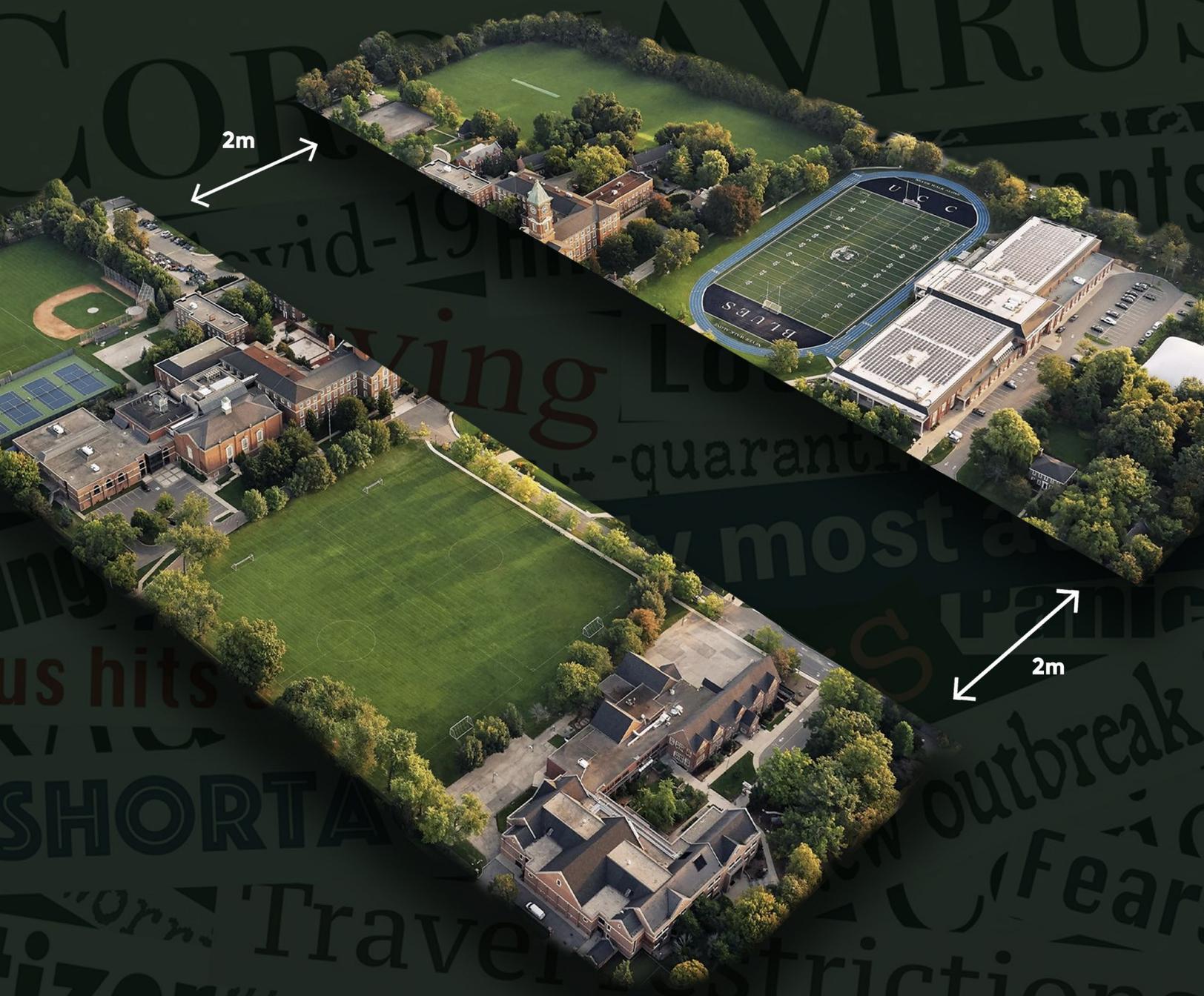


**CONVEY** ← 2m → **URGENCE**



**socially** ← 2m → **distanced**

# UCC'S RESILIENCE DURING PREVIOUS PANDEMICS

KEVIN LIU

CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

Today, we all wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but here's an interesting trivia question:

**In the 1830s, what unusual item did boarding students at UCC wear in order to avoid infection during the frequent cholera epidemics which plagued Toronto?**

- a) Face masks
- b) Camphor-filled cloth necklaces
- c) Socks soaked in red wine
- d) Crowns of flowers

Before answering the question, let me first observe that with such a long history, UCC has endured many different pandemics over the years, including the more recent SARS and H1N1 pandemics, but also cholera and influenza outbreaks of the 19th and 20th centuries. In late June, I reached out to College Archivist, Ms. Jill Spellman, to try to educate myself on how UCC was affected by these previous disease outbreaks. She dug through past student publications such as *The College Times* and online archive portals such as the Internet Archive <archive.org> to unearth and send to me tidbits of our school's history during the epidemics and pandemics over a century ago. It turns out that our school demonstrated remarkable resilience in those difficult times.

## Cholera Epidemics, the Early to Mid 1800s

For the trivia question above, b) is in fact the answer. During the cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1834, UCC students followed the prevailing medical advice of the era: wearing small bags of camphor, a type of odorous tree pulp similar to menthol, around their necks to prevent the spread.

Cholera was first brought to Canada by immigrants from Britain in 1832, in a pandemic that spread to big parts of Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and

North America. Between 1832 and 1854, cholera spread around Canada multiple times, responsible for over twenty thousand deaths.

*Upper Canada College, 1829-1979: Colborne's Legacy* is an official history published to commemorate our 150th anniversary. Inside it shared that during the cholera pandemics in the 1830s, back when a typical UCC boy could "knock off Latin verses with one eye open" and "translate at sight the satirical lines of Lucian into decent English":

*"West of the College was the general hospital, and back of it ran a long row of wooden buildings known as the cholera sheds, dreaded by all, but especially the boarders. The first cholera epidemic came in 1832, and 'then every boy in the College had his tiny bag of camphor hung around his neck, an amulet, so the youngsters claimed, that was proof against that dreamless sleep into which so many sank to rest in that dread year.' The second cholera attack two years later was worse than the first, but luckily no College boy was infected."*

## Influenza Pandemic (Spanish Flu) of 1918-1920

A century ago, the influenza pandemic, also known as the Spanish Flu, spread throughout Europe, North America, and elsewhere on ships carrying troops fighting in World War I. It is estimated to have claimed around fifty million victims worldwide, including around fifty thousand in Canada. All parts of the country were affected, from cities to the most remote communities. Almost nine thousand people died in Ontario, including one thousand six hundred in Toronto, despite measures taken by most communities and all levels of government.

The Christmas 1918 edition of *The College Times* documented the impact of the influenza pandemic on UCC. During WWI, drills for the UCC cadets in The Rifle Company were being held weekly. Due to the influenza pandemic, these drills were

restricted to the boarders only. The sports teams were also prevented from playing in their inter-collegiate games, and school activities such as the dance were postponed.



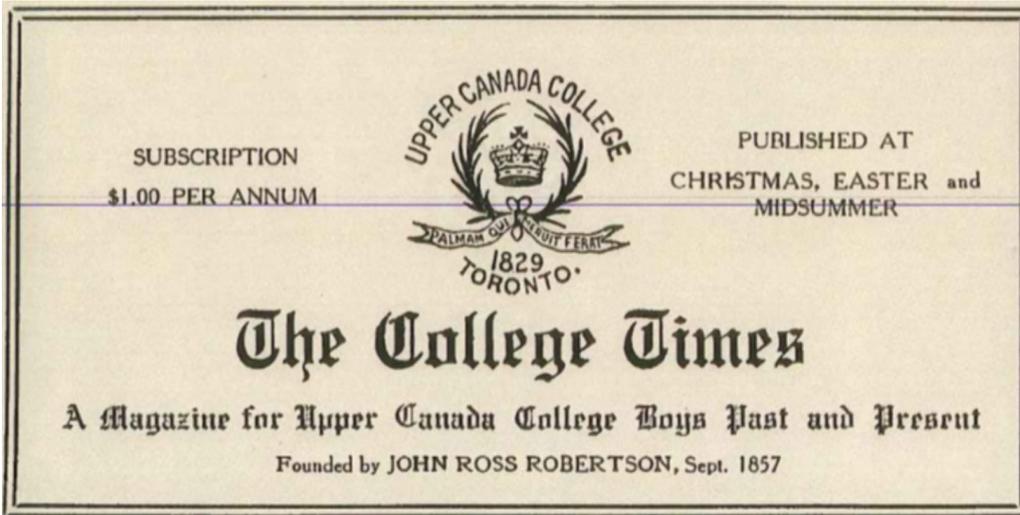
Header for UCC's *The Rifle Company* in *The College Times*

The Easter 1920 edition of *The College Times* revealed that during that school year, "The School had, at one time, about 26 cases of light influenza in the sick room, not to speak of innumerable day boys".

As a result of the pandemic, UCC mourned the unfortunate loss of members of the community, including Old Boy Col. William Hamilton Merritt and student Edward Magann.

Throughout, our school demonstrated tremendous resilience. Despite the cancellation of inter-school sports competitions and the reduction of cadet drills, *The College Times* noted that **"a spirit worthy of UCC"** was maintained in sports practices, and that **"the spirit with which the boys drilled during this period was most admirable"**. Although the summer holidays would begin later than usual due to the pandemic, *The College Times* declared that **"we decidedly have no right to grumble, when we consider the splendid standard of health which the College was able to maintain throughout the epidemic"**.

Today, in the press and during our daily conversations, we always use the word "unprecedented" to describe COVID-19. It is indeed unprecedented in many aspects. But if history is of any guidance, UCC will once again demonstrate remarkable resilience during COVID-19, as the "spirit worthy of UCC" will surely prevail again. And if every one of us takes precautionary measures to protect ourselves and others,



Header of *The College Times*, as used in Summer, 1919

I think that we have every reason to believe that the College will again maintain a “splendid standard of health”.

To wrap up this article, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ms. Jill Spellman, our dedicated archivist, for her deep knowledge of the college’s history and her invaluable help for my journey to the past. Ms. Spellman also offered a correction to our last regular issue. If you continue to read the correction below, you will again take an intriguing glimpse into our school’s history and find out how the space that now we call the Student Center actually looked like in the past.

### Correction from 2020 May Issue - History of the Student Centre

My article entitled *Mr. Hoel’s 21-Year Journey at UCC* in the 2020 May Issue stated: “The Massey Quadrangle had just been converted to the Student Centre and the classrooms above it (the film room and design studio)”.

Ms. Spellman reached out to correct that it was, in fact, The Prince Philip Quadrangle which was infilled in 1999 to create the Creativity Centre that is home to the Student Centre today. The Massey Quadrangle is the open-air quadrangle where the statue of Lord Seaton stands, directly

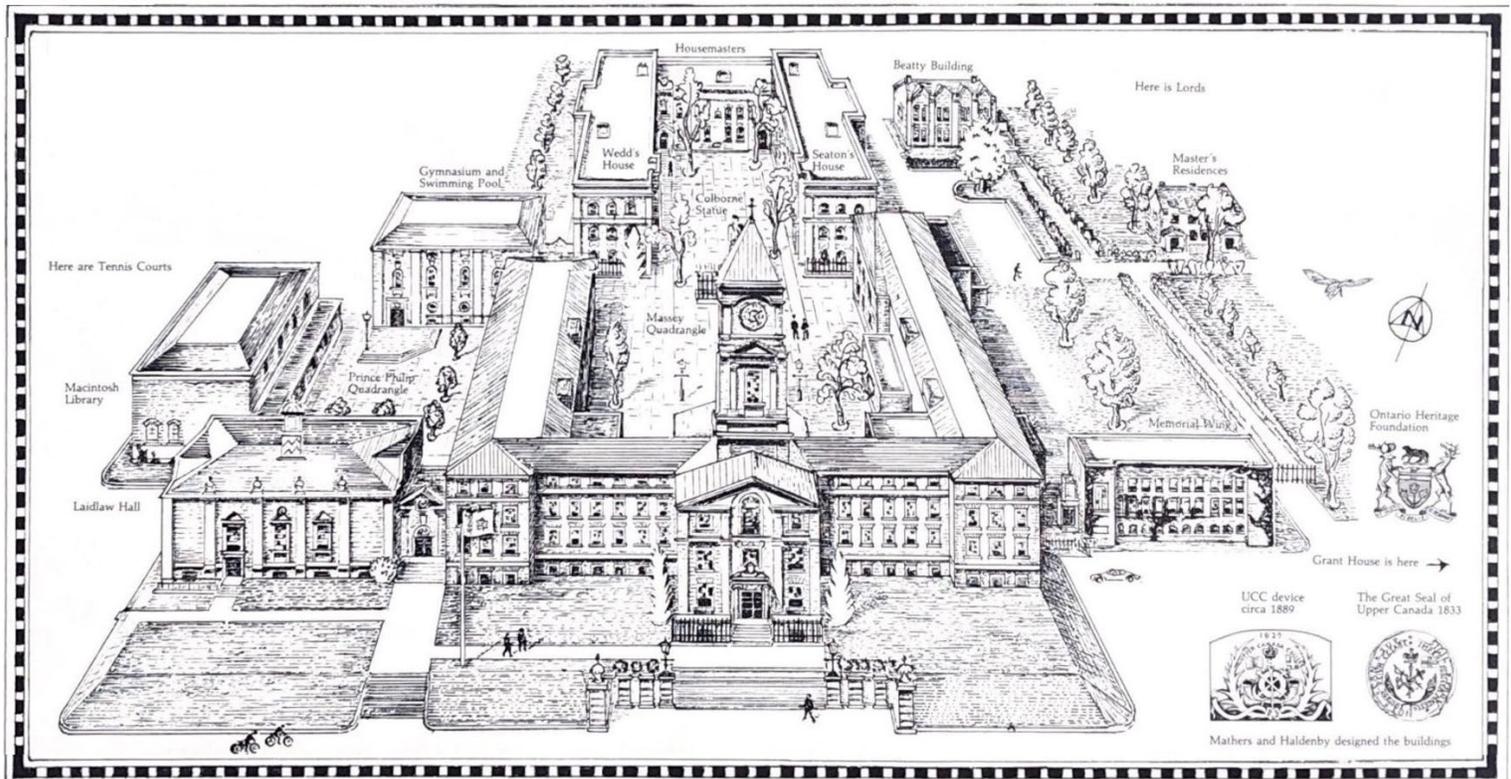
behind the Upper School / in front of the boarding Houses.

What truly fascinated me is the 1982 bird’s eye sketch of the Upper School that Ms. Spellman shared with *Convergence*. Seen below, it is clear how the Prince Philip Quadrangle was created and how much the school has grown around it since.

Ms. Spellman shared that the College’s 150th Anniversary (also referred to by our community as its Jubilee Year) took place in 1979. There was a special long weekend of events that our Official Visitor, HRH Prince Philip, attended and during which the Prince Philip Quadrangle was officially opened.

Twenty years later the Creativity Centre was constructed inside and underneath the former open-air quadrangle. This addition was a marriage of old and new. Today you can see that the original brick external walls have been retained along with a commemorative gallery in the northwest corner of the large area on the main floor known as the Student Center.

If there is anything else our readers are wondering about in terms of the history of the College or our campus, let us know. Ms. Spellman is happy to provide the answer in the next edition.



1982 Bird's Eye View of UCC

# COVID-19: A TESTING STONE FOR OUR FUNDAMENTAL EGOTISM

**RAYMOND LIU**  
MANAGER

It is a once in a thousand-year disturbance. As the tiny intruder, with its showerhead-like spikes sticking out from nearly all parts of its round and bubbly body, jumps gracefully through the air, it feels a sudden gust of wind and floats into the nose of an unsuspecting human. Soon, the human would find that it is not the average virus; it is mutated with a potential kill switch.

The novel coronavirus as a pandemic has prompted our instincts from the beginnings of life: as soon as we encounter a problem, the first thing we do is find others to take the blame. Next, if the problem doesn't apply to ourselves, we try to scour for any way to take advantage.

From early suspicions, COVID-19 spread from a wildlife market where a range of wild animals are sold in Wuhan. Grad-

ually, attention moved to the general region of China, then the entire world. Essentially, some people are sharing the racist view that those of Chinese descent and other travellers are the source and cause of this pandemic. Whatever targets one can find, it must be their fault.

To take advantage of this situation, certain Amazon and eBay vendors saw a lightbulb flash before their eyes when many items began to disappear from shelves in stores. For example, brothers Matt and Noah Colvin decided to exploit this gold mine and went out to clear all the hand sanitizer from stores near their residence. However, online shopping sites sought to shut them down after they continued to jack up the prices.

On the other side of the battlefield, many are fighting to keep things in check while the world is erupting around them. For the aviation industry, despite airlines slowly making the shift to simply trying to minimize deficits while most flights

are cancelled, airlines are still offering free cancellations or changes of dates for passengers.

Communities across the globe have gathered to collect resources and donate them to nearby hospitals and funds. Even bigger corporations like the College Board organized free online classes for students this past summer to prepare for exams that will still be taken.

As parts of humanity slump, others will rise. While a minor amount of people are being selfish and irresponsible, others have contributed to a brighter tomorrow. In the end, we must find ways to come together despite the difficulties that are present and stop exploiting others and doing things in the interests of ourselves. After all, when lives are trickling away by the minute, this is not a fight against another group of humans, but a wrestle to the end with a deadly disease.

## THE VIRUS: CREATING FOES OUT OF STRANGERS

**RAHUL NANDA**  
STAFF REPORTER

A world permeated with self-diagnosing germaphobes and self-proclaimed "scientists" is one of the many unusual effects that have developed as a consequence of the infamous pandemic that continues to reign in over 180 countries. Nonetheless, over 25 million cases and 6 months of quarantine-induced solidarity later, the world's largest and leading governments continue to amend their response to a stemming virus. Especially in Canada, officials have advocated for and relied on increased testing, the regular usage of masks, limited public interactions, decreased travel, increased usage of disinfectants, and, most importantly, sustaining at least 2 meters distance between others in public settings. As these proven effective obligations remain active, they have allowed citizens to narrow their focus on a specific set of guidelines to maintain their safety and wellbeing.

In addition, the virus's endless occurrence in our lives has brought with it an incessant amount of information through the media. Every single newspaper and news network has been persistently capitalizing and educating us on a variety of material pertaining to the virus. Fortunately, our accumulated knowledge gained throughout the past six to nine months has allowed us to better understand the best safety habits during times of uncertainty and, potentially, inform us on the world's progress on discovering a competent vaccine.

Unfortunately though, the overwhelming presence of the media providing Dooms-Day-like, frightening data along with the introduction of strict protocols serving to preserve people's health has been the driving force in establishing the fear and paranoia related to the virus that many of us experience on a daily basis in our small Toronto bubble. Especially in public, this same fear makes us instinctively inclined to naturally avoid all people we encounter outside

of our household — an intuition fueled by knowledge, precaution, concern, and horror. Without even a first impression, strangers in common settings, such as grocery stores, are automatically considered untrustworthy people that we urge ourselves to circumvent at all times and consider a potential transmitter of a virus that has the ability to end a life — as it has with over 800 thousand people already.

Weirdly enough, these interactions demonstrate that instead of providing each other with an inner tenderness and helping hand that may be expected in crisis, we have been further distancing ourselves from each other both emotionally and physically. During a period in which the most vulnerable are persistently affected, grieving with loss, overwhelmed by anxiety and stress, and coping with economic difficulties, we unknowingly continue to consider each other not as a friend, but as a hidden foe.

# A WHIMSICAL 2020

**MATTHEW LI**  
CONTRIBUTOR

The SARS-CoV-2 virus has shaken the world in a fit of disasters that would make one question our dominance on this planet. Indeed, if this seemingly-lifeless virus, 0.0000001 of a metre, is able to plunge the world into such cataclysmic crisis and chaos, then are we justified to call ourselves the absolute ruler of the Earth?

Towards the end of December 2019, when humanity was first acquainted with the coronavirus, no prophet would foretell the dramatic future of 2020. For it was when this disease first escaped the country it originated from that we began to plant doubts of how the world will defend itself in the face of such an unprecedented monster.

Upon the last days of school before the March break, I took the time to give a sincere farewell to all my schoolmates and teachers, as I had a firm belief that the UCC campus will not bear my footsteps for some time. As the back-to-school dates were delayed from April to May, I had made up my mind that we would not see our beautiful UCC for yet another three months stranded at home.

Who am I, as an ignorant child, even somewhat naive, to craft often baseless assertions on topics of politics, philosophy, and so much more? For my part, raising an ear or two to the news at dinnertime aided me in comprehending the sophisticated workings of just these topics. Looking at the statistics, one would be unassailable in saying that Canada has excelled more than the US in handling the pandemic. While Canada took decisive action and shut down its borders, the US, "boasting" its record case numbers, urged Canadian officials to open up the border and allow non-essential travel. While most Canadian citizens did a decent job of avoid-

ing congregation during the reopening stages, many Americans left the coronavirus at the back of their heads and took no precautions whatsoever.

It is, by all means, impossible to wholly annihilate COVID-19 without an effective vaccine or medical treatment. Therefore, not overwhelming our vital healthcare system should be every citizen's top priority.

I deem that all the nations in the world made a fatal mistake - reopening too early. The Spanish flu of 1918 is a perfect example. Some mass gatherings and protests today are reminiscent of the War parades in the United States when the flu was still uncontained, causing a calamitous second wave and many lives to be tragically lost. If indeed a second wave is upon us, this time targeting all age groups, will the healthcare system still cope? And if not, what can we do but watch members in our community fall in the hands of a disaster that is wholly preventable?

At the start of this apparent pandemic, an overwhelming sense of fear choked every nation. As citizens, afraid of this fatal illness, all we could do was to heed the government's advice and stay home, flatten the curve, and protect the vulnerable individuals and front-line workers by wearing masks at all times, practising physical distancing strictly, and taking special care of hand hygiene. Ironically, doing nothing helped save lives. I would most certainly, every day at 7:30 pm, on my balcony, clap and cheer on the healthcare and all the altruistic people sacrificing their lives and those of their families to assure our safety.

As Canada gradually passed the supposed peak of the first wave (makes me think of *Plants VS. Zombies*), much of Ontario entered the three-stage reopening saga. Our pessimistic attitudes slowly abated as more and more of our beloved pastimes returned. However, the bit of news that made my day was when I heard that the UCC campus would finally come back to life with the sound of our laughter. Upon learning about the Sick Kids Back to School Simulation Study, I viewed it as an opportunity to contribute to the safety of schools across Ontario, and a privilege of mine for this experiment to occur in the school I frequented. It took me back to the time I could enjoy some banter with my friends and lessons with teachers without being fretted by the virus. Even though we are mandated to wear masks full-time at UCC, I was grateful for the time our faculty devoted to guarantee the safety of our community.

**"Once Everest was determined to be the highest summit on Earth, it was only a matter of time before people decided that Everest needed to be climbed."**

- Jon Krakauer

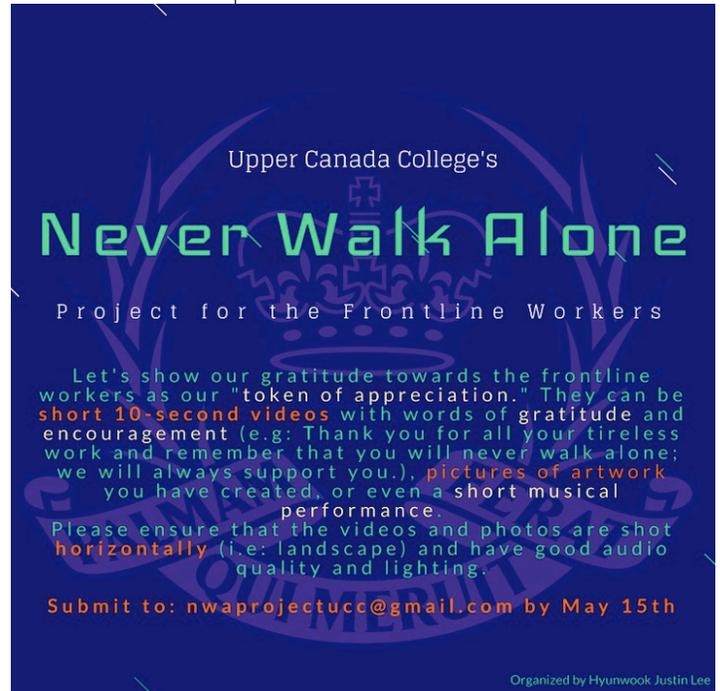
I have drawn a quote from Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*: "Once Everest was determined to be the highest summit on Earth, it was only a matter of time before people decided that Everest needed to be climbed."

Surprisingly, I found that this sentence could perfectly reflect the COVID-19 pandemic. "Once the Coronavirus was determined to become a global pandemic, it was only a matter of time before people decided that this virus needed to be vanquished." No matter how long it takes, there is not a single doubt in my mind that human beings will defeat this loathed creature. Together we fight, and together, we will win.

# THE NEVER WALK ALONE PROJECT

**JUSTIN LEE**  
CONTRIBUTOR

In May, COVID-19 cases continued to increase throughout Canada. As hospitals became overflowing with patients and more burden was placed on the frontline workers who put their lives at stake to save other lives, I organized the Never Walk Alone Project at UCC to show our support and gratefulness as a community for them. With avid participation from students, teachers, and alumni, from whom we collected 50+ video submissions, the result was an epic six-minute video of the UCC community coming together in times of isolation for a great cause. We as a school relayed the messages that the frontline workers were never alone in the battle against COVID-19, that we always supported them, and that we were grateful for their hard work. As UCC has always placed emphasis on unity and cooperation, through this initiative, the UCC community, students, faculty, and alumni alike, showed the true "Never Walk Alone" spirit and gracefully embodied it. The video was shared with various hospitals in Toronto, including Baycrest, Toronto General, Mount Sinai, SickKids, and more. It reached more than 1,950 views on Instagram.



# THE PAN PALS INITIATIVE

**APOSTOLOS ZEZOS AND JUSTIN LEE**  
CONTRIBUTORS

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had a detrimental effect on mental wellness as a result of isolation. Seniors in Assisted Living facilities are one of the most prone groups due to social inactivity.

The Pan(demic) Pals initiative was created to break the barrier and connect high school students with seniors. With goals to establish both synchronous and asynchronous virtual connections, a group of COSSOT students, including several from UCC, founded Pandemic Pals to provide company to seniors



during these challenging times. In April, we initiated our first synchronous program: one-on-one student-senior pairings interacting through phone calls weekly. This consisted of a few pairing between COSSOT students and seniors from the Hellenic Home.

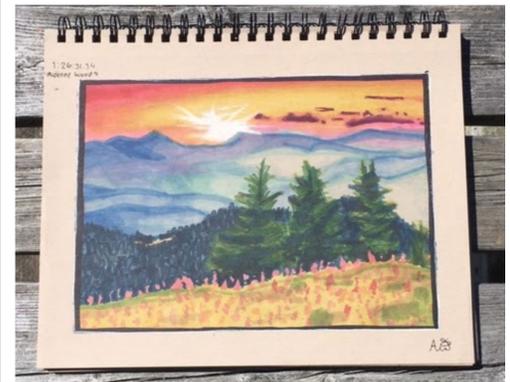
In the meantime, we explored the asynchronous route, compiling student submissions such as artwork and music, and creating several videos for different events like Father's Day and Canada Day. Since then, we have established synchronous connections with four senior homes in Ontario, while our asynchronous content has made its way from Alberta to PEI and many have been shared on social media through our [Instagram account](#) (@panpalsinfo), garnering 5000+ views. Some of our videos are also on our [YouTube](#) page.

Our notable synchronous partnerships include Baycrest Hospital (which has the largest long-term care facility in Canada), the Hellenic Home for the Aged and all 20 locations of Seasons Retirement. In addition, we have built

asynchronous connections with 20+ senior homes across the nation.

We plan to continue this initiative as an in-school organization starting this school year and hope that we can continue to positively impact the lives of the seniors with or without the pandemic affecting our lives while also providing UCC students with opportunities to volunteer in these times where volunteering is difficult.

We look forward to the UCC community getting more involved in this amazing initiative and helping enrich the lives of the seniors in our community.



## Pan Pals

# LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC IN CHINA

RAYMOND LIU  
MANAGER

A killer, a silent killer, a havoc-wreaking microbial killer. A source of worry, a change of livelihood, a destroyer of families. While I was tending to my New Year's celebrations in early January, the world was forever changed as news of a life-threatening coronavirus had emerged.

This virus had taken the country of China by storm. City borders were closed, businesses were shut, and everyone was in a state of lockdown. One of the people stuck there was my father, along with many other members of my family.

I remember calling him every morning and every evening (there is a 12-hour time difference) to check in on his situation, and he told me about his daily routine as a Chinese citizen during the peak.

He had been quarantining with my grandparents in our apartment, and everyday he would wake up at around eight in the morning. He would get up, walk five meters to get to the bathroom across the hall, then another five meters to eat breakfast, and finally, five more to get to work. He often told me that he had felt bored, until he decided that he

would start reading history books.

He read for around three hours each afternoon and said that he felt as if it had brought a sense of freshness to his routine. After reading, his day would go on as any other, except he would only stay at home, and so he did for the next three months.

My uncle lived very close to where my father and grandparents were staying, so it was decided within our family that he would do all of the shopping for food to keep my grandparents isolated. The problem with that was he had never done much shopping before, and I am suspicious that this was the reason why my grandma wanted him to do it. It was usually my aunt who did all of the shopping and cooking, but she was then with her family in another city.

My uncle described to me that he would often feel overwhelmed at the supermarkets, seeing the wide array of products and endless streams of busy shoppers. He had no idea of what was needed to make meals, and where to find anything.

Luckily, my grandma, the main chef of the family, would write down a list of items for him to buy. At the supermarkets, as shoppers hurried to pick up ne-

cessities, my uncle would often find that something which he needed had been sold out. He would be frustrated, and my grandma would be upset. However, after many weeks, my uncle did get accustomed to waking up early to line up before the shops were open and he also managed to learn nearly the entire layout of the market.

For my grandparents, quarantine had been a different story. Their days were usually filled with meeting friends, walking in the park, and watching TV. In that list, the only thing they had left was watching TV, which was filled with reruns. My dad tried to find things for them to do: knitting, reading, and even buying them phones. But, they ended up becoming huge card game players and now do that on a daily basis.

As their situation is diffusing, the majority of the pressure is on us now, as we return to school. By chatting with my father as well as other members of my family, I have a feeling of hope, and that is what is most important as we attempt at a recovery. School is a constant as the world around us is changing everyday. As we adapt from one routine to another, we can try to find things that push us towards the end, wherever and whenever that may be.

## EDITOR'S NOTE - JOINING CONVERGENCE

### Interested in joining or contributing to *Convergence*?

It is easy to become a **Staff Reporter** - all you need to do is to join the *Convergence* and *Blazer* club, show up to club meetings, present your ideas, and write articles (reports of an event, interviews, opinions, etc.).

Also, anyone in the Upper School can be a **Contributor** to *Convergence* without full-time commitment. Your articles can either be related to UCC or cover social/political events of general interest. Please just send them to us at [convergence@ucc.on.ca](mailto:convergence@ucc.on.ca).

Your potential contribution to *Convergence* will be greatly appreciated, and will be a strong factor in determining executive roles such as **Manager** and **Editor** for future years.

Princeton and Kevin  
Co-Editors in Chief