

The Jag

ISSUE 01

**The Jag's take on
New Year, New Me.**

CURRENT EVENTS

CREATIVE CORNER

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INTERVIEW



LETTER FROM *The Editors*

Dear Jag Readers,

“Why does no one read the Jag?”

As former Jag writers, we’ve asked ourselves this question for years. From our frustration, a new direction for the Jag was born: allowing student voices to shine throughout our school community. We are making changes to the Jag, turning it into a newspaper rather than a simple literary column.

Introducing the new Jag:

1. The Jag will now be a **newspaper**. Our focus is shifting away from creative pieces and towards expository writing on current events. Articles about real issues will be emphasized.
2. The Jag has historically been delivered only through email and a tucked-away corner of the library. The following editions will now be placed in **English classrooms** and the **Sun Centre Commons**.
3. This year, the editing team will encourage **shorter articles** to better capture the attention of the average reader. Concision is key in our editing process.
4. We have moved our meetings to **alternating Mondays at 8am** to avoid conflicts with other schedules. As our new focus on journalism demands conversation between editors and writers, we expect attendance for every meeting.

In summary, we are shifting our focus from the arts magazine of the past and will now be taking hard stances on current issues. The Jag will be posted in public spaces, like a newspaper, and articles will be rigorously edited to be accessible for our readers. If you are interested in becoming part of the Jag, you can email one of us, join the Google Classroom ([to74y5a](#)), or show up to a meeting.

We hope you’re all excited for this change.

Happy reading,

Julian, Mira, and Kayler

(julian.gale@smus.ca, mira.wirk@smus.ca, kayler.kim@smus.ca)

Halloween's Cultural Appropriation: Have You Found the Right Costume?

by Jane Lee

As fall has come and Halloween is near, many of us may be wondering what to wear for Halloween. When considering Halloween costumes it is important to ensure that your costume brings joy to others and promotes 'good vibes' throughout this spooky season.

Cultural appropriation refers to when an individual or group takes the ideas and elements of someone's culture and represents them in a disrespectful or inauthentic way. According to the New York Times, "[e]mbedded in it is the notion of adapting something so it is particular to oneself, so that it no longer belongs to or is true to the character of the original source — is no longer other than self" (Mishan, 2022). On the other hand, cultural appreciation is showing respect to cultures by listening and wanting to learn about their origins. It is as if you are being invited to learn about and mindfully experience someone else's culture rather than it being open for you because it "looks cool".

Well, over the past few years, the topic of an appropriate halloween costume has been up for debate. In an article from the Jetset Times, Allison Hinrichs reflects on a time when she and her friends would dress up in Native American Halloween costumes, after watching the Disney princess film Pochahontas. She writes, "Looking back, I know for a fact my friends and I had no intention of offending anyone with our costumes, but it didn't matter whether what we did was malicious or not, it was still wrong." (Allison, 2021). When it comes to Halloween costumes, light hearted characters and concepts will always win out. Showing interest in another culture is important and encouraged, but at a specific time and place. Halloween is a holiday centered around festivity, fun, and the supernatural. It should remain as such.

It is important to remember that, "One of our core values at St. Michaels University School is respect and "[w]ith this in mind, we acknowledge that our school rests in the heart of Straits Salish territory, a living culture with its own rites, ceremonies, and unfolding history. We honour the Esquimalt, Songhees, and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples – whose homelands we share and whom we recognize as our neighbours." As allies of other communities around us, we must acknowledge and respect their traditions and cultures. This applies to all settings– Halloween included.



Mid Autumn Festival: Reunion With My Past Self

by Sara Qian

As I was writing the draft for this fall edition, I struggled, so I decided to interview my past selves. I held up my time traveller to the sun and summoned my elementary school self. She looked around my dorm with curiosity, pausing to examine the walls, the shelves, and my desk, at last landing her gaze on me.

“Hi!” I greeted her.

“Where am I?” She raised a philosophical question. Fortunately, in our case there was an easy answer given that I was interviewing her.

I told her, “You are in my dormitory.”

“Dormitory, as in Harry Potter?” She bubbled up with excitement.

“Not exactly,” I stated, “More like an ordinary school.”

“Well then, why am I here?” she asked.

“To have an interview with me about the Mid-Autumn Festival,” I answered curtly before she could bring up more philosophical questions,

“And we’ll save the questions for later. I have a mooncake for you.”

Sometimes you must lure children with desserts to make them follow your instructions.

“What flavour?” she asked, her eyes twinkling with excitement.

“Lotus-paste,” I replied, “You’ll like it, because of its sweetness.”

She grabbed the mooncake and savoured its fine crust and smooth filling. As she continued to munch on the mooncake, I started interviewing her. “What did you do for the Mid-Autumn Festival?”

“I made a lantern with my mom,” she said between eating the mooncake, “And we decorated it with colourful fans and origami birds.”

“And you hid a riddle inside?”

“Yes, Sister. Would you like to guess it?” She remarked casually, but I mused over her use of the word “Sister”. Was she looking up to me as an older sister?

“Sure,” I decided.

She read out the riddle: “(A type of food) Round in shape, yellow in colour. The outside is embroidered with temple patterns, but the inside holds layers of emotions. Families enjoy it when they reunite. What is it?”

“A mooncake!” I declared.

“Yes,” she applauded me, but I knew something was wrong with that riddle. I fumbled with my memories of my elementary school lantern. Although I couldn’t remember the riddle itself, I could guarantee that it did not involve mooncakes.

“That is not the riddle on the lantern, is it?” I pointed out.

“No, I’m just hungry, so I made up one about mooncakes,” she admitted.

I called her out: “Aren’t you just asking for more mooncakes?”

She smiled back at me mischievously.

Sighing, I handed another slice of the lotus-paste mooncake to her. She devoured it eagerly, then peered at me and at her empty plate to imply for more.

“Actually, would you like to try another flavour of mooncakes?” I suggested, “With Yunnan-ham fillings.”





“Sure,” she accepted my mooncake. After a couple bites, she exclaimed:

“This tastes delicious too, but in a different way than the lotus-paste one. This one contains small pieces of ham, so it tastes rougher than the smooth lotus-paste mooncake. The lotus-paste one also tastes sweet, whereas the ham one tastes both sweet and salty at the same time.”

“You should be a food critic,” I urged her.

She said nothing, but her ears turned red. Fiddling with her hands, she quickly changed the topic of our conversation. “Do you have other types of mooncakes?”

“No,” I sighed, “But I wish I could taste other types of mooncakes as well, like red bean and matcha and snow skin.”

“Snow skin?” she mused.

“It’s a type of modern mooncake,” I elaborated, “People serve it cold instead of at room temperature, and you don’t need to bake it in an oven.”

“It’s like a winter version of traditional mooncakes,” she remarked.

“Yes, people innovated interesting types of mooncakes,” I acknowledged.

She nodded, then posed another question to me: “Which would you choose, traditional or modern?”

“I would have both,” I said, “Why not enjoy both mooncakes passed down from history and ones that appeal to modern tongues?”

“You should be a copywriter,” she countered.

“Touché!” I gave that to her.

After our lively conversation came silence. While my elementary-school self was observing my dorm, I came up with questions to ask her, because I realized that ever since I guessed her riddle, she succeeded my role in asking questions and making requests. I needed to get back on track. But before I could begin with my questions, she raised another one at me.

“Where is your mom and dad?” she asked.

“I’m currently boarding, so they aren’t here for the moment,” I explained.

She probed, “So you can’t reunite with mom and dad at the Mid-Autumn Festival?” What was she getting at? Mid-Autumn Festival is a time for families to reunite and connect with one another. In history, banished poets had often described their regrets at being unable to reunite with their family. Was she thinking that I would also feel devastated to stay by myself on the day of the Mid-Autumn Festival?

“No, but I can reunite with you,” I pointed out.

“Aww...” she cupped her hands around her cheek, “Hopefully our interview was enjoyable.”

I sighed. She became more of an adult than me. The only way I could establish more authority is by leaving her with something to ponder upon, so I announced, “Before you leave, I have a riddle for you.”

She drummed her fingers on my desk. “What is it? I can’t wait.”

“(An publisher) Wide in collection, keen in writing. At first glance a newspaper, at second glance a platform for student voice, after thorough reading a reflection of the students’ focus in their school lives.”

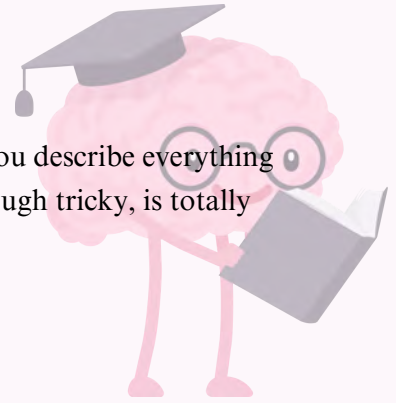
P. S. Readers, you can guess this riddle too.

How To Write A Really Good Personal Essay (From A Fellow Student)

by Julian Gale

A big part of your college application is often your “personal statement”—that is, how you describe everything amazing about yourself in ~500 words. Condensing everything that makes you great, though tricky, is totally manageable.

Here are some of my tips for Grade 12s writing their personal essays:



1) Sound Like You (but)

Universities want your unique written voice! If you sound like a teenager, that just tells them you didn't use AI. On the other hand, just because “quirky” CommonApp essays make great articles doesn't mean you should take that chance. A succinct, punchy story from your life with tight motifs and a moral of why you're a good fit is what we're after.

2) I have too much to write about??!

This was my camp—a bunch of extracurriculars and no one thing that defines who you are. My solution? Write about the thing that best displays the qualities the school wants from you. For me, Creative Writing programs need to know that I know how to write and think, that I have experience, and that my opinions have value. Decide which aspects of your character will make you excel in your program, then show them off!

3) I have nothing to write about??!

Yes you do!! Based on your presence at this school, I have a feeling that your parents have forced you into at least one extracurricular you enjoy. If not, you've got two months. Go make some new friends!

4) Remember why you're writing this

The point of your Personal Essay is to convince the school why you are a perfect candidate for their program. If your current selection is making this a struggle, maybe that school isn't right for you. Your school should embody you.

5) Stylistic Choices vs. Gimmicks

Your essay should be an essay. It's much more likely that someone has your exact Spotify playlist than someone had the same experience as you. A stylistic choice may mean including asides about your childhood, reading the future, imagining life as a video game, et cetera. You could even include a poem or braid essay themes together! Just make sure that if you take out the gimmick, the essay still follows good structure.

6) Get the Edgingtons to Read it

Mrs. Edgington will tell you if your general flow of ideas makes sense, Mr. Edgington will mercilessly cut it within an inch of its life.

That's all I've got. Happy writing!

Shake It Off!

by Owen Sandquist-Sherman

It's impossible to "shake it off" when it comes to Taylor Swift. For Gen Zs and Gen Alphas, the music of pop/country/folk/indie "superstar" Swift is truly inescapable. She's won 11 Grammys, broken 118 Guinness world records, and has sold out an entire stadium in under three minutes. However, many dismiss her music as lightweight pop fluff with no substance. Subreddits are filled with complaints of her music, there are hundreds of Youtube rants entitled "*Why Taylor Sucks*," and many of our own parents dismiss her as a passing trend. A closer look reveals this to be less trivial. Here are three reasons why the music of Taylor Swift is something special.

Her music is dynamic. From a structural standpoint, Swift's music is notable. Music researchers have identified the attributes of what a "catchy song" is. In order to keep listeners engaged, songs should employ several "melodic turning points," usually in the form of contrasting verses, choruses, and bridges. Swift's hit "Our Song" exemplifies this. The verse melody consists mainly of a single note. However, the chorus contrasts this with a sudden climb up a scale, acting as the necessary turning point, and creating an anthemic vibe that she would return to many times over her career. However, clever song construction is not unique to Swift. What makes her truly unique?

Her lyrics are relatable and well-written. According to Scarlet Keys, a professor of songwriting at Berklee College of Music, "she's really painting a picture with concrete language... 'simple is global'...if you write a simple rhythm, it's really easy to hand it over to 10,000 people and go, 'now you sing it.'" Swift's songs feature a variety of lyrical techniques; some use the "simple is global" method and others feature precise details, making them feel complete and authentic. Pop lyrics can often descend into clichés or stock phrases, yet Swift's clever use of character and description proves her lyrics are of merit. Songs like "You Need to Calm Down" deal with modern issues such as LGBTQ2+ rights. However, Swift's immortality is truly sealed by her musical reach.

She is versatile. Artists only capable of writing in a singular genre are often dismissed and relegated to becoming one hit wonders. Swift began her career in the country genre, then moved to pop, then to indie folk. She appealed to a mainstream audience while operating in all three of these modes, showing her talent and accessibility. One of the only artists to approach the success and impact of Taylor Swift is the Beatles, who popularized folk rock, psychedelia, and even the beginnings of electronic music. Similarly, Swift took several musical genres and made them relevant again. By establishing herself as a pop artist and then moving to indie folk, for example, she was able to popularize a genre not typically associated with mainstream success, proving her depth as a songwriter and musician.

Modernism, Morality, and Melancholy: the Mystifying World of Ryunosuke Akutagawa

by Jessie Wang

What makes a book a “classic”? What allows its author to be remembered throughout history and his ideas to be preserved for centuries to come? Is it the quality of his prose? The uniqueness of his perspective? Often, works hailed as classics are those that embody the cultural identity of a nation. As Germany had Goethe and Heine, and France had Balzac and Hugo, Japan had Akutagawa.

Though perhaps less renowned in the West, writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa (龍之介 芥川) is one of the most harrowed literary giants of East Asia, famous for his eloquent language in the short story form and representation of his country in a period of great uncertainty. The story of Akutagawa’s life is set in the Taisho Era of Japan, a time during which its people struggled against the forces of imperialism and the pressure of rapid Westernization. Having been brought up and educated according to “modern” Western customs, Akutagawa spent his life weaving together the traditionally Japanese forms of storytelling with the new imported styles that had revolutionized the literary circles of his time.

Although works depicting existentialism and the burdens of everyday life were in demand, Akutagawa—in his detached personality—was never quite comfortable with the nakedness of such realism. Instead, he offered the same contemplations on morality, ethics, and the human condition focused through the lens of carefully crafted metaphors. Many of his early short stories, such as “Hell Screen” and “In a Bamboo Grove” read like folk tales in their simplicity while simultaneously holding an underlying depth.

In the final chapter of his literary career, Akutagawa’s works became marked by their distinctly autobiographical depictions of mental health struggles. Through stories such as “Cogwheels”, he offered haunting musings on mortality and existentialism. Nonetheless, the air of mystique that his style contains remains persistent throughout his works, leaving the reader questioning “how much of this is fiction?” and “how much of this is reality?” Unable to bear the effects of what he suspected to be schizophrenia, Akutagawa took his own life at the age of 35 in 1927, his death serving as a harbinger to the horrors of the Second World War that would follow. As beautiful and as brief as the blossoming and wilting of a flower, his writing marks the short-lived glory of the era in which he lived and contains the identity, pride, and hopes of his people.



Recommended works

Autumn (1920)

Rashomon (1915)

Cogwheels (1927)

Hell Screen (1918)

Kappa (1927)

Untitled

by Yuhe Pan

Autumn arrived slowly, sweeping across the world with the softness of a sigh, weaving clouds from gray threads and scattering them across the vast sprawl of Summer's sky. Wind unspooled from her fingers, cool and crisp, gently dulling the sun's warmth.

And the first leaf changed at her touch, rusty orange bleeding into lush green. No one paid any attention when that first leaf changed. Because the moment was simply far too small, far too inconsequential in the tremendous tapestry of life to be deemed of any importance to anyone. Even when Autumn wove more clouds to block out the sky, unraveling winds more cold and more frigid, the world never stopped to notice. Not when more leaves began to weep orange and yellow and red, drifting to the earth where they grew wet from the rain and wilted in the dimming of the sun.

No one stopped to bear witness. Not even once.

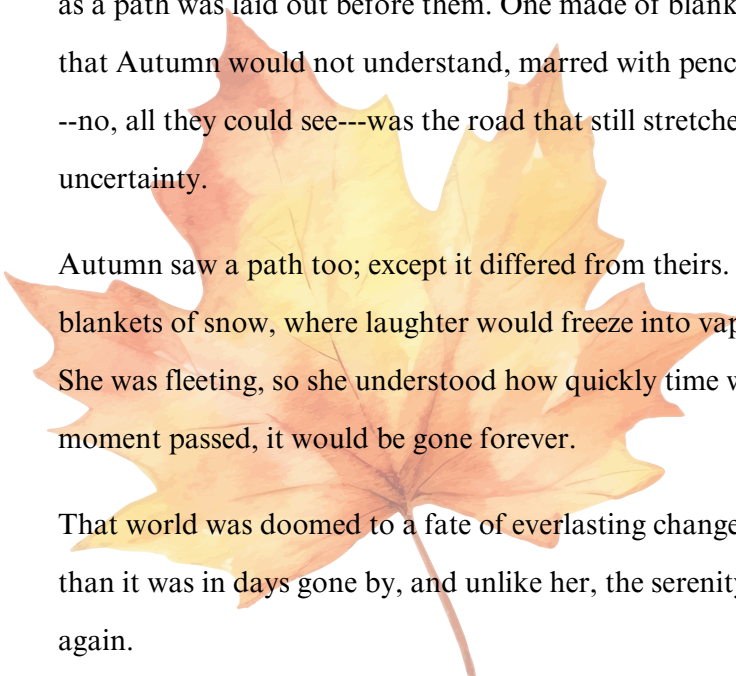
And though the world did not stop to observe her, Autumn stopped to observe the world.

She witnessed how the children clamored back to their schools like they did so every time she returned. She saw how the their initial exuberance and excitement faded from their faces the colder the wind blew, as a path was laid out before them. One made of blank papers that would later become inked with words that Autumn would not understand, marred with pencil scrawls and circular red markings. All they saw--no, all they could see---was the road that still stretched on endlessly ahead into the dense fog of uncertainty.

Autumn saw a path too; except it differed from theirs. One that foretold of bitter cold and white blankets of snow, where laughter would freeze into vapor within Winter's crisp and cold air.

She was fleeting, so she understood how quickly time would pass without a single apology; that once a moment passed, it would be gone forever.

That world was doomed to a fate of everlasting change and transience. Nothing would ever be lovelier than it was in days gone by, and unlike her, the serenity and joyfulness of the past would never return again.



Connect

by Sophie DeLauniere

Panic and stress consume the halls

Everybody up the walls

Often times there is a scene

Praying; begging, “help me please--

Lessen the workload

End my strife

Mocha or matcha?

Aaah! I’m on my ninth.”

Teachers marking, students worried

Tests and projects; life is hurried

Entire nights spent cramming late

Restless sleep; too much on the plate

Moments of silence

On ocean or field

Stay golden for life

To help our heads heal

In shadow of night, when all joy seems lost

Nod to loved ones: your peace, no cost

Long-lasting memories, interactions to treasure

Invaluable moments, too precious to measure

Far higher than evaluations, outcomes or marks

Every true lesson comes from our hearts.

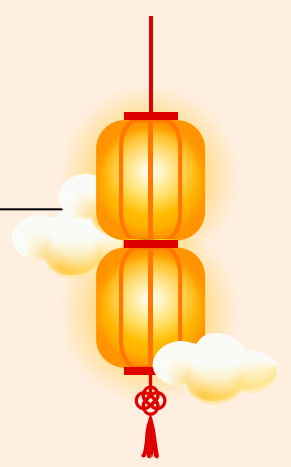
It is early morning now, tangerine light bounces off the wooden kitchen floors and into my sleep-deprived eyes. It is summertime, and I am seventeen. This morning is one of mundanity. My other friends sleep upstairs. I squint my eyes against the morning. The smell of caramelized banana pancakes returns me to lucidity. My friend flips the final batch as I clean the table. We don't say much. I make tea. Red mugs and cinnamon apple chai. Dawn is peach and nectarine, the sun takes slowly to the sky. Pink lights from my speaker gleam through the veins of granite countertops. I look at him as a favorite song of ours begins. Stripped back acoustics and electric guitar riffs fill sweet air. I move easily through the dappled morning light. We dance together. We dance with no rhythm; like drunken fools moments. We dance until the song fades, and I play it again. Soft steam from scarlet mugs goes still. Everything goes still. I close my eyes before the next song plays.

-anonymous



SMUS Chinese Culture Club Celebrates the Moon Festival

by Youlan Li



On Friday, September 27, 2024, the SMUS Chinese Culture Club celebrated the Moon Festival together in Suncenter Commons. The Moon Festival, a traditional holiday symbolizing family and unity, brought students together for a night filled with fun, performances, and delicious snacks & mooncakes. The festival, also known as the Mid-Autumn Festival, is celebrated with traditions such as eating mooncakes and admiring the full moon, which represents reunion.

The event featured lots of student performances, such as singing, dancing (locking), playing the drums, and talk shows. Attendees also shared festive mooncakes, a beloved hallmark tradition of the festival. It was a wonderful opportunity for students to immerse themselves in Chinese traditions while celebrating together as a community.

Later on in the year, the Chinese Culture Club plans to host another exciting event during the Spring Festival. We are looking forward to seeing more students joining and celebrating it together.





Clubs at SMUS

by Bronwyn Ellis

I started my own club this year with two of my friends because we wanted to crochet at school and teach others to love the art as well. Every year, students notice a gap in club representation and start their own to build a community of like-minded people. Being a part of a group is human nature and often clubs help guide the way to your future. If you didn't get a chance to go to the club fair and sign up for one of our new clubs, here are a few of them:

Songwriting and Music Production Club: Dive into the world of sound and learn everything from music theory and songwriting to producing your songs. (Katherina Bohmann)

Basketball Club: If you love basketball, this is the club for you. It's an open space to chat about the sport, including stats, standings, and the history of basketball. (Crawford Sly)

Game Theory and Probability Club: Explore the math behind games like blackjack and go Fish while playing to make it fun. (Jaden Berger-North + Helen Jiang)

Crochet Club: Want to try crochet? This club offers a fun, relaxed environment with all materials provided, so just bring yourself. (Elena Graham + Fung-Ei Chew + Bronwyn Ellis)

Circle of Impact Club: Join organized service projects to make a difference in the community and earn service hours. (Jaiden Daniels + Gautam Jay)

South Asian Culture Club: A space for those interested in South Asian cultures or feeling homesick. Club meetings include games, food, and activities. (Saanvi Katireddy + Preeya Kaur)

SKLORD: Add creativity to school merchandise and express individuality through art. (Gautam Jay + Jaiden Daniels + Connor Lee)

Arabic Club: Learn Arabic, explore Omani culture, and even try some traditional foods. (Emad Alkhusaibi)

Golf Club: Meet up on weekends to play golf at a nearby course and discuss all things golf. (Matty Kolinek)

Dungeons and Dragons Club: Learn to play DnD and participate in campaigns. (Lleyton Rees)

Calculus Club: Get help with calculus or learn about its real-world applications without competition pressure. (Helen Jiang + Joanne Jiang)

Every club brings something unique to the table. Sports and culture clubs provide an inclusive space to discuss common interests or learn something new and if you're looking to get involved in the community while getting service hours, join a club like Circle of impact. If you're looking to express your creativity, join an Arts club, and if you're looking to tackle difficult subjects or look at real-world applications of academic subjects, join an academic club. Whether you want to explore something new, express yourself creatively, or get academic support, there's a club for everyone. It's never too late to join a club. If you find yourself with free time during lunch, take the opportunity to check one out!

PRESENTED BY

TRIVIA CLUB

1) A LANDFORM WITH STEEP SIDES AND A FLAT TOP IS GIVEN WHAT FRENCH NAME?

HINT: SOCIALS 10!



ENJOY THIS TRIVIA?
JOIN TRIVIA CLUB!

2) WHICH SHIP WAS FAMOUSLY TORPEDOED AND SUNK BY A GERMAN SUBMARINE IN 1915?

3) WHAT ISLAND, KNOWN FOR ITS GIANT STONE STATUES, IS A TERRITORY OF CHILE?

WE MEET ON TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS AT 12:20 IN THE BASEMENT OF THE SCIENCE BUILDING.

ALL SKILL LEVELS ARE WELCOME AND BRING A FRIEND.

4) WHAT IS THE OFFICIAL STATE PIE OF FLORIDA WHICH IS NAMED AFTER THE FRUIT IN IT AND A LOCATION IN THE STATE?

5) WHICH FRIENDS CHARACTER WAS COURTNEY COX ORIGINALLY ASKED TO PLAY?

YOUR TRIVIA CLUB HEADS, LIAM & WILL

Spotlight Interview: Ms. Amiel

by Claire Ru

A year ago, I was a new international student, sitting in a social studies classroom for the first time. I did not like to admit it, but language was a barrier for me. Not as I could not understand the content, but I could not transfer the knowledge into my own words and express it as freely. This is, especially in social studies, an issue. Ms. Amiel was my Socials 10 teacher and encouraged me to be more active in class and seek out help. I spent a few tutorial sessions with her, watching her go through my response and realizing that I could almost improve the expression in every sentence I wrote. Noticing the fact that I had an issue with written communication was somewhat discouraging, but the sense of accomplishment when I step into and commit to a face-to-face tutorial session also exceeds the discouragement. Ms. Amiel (and I can generalize it to all SMUS teachers) can see minor progress made and are welcoming to provide support. Perhaps some of the international students are in a similar situation as I did, so I conducted this interview, including some questions that I was wondering about. Trust in the process, in a year, we can make progress on several aspects, and it will all turn out smoothly.

Interviewer: Some students are not familiar with you, would you like to introduce yourself and the work as the Assistant Director of Academics?

Ms. Amiel: This is my second year at St. Michaels University School, and as the Assistant Director of Academics, I have two roles: First, Mr. Anderson is the Director of the Senior School, and there are three Assistant Directors underneath him, Mr. Primrose, Mr. Curry and I. My focus is more on academics. My responsibilities include assessment, reporting, and student success. This means I get to work closely with teachers and Mr Anderson, and my goal this year is to continue getting to know the teachers and the students better. Second, we have a JK to 12 Director of Academics, and that's Ms Lamarche, and so I'm her assistant director as well. One could say I have two bosses and two jobs at the school! I really love my job, because I get to see what academics look like from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12, and I get to interact with lots of different departments across the senior school.

Interviewer: As the Assistant Director of Academics, what are some tips for students to be successful?

Ms. Amiel: So, when I think about what it might be like for Grade 9 students coming into the Senior School, my advice to them is to: establish really good learning habits; spend the year figuring out what works best for them; and figure out how they learn best.

For *Grade 10s*, it is a bit of a jump moving from Grade 9 to 10; they might see an increased workload or more challenging courses, and it's a really good time to ask for help and find the adults around campus who are going to help them. Whether they have a really close relationship with their homeroom advisor, coach, houseparent, or teacher, building a strong support network is key.

For *Grade 11s* just starting out, I guess my suggestion to them would be to have a two-year plan. Think about where they would like to be at the end of their Grade 12 year and work backward. I remind all students that it's okay to change your mind and that you do not have to have it all figured out. Some much about university is exploring and finding your passions and strengths, so I say to the Grade 11s, it will all work out in the long term. For now, just focus on the next two years in order to have a great finish to your high school career.

And then for *grade 12s*, I'd say remember all those study habits they learned in Grade 9? Now is the time when it really matters. Obviously, Grade 12s are so busy with applying to university, maybe having a job, and participating in all the volunteer and service work on top of going to school; being really organized is a key to success.

Interviewer: Any tips for studying Social Studies for international students at SMUS?

Ms. Amiel: Certainly. I would say, be confident. I often hear students comparing themselves to others and saying things like, "Oh, they know so much more than me." They actually don't, so be confident that you are coming in with a great perspective and a worldview that enriches our social studies classrooms. Please participate and speak up! I love teaching students from all over the world because they bring in different experiences and points of view. My other advice is to read, listen, and watch the news. That is the best way to understand events in Canada and contextualize what we learn about in the classroom. News is very inexpensive; most often, it costs nothing to download an app of the CBC Radio, or watch and read the news online.

I also encourage international students to travel around Canada and explore its distinct and vast landscapes. Canada as a country is far more exciting and diverse than what is shown in a textbook, and traveling around the country would give students a range of fresh insights into the country.

Interviewer: Writing is a big component of social studies; what are some recommendations for students who want to improve on writing?

Ms. Amiel: Remember that your social studies teachers understand the skill level that you are coming into the classroom with. We do not expect Grade 10 students to write like they are in first-year university nor do we necessarily expect students whose English isn't their first language to write perfectly. It takes time. And that's okay. We know that you can still have great ideas and be really good at critical thinking and analyzing, but maybe your grammar is not yet perfect.

But what really helps is asking your teacher to proofread written assignments ahead of time. I would say to students who would like to improve their writing: give yourself more time before the deadline; give yourself more time for the editing process; and let other people read your work. I wish I had figured that out in high school; it took me until about my second year at university to have the courage to go to my professors and visit them during office hours, but once I started to do that, my grade point average skyrocketed. Let teachers help you capture your authentic voice and ideas.

Interviewer: Teaching involves repetition. How do you make the course intriguing for both students and yourself?

Ms. Amiel: Historians are like detectives, and there are always different lenses and approaches to conducting an investigation. So a good historian, like a good detective, will look at all the different points of view. I like to find new pathways to study and teach something that maybe students haven't explored before, and maybe I haven't either. For example, I've been teaching World War II for like 17 years now, but I noticed I was doing it in a very Eurocentric way, focusing mostly on Europe. I decided to find new avenues to study the War, for example, my class once looked at how the War exacerbated the famine and food shortages in India. Millions of people died in India during World War II; we don't really study 20th century Asia and Southeast Asia.

I also like to give students choice when exploring historical concepts and events. Reading students' differentiated projects helps me learn and it also keeps my curiosity going. For example, when I taught Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12, students chose their own projects to study. One student looked at the idea of Canada Day and what does the day mean for different Indigenous groups in Canada. Another student examined elementary schools' curricula and visited different elementary schools to see how Indigenous-focused lessons were being taught. Another student looked at the economic self-determination of First Nations groups. Having students choose different topics and ideas to explore keeps it fresh for me.

