 'Bloody Landscape' on displace at the opening of MASS." and not have mentioned "North Korea." *The Ubyssey* regrets the error.

UBC Film Society SINCE 1935
November movies
FRI NOV 24 - SUN NOV 26
7:00 Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby
9:30 Beerfest
WED NOV 29 - THU NOV 30
7:00 House of Sand
9:30 Who Killed The Electric Car
Screenings @ Norm Theatre in SUB
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CLASSIFIEDS

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AND SARS. ~1.5 hours, earn $25, pizza/drinks provided. Students age 19+. Nov

30, 12-1:30PM. For more info, contact Dr. Natalie Henrich:

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THE UBYSSEY

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Brandon Adams and Candice Okada were walking through Myles Estey's garden, when an Elliott Chalmers snake lunged in front of them. "Claudia Li! Hannah Harby! Christine McLaren!" Brandon cursed. The snake said his name was Victor Liang, descended from Meaghan Roberts and Eric Szeto, from the town of Champagne Choquer in the Jesse Marchand region. He showed them to a Mary Leighton tree, where there hung many shiny Andrew MacRaes. He said the fruit would give them the wisdom of Colleen Tang, Sana Sharham, and Carolynne Burkholder, but the couple refused. "Jesse Ferreras and Momoko Price warned us!" Before the snake could speak, Matthew Jewkes leapt from the tree and speared it with a George Prior, ending the scene.

EDITORIAL GRAPHIC *Michael Bround*

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Cinematheque brings EU to Vancouver

by Victor Liang
CULTURE STAFF

LUC BESSON'S *ANGEL-A*

Vancouverites are invited to enjoy "Europe Without the Jetlag" from November 23—December 7 as the ninth annual European Union Film Festival (EUFF) kicks off this week at the Pacific Cinematheque. With an impressive billing of 25 features from 23 of the European Union member states (Cyprus and Malta excepted) and two accession states set to join in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania), the tradition of the EUFF in Vancouver continues.

While the festival has grown with the EU, the goal has remained the same: to sensitise our community to the EU as an organisation, to celebrate it, and bring Europe closer to Vancouver.

"In the nine years that we've been doing it in Vancouver it's become a really big part of our annual programming," said Jim Sinclair, Pacific Cinematheque executive director and artistic programmer.. "Cinephiles are generally interested in European film and that's not surprising given that great cinemas of Europe have been very important in the history and development of cinema as an art form."

The festival, which originated in Ottawa, was brought to Vancouver in 1997 by Sima Godfrey, associate professor at UBC in the Department of French, Italian and Hispanic Studies and founding director of the Institute of European studies. At the time, Godfrey felt that Vancouver needed a window not only into political and economical developments in Europe, but also into cultural and social ones.

"[Bringing the EUFF to Vancouver] seemed like an excellent opportunity to showcase some of the cultural products coming out of Europe, particularly in the world of cinema where our screens are so heavily dominated by American film," she said. "This was an opportunity to see some alternate kinds of representations of life as expressed from European countries."

Many of the films are being run for the first time in Vancouver, and Sinclair promises an eclectic mix.

"As the EU grows, the festival is becoming a really interesting look at the landscape of contemporary European filmmaking," said Sinclair. "The festival is a neat snapshot each year, of filmmaking right across Europe. There are the traditionally strong countries in the history of cinema like France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and with the EU you have the new countries from Eastern Europe like Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic who all have a great cinematic tradition, and then you have smaller countries like Denmark and Slovenia that have had emergent cinemas in the last decade."

"As usual the highlights come from the traditionally strong filmmaking countries which include France and Italy, as they draw the largest audiences [at the EUFF], but that said one of the beauties of this festival is that we work with each of the local consulates here to get their audiences out. Where there is a community they tend to come out for this event to see their film."

Bye Bye Blackbird is a film from Luxembourg featuring Charlie Chaplin's grandson, James Thierree, as a circus acrobat caught in a love triangle. *Angel-A*, from renowned French director Luc Besson, (*La Femme Nikita* and *The Fifth Element*) is a characteristically stylish film, shot in black and white and telling of two mismatched loves brought together by their respective suicide attempts. British director Richard Jobson's metaphysical science-fiction romance, *A Woman in Winter*, is the story of a physicist who falls for a woman who may be living proof of his theories, and is a testament to the cinematic art form, as digital technology was used to produce the film.

The common thread in a lot of these films is the introspective nature—the direct concern with local culture and politics.

"[The films] often represent things that are happening at the moment in society. The German film [*Kebab Connection*] has to do with a Turkish kebab stand in Germany and they're obviously dealing with questions of integration and immigration workers from Turkey and Southeastern Europe," said Godfrey. "These are real issues in Germany today, questions of immigration and multiculturalism, so they're addressing very timely questions."

From Sweden comes *The Ketchup Effect*, where the social pitfalls of female adolescence in the Swedish school system are mapped out. Bulgaria's *Letter to America*, meanwhile, uses an ancient Bulgarian folk song as a vehicle for looking at the rapid erosion of traditional ways in the modern world.

Godfrey reminds us that in the end, the film festival is as much entertainment as it is insight.

"These are not films that are there to preach anything at all," she said. "These are films that tell different stories from the films we see in our regular fare, and they tell them from different perspectives, and are sensitising people to these issues."

"That in itself is educational."

Fountain a muddled fantasy

THE FOUNTAIN
now playing

by Jesse Ferreras
CULTURE EDITOR

The number three is often as unlucky as 13 for hotshot young filmmakers entering Hollywood after a big break.

It was certainly true for Guy Ritchie who, after *Snatch* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, has yet to revive his career from *Swept Away*. Unfortunately, it is also true for *Pi* director Darren Aronofsky, who tries too hard to do too much in the sci-fi melodrama *The Fountain*.

Like Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris*, Aronofsky tries to inject some intelligence into a genre plagued by too much CGI overkill, but winds up with an awkward combination of David Bowie's *Space Oddity* and Mayan creation myths.

Hugh Jackman arrives in the film as a Spanish conquistador on a quest to the summit of a Mayan ziggurat. His fellow soldiers desert him and leave him to a pack of frightening tribesmen.

Cut to the nether-regions of space, and at first you think that a new Moby video has been inserted into the film. Pity that it's Jackman with a shaved head, looking like he belongs with a band of hare krishnas. He is floating towards a nebula in a transparent space pod, where he is kept company by a dying tree whose bark has grown hairs that stand on end when he speaks to them. Cut once more and Jackman is Tomas Creo, an animal scientist researching ways to cure tumours in the minds of simians while his wife Izzi (Rachel Weisz) is suffering from a tumour that is causing her to lose all sensibility in her body.

While Tomas is toiling away at the lab, believing that by implanting a substance extracted from a South American tree he may have found a cure for cancer, Izzi is writing a book about a Spanish Queen who has come under threat by the Inquisition. She summons the help of a conquistador to journey to New Spain and discover the "Tree of Life." Its sap, she tells him, confers eternal life on those who drink it.

The conquistador's journey thereafter unfolds in parallel with Tomas' as he works obsessively to find a cure that he can transfer to his wife. Interrupted once in a while by the scenes in the space pod, Izzy's dying wish was that Tomas would finish her story, which he sees unfold in ways he never expected.

The Fountain is really not that bad—it did not deserve at all its cold reception at a Venice Film Festival. Some things about it are actually very good: talented cinematographer Matthew Libatique casts characters in a golden glow and maintains a consistently enchanting colour palette throughout. Clint Mansell's score, meanwhile, is graceful and melancholic, and among the best work he has ever done. Their contributions help create some genuinely touching moments that are not helped at all by the woeful miscasting of Jackman, whose gruff appearance does not gel with such a sensitive role. He overacts the roles of scientist, conquistador and space monk to their emotional extremes.

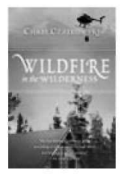
The other problem for *The Fountain* is Aronofsky's inability to handle so many varying philosophical themes and artistic influences in a single film. So adept at tackling a complex story in *Pi*, he culminates his philosophical musings in a laughable climax that blunts completely the momentum he builds up to it.

The best advice for Aronofsky would be to go back to the drawing board, hammer out his ideas and influences one more time, and find a better way to express them in a complex and compelling fashion. He need not cram into a single film every idea he comes up with.

Nature under threat

Utopian world slashed with frightening realism

WILDFIRE IN THE WILDERNESS
by Chris Czajkowski
Harbour Publishing



by Christine McLaren
CULTURE WRITER

Hundreds of miles from the nearest building, from the nearest city where the sky scrapes against the cold edges of dull cement, lies a log cabin. From the bay window, one looks out to see the morning sun glittering off the glacier like a mountainous star beaming out from meters above the treeline against a cloudless azure sky. Here, where nature is boss and man is secondary, lives renowned author Chris Czajkowski, who allows this world of pristine purity to serve as the backdrop for her latest creation, *Wildfire in the Wilderness*.

Thirty kilometres from the nearest road on the shores of "Spinster Lake," she built her life in the Charlotte Alplands of Northern B.C from the raw materials in her soon-to-be backyard with the aid of a come-along and a peavey. She calls her home Nuk Tessli. The book is an account of Chris's life in a place where the nearest neighbors, aside from the wilderness creatures that kindly share their home with her, are a three-day hike away in good conditions. She lives without electricity, running water, or a telephone and her income is based solely on the sales of her books describing this simplistic life and the curious travellers who come to visit her cabin and experience the great outdoors at their purest. Partway through the book, however, this utopian world is slashed open with frightening realism, when lightning sparks a fire in the mountains around her and Chris finds her only home and life's work in imminent danger. She provides a startlingly vivid account of her life before, during, and after the blaze.

Chris has an amazing talent for describing the world around her. It is difficult not to be seduced by such a perspicuous depiction of the world that lies just beyond our horizon. The daily occurrences that compose her life, such as 3am wake up calls by ravenous grizzly bears, or having to bundle up and put on snow shoes just for a simple trip to the bathroom at midnight, leaves the reader biting at the bit, craving much excitement and adventure.

With the breathtaking literary paintings of the scenery around her, hilarious anecdotes about her four-footed best friends, and the white-knuckle account of the fire that threatened to take everything away from her, Czajkowski's novel can soothe the soul of any nature lover, and coax the latter out of any city dweller. It engages the reader in a world that is close enough to be touching, yet somehow further than imaginable.

WHITEY DON'T SEE THAT

The rising recognition of 'white privilege' in Western academia

BY MOMOKO PRICE, PHOTO BY OKER CHEN

Canada's international reputation as a multicultural mosaic—an ethnic *patchwork quilt*, so to speak—is its pride and joy. Public school students are indoctrinated about this virtue early on, often before their young ears have even come across the word 'mosaic' in its conventional context. Against the 'melting-pot' identity of the US, the Canadian mosaic boasts of two great things: an exceptionally high number of visible minorities as well as an open cultivation of immigrant communities and subcultures. Canada, in comparison to most other nations, is a pretty nice place to live—for anyone and everyone.

But one wonders if Canadian culture is really as yielding and egalitarian as our image would have us believe. Is the fight for human rights or better minority representation in society a vestige of the 60s and 70s? After all, women are now making up around 60 per cent of students at the post-secondary level, same-sex marriage is a go and our federal government passed the explicitly anti-discriminatory Human Rights Act over 20 years ago. Looking at the laws in place and the wide spectrum of skin tones, sexualities and gender identities walking our streets, you might think Canadian society is as egalitarian as it's going to get. It's no wonder that human rights protests are few and far between, and that aside from heckling the odd anti-abortion display, university students just don't get all that riled up over social injustice anymore.

WAR OF THE WORDS

People don't really flinch in the face of swear words these days, but they certainly pay attention when words like 'sexist' and 'racist' are brought into the ring. Public scandals like Michael Richards's recent meltdown on *Laugh Factory* and his poorly received apology on *Letterman* demonstrate just how reviled and unforgivable blatant racism is. In our society, being culturally sensitive and 'politically correct,' or PC, is expected. Anything less would be uncivilised—hell, it would be downright ignorant.

But is it possible for cultural tolerance to swing so far one way that it actually becomes unjustly intolerant? David Bercuson, a historian at the University of Calgary and co-author of *Petrified Campus: the Crisis in Canada's Universities*, believes it is. His book, written in reaction to, among other things, the PC movement of the 90s, describes how some university faculty members ended up with their jobs and reputations between the crosshairs because they were targeted by the vehement PC outrage of students and the community.

When asked whether or not he believes that 'political correctness' can stifle debate, Bercuson explained: "It's like a chill...For example, we could talk about Western countries' failure to do anything about Darfur...we could discuss it on the basis of the fact that it causes military problems, or that it does this or that. Or someone could just get up and say it's [because of] racism. Well, when you've done that, I think you've poisoned the debate."

"'Racism' is a word that we abhor," he continued. "We abhor any thought that we are engaging in this kind of invective. How are you supposed to defend yourself against [an accusation] like that?"

And while Bercuson believes PC ideologies have the *potential* to be abused and manipulated, organisations like the UK-based Campaign Against Political Correctness (CAPC) hold PC ideals in such contempt that they actively campaign to abolish them altogether. They stress (as do most critics of PC policies) that the world needs to stop the cultural madness and just get back to common sense.

> "THE GOAL OF WHITENESS STUDIES IS TO ENTRENCH PERMANENT RACE CONSCIOUSNESS IN EVERY-ONE—ETERNAL VICTIMHOOD FOR NON-WHITES, ETERNAL GUILT FOR WHITES."
>
> *–Barbara Kay*
> The National Post

TELLIN' IT LIKE IT IS, OR AT LEAST, LIKE I'M USED TO

Laurence Berg, Canada Research Chair for Human Rights, Diversity and Identity, disagrees with the idea that PC language and policies are oppressive. Why? Because he doesn't really believe that PC policies existed in the first place.

"What [they]'re calling the 'PC movement' I would call a social movement by marginalised people and the people who support them," he said. "[A movement] to use language that's more correct—not 'politically correct'—that more accurately represents reality."

Berg is referring to a way of thinking that many of us students were too young to catch the first time around. For us, the term 'politically correct' survived the 90s, but the term 'human rights backlash' did not. Will Hutton, former editor-in-chief for the UK publication *the Observer*, described in his column how the term 'PC' was never really a political stance at all, contrary to popular belief. It was actually perceived by many as a right-wing tactic to dismiss—or backlash against—left-leaning social change. Mock the trivial aspects of human rights politics, like its changing language, and you'll succeed in obscuring the issue altogether.

Berg believes this is what political correctness is all about: "The term politically correct is a reactionary term," he said. "[It was] created by people who were worried by [social] changes...that affected their everyday understanding of the world in ways that pointed out their role in creating or reproducing dominance and subordination."

According to Berg, the indignation people feel against PC ideas reflects the discomfort we feel when language and politics begin to pull away from the dominant values we grew up with—in other words, white, middle-class values. It's no small coincidence that the concept of political correctness originated in the 80s and 90s, just after human rights concerns and visible minority groups started getting real attention in politics and the media.

Berg explains that in its original context, PC was a pejorative term used by people who felt they were losing something. Exactly *what* they were losing is very hard to describe, especially to them. But many sociologists and historians today have come to a consensus on what they call it: it's a loss of *privilege*—and in terms of race, a loss of *white privilege*.

I ONCE WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE... DON'T I?

As soon as the terms 'race' and 'white' get thrown onto the same table, things start to get tense. You feel it already, don't you? It's not something people are all that comfortable talking about, what with the ugly realities of colonialism, the slave-trade and you know, the Nazis, but academics are stressing that it isn't something we can keep ignoring.

In the US, where racial conflicts and issues generally take a higher priority than in Canada, 30 universities including Princeton and UCLA now offer courses explicitly called whiteness studies, whose objective is to delineate exactly how society has formed and become constrained into the slanted system we live in because of past discrimination against non-whites. These studies have not only been hotly disputed by Conservative Americans, they haven't been well received by Conservative Canadians, either. Just last month *National Post* columnist Barbara Kay wrote a heated article called "Blaming Whitey," in which she angrily declared that "the goal of whiteness studies is to entrench permanent race consciousness in everyone—eternal victimhood for non-whites, eternal guilt for whites."

But according to UBC political scientist Bruce Baum (whose response to Kay was also published in the *Post*) the objective of whiteness studies and white privilege as a concept is not to promote self-hate, guilt or victimhood—it's to bring attention to how the active racism of our countries' pasts continue to contribute to intangible, but very real systemic racism today, a problem that until recently has largely remained nameless. To recognise the strange disconnect that exists in conventional talks on race, think about this: most of us would probably agree that racism is a real sociological problem. However, *none* of us would likely consider ourselves propagators of it. How could this be possible?

> AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IS NOT CONTROVERSIAL. IT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED FOR DECADES—ONLY IT PROMOTED THE PROGRESSION OF *WHITE PEOPLE*.

This is where the phenomenon of white privilege comes in. According to Berg, the problem with talking about social inequality is that "privilege is never experienced as privilege, but marginalisation is *always* experienced as marginalisation." He means that we don't see white, middle-class values as white, middle-class values. We see them as *normal*. Conversely, we see needs that fall outside of these values as 'special interest' issues that perhaps deserve attention, but not *too much* attention.

To illustrate how this perspective can affect political debate, Baum referred to a book recently written by Ira Katznelson, a prominent political scientist at Columbia University. The book, titled *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold Story of Racial Inequality in 20th Century America*, re-addresses affirmative action with a simple argument most people don't even think of when they talk about it: the fact that affirmative action (laws that explicitly promote the prosperity of one social demographic over another) is not controversial. It has been accepted for decades—only it promoted the progression of *white people*.

Katznelson delineates throughout the book how discriminatory legislation governing housing, employment and electoral processes after the World Wars had far-reaching infrastructural consequences—consequences that continue to affect American society today. It's complicated, but essentially the book uses historical evidence to make readers see that dismissing affirmative action as a kind of new-age racism blinds us to the fact that American social norms are not leveled out. Further, it highlights the mirage of the post-civil rights notion that 'serious' racial inequalities are a thing of the past.

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN TODAY: GUILT

The mantra of the 21st Century so far has generally been "been there, done that." In terms of art, everything's been done. In terms of film, everything's been *redone*, and in terms of human rights, everything's been protested. Many people are uncomfortable talking about systemic inequalities now because—as Barbara Kay demonstrated—they make the privileged ruffle their feathers defensively or spiral into helpless guilt, and make the marginalised feel as though they're victims and complainers. Because neither side can convene on the same perception of reality, talking about these issues becomes pretty unappealing.

Getting people to talk about racial inequalities is tough, Baum admits. When he taught a class on critical theories of race, he found that students tended to fall into one of two groups: the group that looks at the history and accepts it as true (albeit problematic) and the group that perceives the course and Baum's general attitude to be 'down on white people.'

He described how one white student came to him after class one day and explained that he came from a struggling, working-class family. "He asked me, 'what can I do? How can I be part of the problem?'"

This is one of the complex issues surrounding race now—it doesn't seem fair to make people feel responsible for historical pasts in which they played no part. How are we supposed to address the on-going consequences of stricken racist legislation without inciting undue alienation and guilt?

Baum said that he conceded to the student that economic class is in fact a large part of the problem, but shifting attention away from the ugly fact that race is just as entwined isn't right. Guilt happens, but it doesn't justify turning away from—or 'whitewashing'—the past. "Yeah, we didn't create this history," he said, "but white people benefit from [it]."

MARGINALISATION IN THE HERE AND NOW

As the public outcry against Michael Richards' brutal racist outburst has demonstrated, nobody sympathises with a racist. But Bercuson highlighted the subtle reality of most racist transgressions today: "The extreme manifestations of them are so obvious that you would almost consider it common sense [to recognise them.] The problem is when it gets marginal."

Everyone can recognise the injustice of active racism, such as a hate crime or a blatantly racist public statement. But what continues to go unrecognised in North America is the damaging effects of the passively accepted 'Myth of the Meritocracy:' the idea that, now that most of the archaic laws have been amended, anyone should be able to pull up their socks and get what they want, as long as they're just willing to work hard enough.

The student who stressed the limitations of class to Baum made a good point: money certainly dictates how many doors will be open in your future. But the fact remains, being poor is far more correlated with being non-white than white. In the United States, about five per cent of Caucasian families and 28 per cent of African-American families live below the poverty line. Which means that over five times as many black children are born into poverty as white children.

> "HUMAN RIGHTS GIVE US THE ILLUSION OF EQUALITY...HUMAN RIGHTS DON'T GIVE US EQUALITY. WHAT GIVES US EQUALITY IS CHANGING PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES."
>
> *–Dominique Clement*
> *Human Rights Historian*

Because African-Americans were legally denied affordable housing until well into the 40s (by contracts called residential restrictive covenants, or 'Caucasian Codes') and illegally denied housing well into the 60s, communities in the US have evolved to be far more racially and economically segregated than people would like to admit. Put together the wealth gap, the segregated housing and fact that schools are funded by neighborhood property taxes, and you get rich neighborhoods and good education for white kids, and poor neighborhoods and poor education for black kids. Not because the laws are necessarily unfair *now*, and not because anybody is necessarily a *racist*, but simply because this is how American society has let itself evolve in the past 40 years, and it's still a problem.

You might be thinking to yourself, yeah, but that's the *States*, Canada's different. We're the happy patchwork quilt, not a chaotic melting pot. We've got lots of diversity and opportunity for everybody. But Canada is not devoid of its own racial and economic inequalities, as its Aboriginal communities know too well.

MADE IN CANADA

Dominique Clement, a human rights historian at the University of Victoria, said researching the First Nations social movement during the 20th Century is a funny thing, because there are very few documents on the topic to research.

"First Nations is interesting. There's very, very little written on First Nations human rights activism. There's this weird period between 1910 and 1969 where First Nations were not terribly politically active."

You might wonder why this might be the case. And unless you're up-to-speed on graduate-level Canadian history, you probably won't guess the real reason. It wasn't simply because First Nations were poor, or displaced, or lacked support (though these reasons obviously contributed.) It was because Aboriginal activism was explicitly against federal law.

"In the early 20th Century, Aboriginal groups formed organisations to basically call for better conditions on reserves and call for education rights and things like that," Clement explained. "Sometime in the early 1920s, the federal government essentially criminalised and put in the Indian Act that Aboriginal groups could not form political associations and they were also not allowed to litigate land claims...That lasted until about 1969."

So until around 1970, less than 40 years ago, Aboriginal communities were not only legally ripped apart by abusive residential schooling systems, they were also legally prohibited from publicising or protesting their circumstances. Moreover, they were unable to fight for their own land.

It's stains like these in the history of our cultural quilt that affect the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community today, but as Berg said about the nature of historical privilege and marginalisation, privilege to the privileged is nearly invisible, while marginalisation to the marginalised is glaring.

The Indian Act has been amended and settlements for abuses in residential schools are still underway. Social support for Aboriginal communities is growing every year, but large systemic gaps in fundamental basics like housing and income still remain.

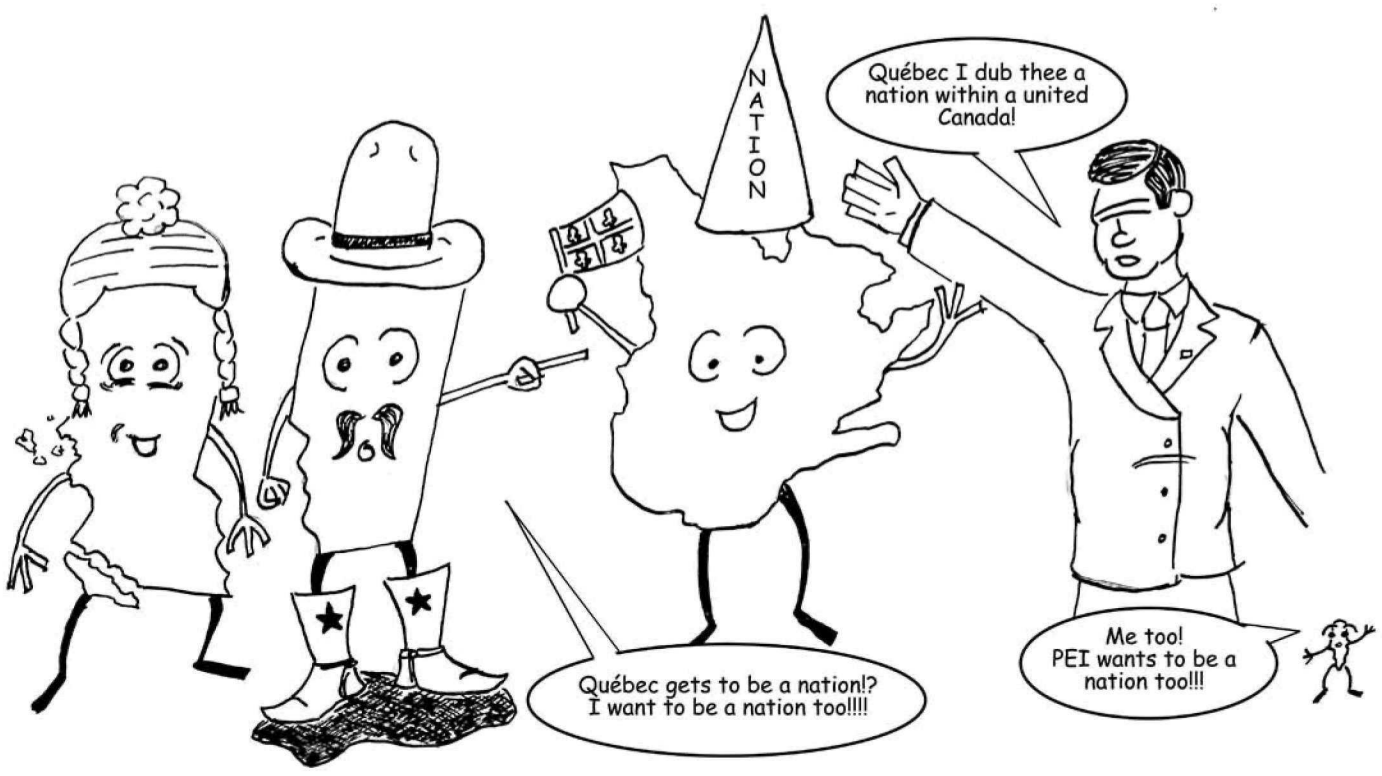
According to Clement, dealing with these issues, as well as other Canadian human rights issues in our current political climate should no longer be focused so much on legislation as it should be on education and on rectifying backlashing attitudes that continue to leak into each impressionable generation.

"At this point, people think, 'well, we've given all these rights, we've legislated them, so we don't need to do more. People are equal.' Human rights give us the illusion of equality...Human rights *don't* give us equality. What gives us equality is changing people's attitudes."

He posed this example to illustrate his point: "You may say that women get equal pay to a man, but if male CEOs don't hire women to their boards, well then that equal pay becomes useless now, doesn't it?"

Clement, Baum, Bercuson and Berg—all prominent Canadian social scientists—agree that education and awareness of our real history, with all the racism and injustice, is key to understanding how our society works today. Because when it comes to race issues, the reason why things are 'the way they are' rarely, if ever, reflects solely what you think you see in front of you.

And the fact that every single specialist approached to discuss this issue (nearly ten in all) turned out to be a white man just drives the point home that much more.



I Smell The Seeds Of Secession

"A distinct society"—okay, but then what?

"Vive le Quebec libre!"

General Charles de Gaulle's pronouncement at a 1967 rally in Montreal touched off a separatist movement whose fire has not yet been put out. But it's not for lack of trying by the federal government. In a surprise move Wednesday, the Conservatives passed a motion that stated that they wanted to recognise the Qebecois as a nation within a "united Canada."

The opposition was quick to jump on board, showing their support for Harper's motion with a standing ovation, making this one of the least controversial topics that the government has dealt with this year.

Hand it to Harper: this was also a shrewd political move.

By bringing this motion up on Wednesday, Harper pre-empted an eerily similar motion that was to be tabled by the Bloc the very next day, minus the "united Canada" jargon.

But while providing an immediate boost to the Tories sagging numbers in Quebec, the Prime Minister's posturing may prove to be more fatal to Canada's future than most would like to think.

Symbolic in its nature, this could provide Quebec with the stepping-stones to cement future separation, dividing Canadians even more. Governments come and go, but policies often stick around much longer than the parties that invoked them.

Every attempt to appease or counter the separatists has been interpreted as an affront to the movement itself. Each successive government has taken its turn to win over Quebec, but when will it end? Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's motion to recognise Quebec as a "distinct society" after the Quebec referendum in 1995, for example, or the Clarity Act in 2000, which made the process of separation much more difficult to ratify by the federal government, only further alienated those involved.

And now with this motion the government has once again appeased Quebec's 'national' pride. Loaded terms like 'nation' and 'founding peoples' and 'unique language and culture have a profound affect on unity issues.

If they truly care about a united Canada, the government should confront the separatist movement head on rather than contribute to a tradition of evasive political maneuvering. And if you are going to make motions like the one Wednesday you should at the very least be making it crystal clear what exactly these newfound recognitions will mean.

The House of Commons states that Quebec will be viewed as a distinct nation within Canada, but how?

Is that kind of recognition going to afford Quebec more funding? Or nationwide initiatives that will make Canadians recognise how distinct Quebec is from the rest of Canada? Will Quebec MPs be given more powerful veto over government decisions?

With two sovereignty referendums in their corner, the federal government should not be afraid to flex its political muscle. Someone needs to draw the line.

Streeters

How do you define 'nation'?

—Gary Andraza
VST Grad Student

"A nation is a set of unified people who live together with common beliefs and values."

—Andrew Gobbo
Psychology, 4

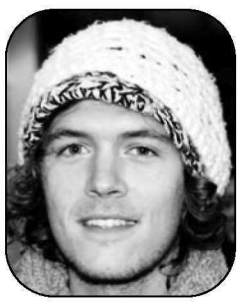
"A nation is its own region that has boundaries and its own people."

—Ian Dives
Science, 1

"It means a country to me."

—Karla Espinosa
Commerce, 4

"A nation is a specific culture that includes the values of the people living there."



—Eric Budzynski
Global Resource Systems, 3

"A nation is defined by its physical boundaries."

— Coordinated by Brandon Adams and George Prior

LETTERS

Waste management is important

I would like to echo the thoughts of the feature article from November 17 that focused on "Reduce, Reuse, Remember." There certainly could be more emphasis placed on targeting the Reduce and Reuse aspects of the Mobius Loop. There is a great need for the 'Garbage Crisis' to be viewed as a collective problem that we all face, as opposed to a municipality's responsibility alone.

What the article failed to mention, however, is that there are current efforts in place to help generate awareness about the importance of waste reduction.

At the GVRD level, there are steps being taken to address this growing problem. A workshop for the GVRD's Zero Waste Challenge was held last week, where the public was invited to meet with decision makers and various municipal coordinators about the garbage crisis. Topics such as environmental design, sustainable procurement and stewardship programs will be considered as recommendations for the new Solid Waste Management Plan put forth to the Waste Management Committee.

On campus, UBC Waste Management has worked hard in the past year to increase awareness! There are steps currently being taken to revamp the Surplus Equipment Recovery Facility (SERF), which recovers extra office furniture on campus to reduce the amount of new materials purchased on campus. There has been a major expansion in UBC's award-winning Organics Collection Program, so that composting is now available at all Food Service outlets on campus. There are additional recycling services available on campus as well, such as the Special Items Recycling Unit in the SUB and the monthly e-waste days held at the Waste Management warehouse.

While many regulating bodies are by no means taking a passive role in this issue, I do agree that there remains a great deal of work and education to be done before we are able to wholly adopt responsible consumption habits.

—Rachel So
communications and program development coordinator
UBC Waste Management

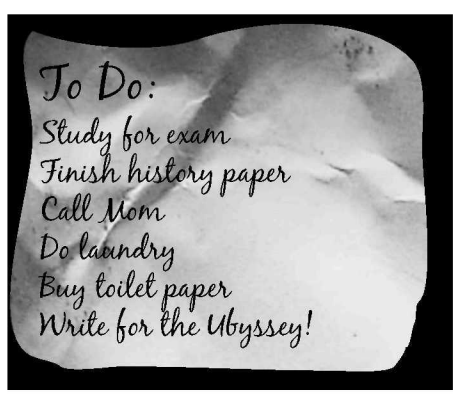
Pot spot on

It is commendable to stop citizens from driving while honestly impaired (*Ubyssey* "Conservative Policy Is Smoke And Mirrors," [Nov. 14]) as long as citizens who use cannabis responsibly are not targeted for simply having trace amounts of THC in their body.

Just as responsible alcohol consumers having alcohol in their body may pass impairment tests, so too should cannabis consumers. Discriminating against responsible cannabis users able to walk-the-line is unacceptable.

This is important since various jurisdictions in North America, have attempted to enact laws targeting citizens with any trace amount of THC in their body as being impaired, yet is not a clear case of impairment.

—Stan White
Dillon, Colorado



Designing your own vagina

by Sana Sharham
NEWS WRITER

Plastic surgery is on the rise. But it's not just noses and tummies that are getting perfected. The newest trend in plastic surgery is the nipping and tucking of vaginas.

The procedures include shortening or plumping up of the labia, tightening the vagina, removal of the clitoral hood and even hymen repair for those who wish to be born-again virgins.

The procedure is not a scientific or technological breakthrough—doctors have been performing the surgery for at least 20 years now—but it is becoming more popular.

The reason for this surge is hotly debated. According to Michael Atkinson, a sociology professor at McMaster University, "this is essentially a cultural problem that we fix medically." He added that the idea that something that deviates from the norm should be fixed is a direct result of market logic.

Still, many women insist that they pursue these procedures to enhance their own sexual pleasure and doctors are increasingly marketing the procedures as accomplishing just that.

According to Robert Stubbs, the 'it' doctor of genital surgery in Canada, the procedures can increase sexual pleasure. He pointed out that his patients who undergo clitoral unhooding experience a "three to nine times better orgasm."

In spite of this, Dr David Matlock, commonly referred to as the 'Picasso of vaginas' said, "there's a need for this, women are driving this. I didn't create this market, the market was there."

Many also attribute the emergence of this trend to the increase of pornography mainstream culture.

According to Leroy Young, chairman of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' emerging trends taskforce, the rising popularity of pornography has invited comparisons between women's otherwise covered areas leading to insecurities and inadequacies.

As more women opt for vagina modifying procedures, many doctors report up to one year waiting lists for the 'designer vagina'—a procedure that ranges between US $3,800 and $17,000.

But some detractors compare this practice to the female genital mutilations that still occur in some African countries. In her journal *"Cultural Practice" or "Reconstructive Surgery"? US Genital Cutting, the Intersex Movement, and Medical Double Standards,* Cheryl Chase argued that there is a "double standard regarding representations of genital cutting, depending on who is cutting and where in the world the cutting is done."

She emphasised that because the procedure is performed here in a more technologically advanced manner, we neglect to apply the same barbaric ideas to it that we do in African countries.

The people who are doing the cutting are still criticised for other reasons.

Many gynecologists are worried about the risks of complication with the procedures, which they feel are being ignored. Dr Vyta Senikas, associate executive of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, said, "these surgeons act as if their customers are shopping for a new car."

New chapter of feminism at UBC

Antigone magazine hopes to increase dialogue about women and politics on campus

by Meghan Roberts
NEWS WRITER

A new political magazine has started a new chapter of feminism at UBC.

Antigone magazine was launched at a party at the Meekison Arts Student Space on November 2. Former BC Green Party Leader Adriane Carr, representatives from the Canadian Women Voter Congress and the University Women's Club, joined editor and founder Amanda Reaume and other *Antigone* contributors at the event.

Reaume decided to create the magazine after meeting Kristen Myres, president of the UBC chapter of Women Involved in Legislative Leadership Association (WILLA).

Myres and Reaume both questioned why there were not more women involved in politics and shared a desire to increase this involvement.

"One night I had the idea to start a magazine on campus to get young women and young men involved in politics and political issues that have to do with women," said Reaume. She hoped this magazine would encourage women to participate in politics.

The title *Antigone* originates from an ancient Greek play where the female character starkly opposes the patriarchal system. The women working on *Antigone* felt the character's political resistance symbolised a woman's refusal to be silenced.

The current issue of *Antigone* features a piece by Reaume on modern views of the feminist woman, a profile of Amani Saini, who was a candidate for School Trustee in Abbotsford at only 20 years old, and an interview with BC's Minister of Finance Carole Taylor.

Reaume is especially enthusiastic about changing students' attitudes towards feminism and the stigma attached to the word.

"There are so many different faces of feminism," she said, adding that there are many amazing feminist women who have contributed to society.

"I have a problem with [feminism] being demonised," Reaume said. She hopes that *Antigone* will help familiarise the term so that more young women will embrace feminism.

LAUNCH PARTY: Former BC Green Party Leader Adriane Carr joined *Antigone* contributors at the magazine's launch party on November 2. **PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA REAUME**

Sara Sawesh, a third-year political science student, is enthusiastic about the idea.

"It's breaking the barrier of the 'old boys club,'" she said. "It's nice to see that there is a magazine by women for women in the field of political science."

Reaume hopes that *Antigone* will make an impact on campus by creating dialogues between students about the relationship between women and politics. Working together with initiatives like WILLA, UBC Pride, Allies @ UBC, and the Sexual Assault Centre, she hopes to encourage an atmosphere of equality on the UBC campus.

There are also plans to expand the scope of *Antigone* to include SFU and other universities across Canada.

Antigone can be found where other UBC publications are distributed.

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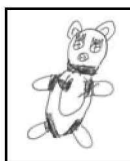

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Rockstar's *Bully* gets pushed around

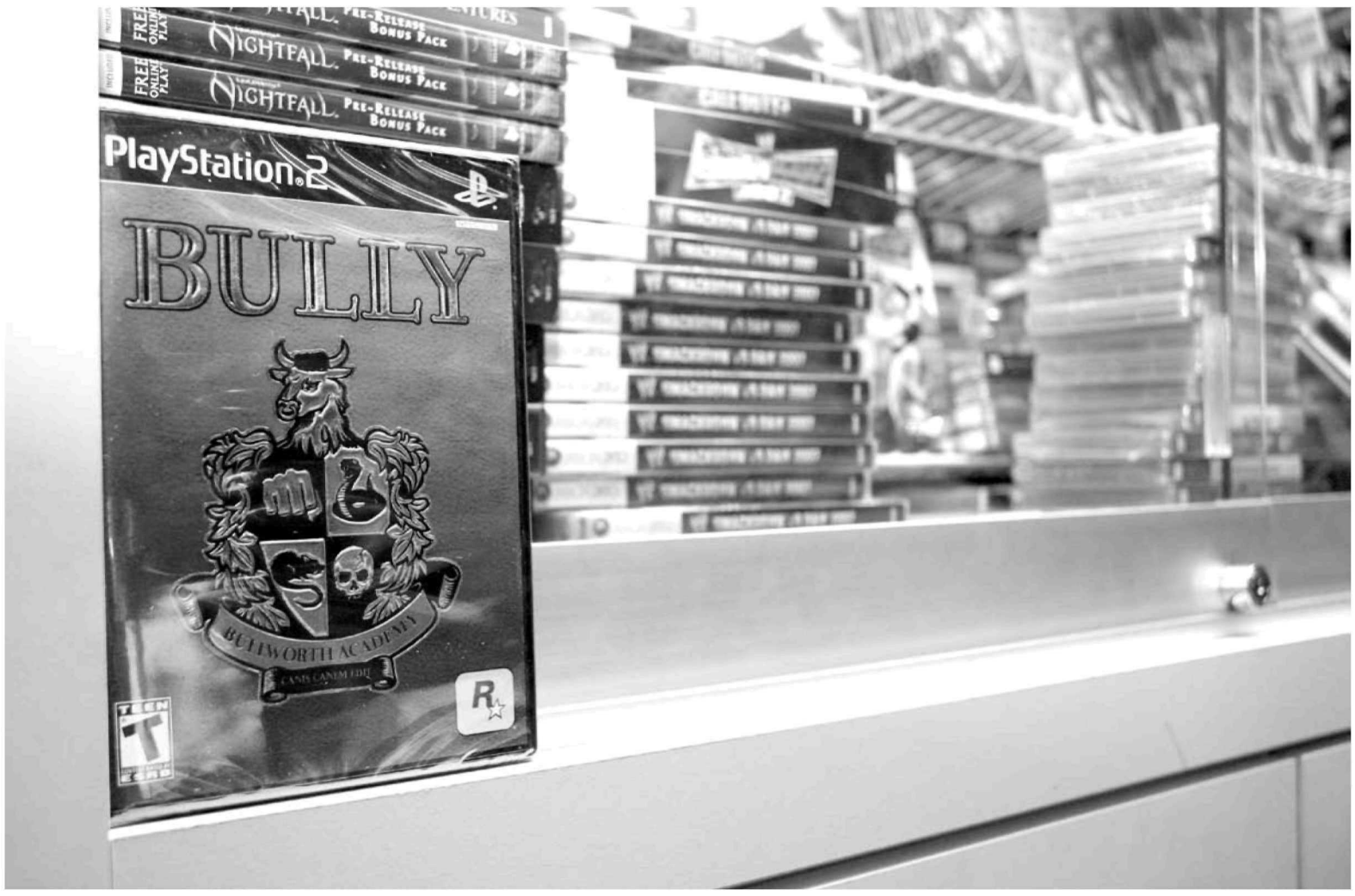
Videogame should be banned, says high school student

by Brandon Adams
NEWS STAFF

The makers of *Grand Theft Auto* are once again stirring up controversy with their new game *Bully*.

"It should be completely banned," said Katie Neu, who, with fellow New Brunswick high school student Robert Frenette, is calling for a complete Canada-wide ban of the game.

"WHAT YOU LEARN IN THE GAME CAN BE BROUGHT INTO REAL SITUATIONS...IT'S BASICALLY TELLING YOU IT'S OKAY TO BULLY BECAUSE THE CHARACTER ON THIS VIDEO GAME IS DOING IT SO IT MUST BE OKAY."
–Robert Frenette
high school student



NO THAT'S NOT THE HOGWARTS LOGO: New videogame *Bully* caught up in a controvesy. **KELLAN HIGGINS PHOTO**

Bully, the latest game by Rockstar Vancouver and Take-Two Interactive, centres around 15-year-old troublemaker Jimmy Hopkins. The game follows Jimmy through the gritty world of Bullworth Academy, a reform school, where Jimmy is dumped by his mother on her way to her fifth honeymoon.

At Bullworth Academy Jimmy must attend classes while socialising with other students and exploring the town of Bullworth.

Jimmy also must protect himself from various cliques of students at Bullworth; the nerds, preppies, greasers, townies, bullies and jocks all hassle *Bully's* protagonist. Bloodless fights, sometimes using bats or slingshots, end with everyone fine and a new schoolyard pecking order.

Controversy surrounded *Bully* immediately after it was announced because of its similarity to Rockstar Games' *Grand Theft Auto* series. Its name and the fact that players could fight other students upset many critics of violence in video games.

"What you learn in the game can be brought into real situations," said Frenette. "It's basically telling you it's okay to bully because the character on this video game is doing it so it must be okay."

Neu and Frenette's online petition calls for a complete ban of *Bully*. It has received much attention both the mainstream media and among gamers.

While the controversy surrounding the game has caused retailer Electronics Boutique to place the game, which is rated 'Teen' by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), behind glass, supporters of the game point out that neither Neu or Frenette have played *Bully*.

"I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY EVIDENCE BETWEEN [PLAYING VIOLENT GAMES] AND PEOPLE DOING VIOLENT ACTS."
–Richard Rosenberg
computer science professor

The ESRB's website states that games rated 'Teen', "may be suitable for ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language."

"It doesn't matter what age they set," said Neu in response to the game's ESRB rating and limited availability. "If you have to be 18 to buy the game, people who are under 18 will find friends to buy it and give it to them."

But some experts are skeptical of the connection between video games and violence.

"I don't think there is any evidence between [playing violent games] and people doing violent acts," said Richard Rosenberg, UBC computer science professor.

"To blame it on games is an easy out," continued Rosenberg. "I think it's much easier for public officals...to say 'if only we could reduce or limit these games; if we could censor and restrain them then we would reduce the amount of violence in the real world.'"

"It used to be comic books when I was a kid," said Rosenberg, comparing the current controversy over video game violence to the 1950s uproar over violence in comic books.

"This is just another piece of technology which attracts some people who encourage banning and controlling because that's how they seem to believe we can solve our problems—it's not going to work, it's not going to happen," added Rosenberg.

Despite repeated requests, representatives from Rockstar Games refused to comment for this story.

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E.coli found in water at UBC

E.coli bacteria was discovered at a water testing site at UBC yesterday, according to health officials.

The test sample has delayed the GVRD's plans to lift the boil-water advisory a week after it was issued.

But Patricia Daly, a medical health officer with Vancouver Coastal Health, told media on Wednesday that the sample may have been a false positive.

"The water in the sample had a high enough level of chlorine that it would not allow growth of bacteria, including E.coli," Daly said in a news conference.

Daly added that the water in the testing site doesn't supply residential areas near the University or student residences.

The sample may have tested positive because of contamination from compost, Daly said.