“It’s tough to be a first” — KAYLA GREY, TSN'S THE SHIFT

Inside the brains of 10 ambitious rule breakers
TikTok’s Canadian invasion
Pro sports’ renaming reckoning
How drones are solving climate change

HOW I MADE IT

CANADIAN BUSINESS

NOT YOUR PARENTS’ BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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**ON THE COVER**

Kayla Gray, host of TSN's The Shift, photographed by Miguel Arenillas

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Behind the $2-million rebranding of the CFL's Edmonton Elks

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“**I forced myself to take risks and push forward without fear**”

Cathy Tie, CEO of Locke Bio

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**PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA CHOU; (COVER) HAIR BY JANET JACKSON; MAKEUP BY FRANCELINE GRAHAM; STYLING BY SANTANAE LUIZIGE**
Who's keeping your crypto safe?

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Jerome Dwight
President, Brane Inc.

Former CEO, BNY Trust Co. of Canada

Benjamin Bridge’s non-alcoholic Piquette Zero is one of our 10 favourite things.
I

n July, a task force led by Simon Fraser University professor Lara Aknin unveiled its findings about the pandemic’s psychological effects on various populations. In short: Yes, our collective mental health deteriorated in the early months of COVID, but, on a global scale, rates of depression and anxiety quickly returned to pre-pandemic levels. How did we manage that? According to the study, we’re excellent at adapting to change.

Change may well be the theme of this magazine. Canadian Business was founded in 1928, and over the decades it has focused heavily on the power shifts on Bay Street. But the new CB is a dramatic departure from the publication your parents may have read. When our team began dreaming up ideas for a redesign, we wanted, foremost, to reflect the new vanguard of leaders—increasingly, that’s new Canadians, women and young people. Early on, we decided “no more navy suit” on our covers, but at that stage I don’t think any of us imagined a seafoam tulle gown and Jordans. Our cover subject, Kayla Grey of TSN’s The Shift, is one of a dynamic cohort of influential Canadians who told us their success stories in “How I Made It” (page 42). Grey is the first Black woman to lead a flagship sports show in Canada, a move that’s part of a pivotal reckoning in media, sports and beyond. In “The Name of the Game” (page 66), writer Luc Rinaldi investigates what it took, down to the dollar, for Edmonton’s CFL team to rebrand following its controversial name change this year, something several other Canadian organizations are grappling with at this very moment.

In Strategies (page 75), you’ll find case studies of companies dealing with change—both welcome and disruptive—including one detailing how the Vancouver-based social media company Hootsuite modernized its employee benefits to meet the evolving needs of its workforce.

The new CB is for anyone who wants to do business better. To that end, you’ll find no shortage of inspiring stories from execs and entrepreneurs who are challenging the status quo. Oh, the page, the redesigned canadianbusiness.com and our new CB Insider membership program provide exclusive digital content, access to events and masterclass series that connect our audience to the country’s thought leaders. Change will always be part of our lives. The new Canadian Business is about helping you make the most of it.

Welcome to the New CB A dramatic departure from your parents’ business magazine

—Editor’s Letter

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A New Day for Canadian Business

Canadian Business—known to its fans as, simply, CB—has reported on the country’s most important leaders and companies for the last 93 years. With this edition, we are thrilled to unveil an entirely reimagined publication that carries on the brand’s legacy while focusing on the future. The new CB is all about innovation in its many forms. Thank you to everyone who has made this reinvention a terrific success, particularly our relaunch partner, BMO Financial Group. Our shared mission is to boldly grow. Here’s to all the extraordinary ways that we are doing just that, in business and in life.

Ken Hunt
President of SJC Media, Publisher of Canadian Business

BOARD DYNAMICS FOR EXECUTIVES
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Just as we were approaching the new normal, companies were once again tossed into uncertainty. Now they’re recalibrating: How do you encourage folks to return to physical spaces? Two execs discuss the merits—and the many, many complexities—of the hybrid work model.

by Briony Smith

“More did we manage to put guys on the moon before we managed to put wheels on a suitcase?”

KATHERINE MARÇAL, PAGE 24

Office Politics

Just as we were approaching the new normal, companies were once again tossed into uncertainty. Now they’re recalibrating: How do you encourage folks to return to physical spaces? Two execs discuss the merits—and the many, many complexities—of the hybrid work model.

by Briony Smith
At the one-year mark of the pandemic, most companies had hashed out a rough back-to-office plan. Industry leaders tried to influence trends—or at least make headlines—with bold decisions, like Shopify, which publicly declared “office-centricity is over.” Others, like Apple, informed employees they’d be expected in the office a minimum of three days per week come fall. Then came the Delta variant and breakthrough COVID. Studies reported a fifth of Canadian workers said they’d quit if they were forced back to an office full time. We sat down with Megumi Mizuno, chief of staff at Vancouver-based Traction on Demand—Salesforce’s largest North American consulting partner—and Paul Burns, managing director for Twitter Canada in Toronto, to find out how they’re trying to bring people together again safely.

Megumi Mizuno: Traction on Demand has just under 1,100 people, and pre-pandemic the majority were working in offices. Right now our spaces in Burnaby, Nelson, Montreal and Toronto are back open, but there is no mandate to return. We’ll be keeping our offices across the country, but we’ll look to sublease the excess space we have now, like one of our two floors in our Burnaby head office.

Paul Burns: The Twitter Canada head office is in Toronto, and we have offices all over the globe with about 6,000 employees. We were mostly working in-office, with some exceptions. We don’t have a set date for when our Toronto office will reopen. Right now we’re pilot ing ways to reconfigure our spaces to better support hybrid work and curating areas for collaborating, quiet focus and socializing.

M.M.: Our team has really enjoyed working from home; not having to travel into the office, they just found they were less stressed. Childcare issues were a little bit more flexible. But they also missed the interaction with other “Tractionites.” So our CEO, Greg Malpass, had an idea: There are all these local restaurants that are sitting empty during the day. Could we use them as meet-up hubs for our employees? So that’s what we’re looking to do now: partnering with local businesses to create remote work spaces so staff can connect without a long commute. The plan is to start with three spaces, and we’d like to set up a minimum-spend type of agreement. We know that many of these small businesses have suffered through the pandemic.

P.B.: For now, we’re letting team members make the choice that’s right for them. But given we’re a tech platform, our corporate security teams would likely have something to say about third-party spaces.

M.M.: Ours does, too, but we’re going to collaborate with them to figure it out. Working out these plans is like a pendulum: You swing one way too far, and then you swing the other way too far, and at some point you’ll fall in the middle. And that middle is going to shift. So we’re constantly talking to people and giving as many options as possible, because no one solution is going to be a fit for everyone.

P.B.: We’ve been using email, Slack channels and intranet sites to keep our staff abreast of the latest plans, and the reactions have been mixed. Some people are fired up to get back and others have said, “I’m not ever going back in.” I’m trying to be very honest with them and help unpack some of the feelings they’re having. On one hand, there’s social anxiety about going back to the office, like “I’m actually going to have to interact with humans in real life?” On the other hand, there are people who crave interaction, who get energized by it. I also hear people worrying that their career-advancement opportunities will be affected if they’re not in the office. So we want to support staff in navigating that and make sure people know we trust them to do what’s right for them.

M.M.: I’ve been thinking about how women are particularly inclined to work from home. We don’t want people who work remotely to miss out on opportunities. We’ll have to keep watching that. We’re also working on various justice, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, like workshops and training programs, so employees who work from home have equal opportunities to network with leaders and build those relationships.

P.B.: At Twitter, we serve breakfast, lunch and dinner for employees in an open space with a kitchen. That common space is the place where relationships are formed and built, and I get excited about the idea of that being restored. I find it’s harder to create that virtually: you miss those organic whimsy moments of just getting to know someone on a deeper level. Facilitating those spaces, to me, can only happen in an office environment. That’s not to say a hybrid model wouldn’t work for Twitter, but it would be an interim step.

“Traction has really enjoyed working from home—they just found they were less stressed”

Megumi Mizuno
Chief Of Staff, Traction
On Demand
I started at TikTok last year after two years at Soho House, where I had been chief marketing officer. It was certainly a change: At Soho House, I was working with physical spaces; at TikTok, it’s about digital ones. But they’re both anchored in creative communities. That concept of people coming together from around the world to share ideas and interests has always kept me curious.

I was an early adopter of TikTok. Because I previously worked in digital media and products—like at Microsoft and Facebook—I paid attention to the platform. What really sold me on working at TikTok, though, was the opportunity to build the Canadian business from the ground up. Often, when companies expand to Canada they look to whatever the U.S. is doing and bring it north, but we had a unique opportunity to do this our way, with a market-led approach. I said: Sign me up.

My first order of business was building a team. The app has a wide and diverse audience, so it was paramount that our Canadian leadership reflect both the creators and our unique market. Plus, I know first-hand that diverse teams are better teams—as a leader, I want to make sure I cover blind spots. I tend to care less about someone’s credentials and more about how their career evolved. It’s hard to teach drive, passion and curiosity.

My first job was: Working at a ferry company. I did everything from ticketing to cleaning cabins. I was one of the smaller people there, so I had to clean the spaces other people couldn’t fit into.

Working at Facebook taught me: How to hone my discipline and focus. In fast-paced environments like tech companies, there’s always work to do.

Best career perk: I got to see a lot of the world. Some of my favourite designers and architects are from Japan, so I remember running around Tokyo like, ‘Oh, look at this!’
chatting with coworkers online, because we’re all still working from home. It isn’t really nine-to-five because I’m watching and enjoying what creators are sharing on the app before and after work. I get to discover new people and artists who are kind of getting their shot because of the platform—and then help the undiscovered get discovered. I’m working on growing our ecosystem of partners in Canada, like Much, that support young talent.

The Canadian market is also very ripe for testing new product features. Because we have a ton of diversity and language variety here, there’s lots of insight we can apply on a global scale. I listen to our community of users for feedback on the creative tools, creative effects and core features, and then we’re able to act quickly and evolve, and even eventually share those enhancements around the world.

There’s something in the water here, and it existed well before TikTok was around. We know that Canada is a country rich in creative talent across so many areas. I just want the rest of the world to know that, too.

Wattpad names Jeanne Lam president
Toronto-based self-publishing platform Wattpad named Jeanne Lam as its first president following the company’s acquisition by South Korean IT conglomerate Naver. Lam, formerly Wattpad’s chief business officer, helped grow the business into a global entertainment company. Wattpad was acquired by Naver in May for $600 million US in cash and stock.

Bill Gates boosts investment in Four Seasons
The billionaire software developer’s investment company, Cascade Investment LLC, is buying half of Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal’s stake in the Canadian luxury-hotel business, bringing its ownership to 71.25 per cent. The price: $2.21 billion US. Gates first invested in Four Seasons in 1997.

Benevity scales up with hires from Shopify and Adobe
Calgary-based software company Benevity has tapped former Shopify VP Janeen Speer to lead its 300-headcount hiring sprint this year. The corporate-charitable-donation-management business has been growing its executive team in recent months, including bringing on former Adobe VP of product Scott Lee as its first CPO in September.

Hootsuite finds a new CFO
Vancouver-based social-media-management firm Hootsuite has hired Tatiana Figliola as its new chief financial officer, filling a role that had been vacant for nearly two years. Figliola comes to the company from InterDigital Inc., where she was VP of finance.

Black Hxouse launches entrepreneurship fund
One year after its launch, the Weeknd-affiliated incubator Black Hxouse announced its first Leadership Investment For Entrepreneurs. The grant program, backed by TD Bank, will give away a total of $100,000 to BIPOC entrepreneurs in Toronto.

MOVES
Who’s in, what’s launching and other big business news
In 2019, Joel Greaves, a marketing exec from Toronto, and his wife, Devon Vaillancourt, who owns a concierge service for luxury home-owners, decided to leave corporate life behind to become motel revivalists. After a year of looking in the more established parts of Ontario cottage country, they got hooked by a property in Calabogie, Ont., in the relatively-hipster-free Ottawa Valley. Here, they thought, they could become pioneers of the next local-tourism hotspot. They pooled their own savings, investment dollars from Balsam Venture Capital and a loan from a business development council to pay $695,000 for a 1970s-era motel—previously part of Jocko’s Beach Resort. The couple recruited Keri MacLellan and Andrea Pierre, from the design firm Westgrove, who gutted the property’s 11 rooms, installing a white-on-neutrals touch.

Modern touch
Keri MacLellan and Andrea Pierre of the design firm Westgrove upgraded the 11 rooms with hardwood floors and propane-stove fireplaces. The Scandi-cabin vibe is complemented with contemporary, sculptural light fixtures, mosaic-tiled bathrooms and white pine-panelled walls.

Safe haven
Opening a motel during a pandemic meant finding ways to minimize face time between staff and guests. In addition to contactless check-in, the owners introduced a text messaging system that lets guests request room service or off-site dinner reservations.

VIP guests
Dogs are welcomed at Somewhere Inn with the gift of a canine bandana and they get an unlimited supply of treats during their stay. “For many people, getting away from it all and spending quality time with those who matter most includes their dogs,” says Greaves.

Calabogie is firmly up-and-coming. It’s the epicentre of the Ottawa Valley, full of potential for a year-round resort business, with rafting, fishing and hiking in the summer and snowmobiling and skiing in the winter. “There’s a groundswell of young entrepreneurs starting cafés, adventure outfitters and craft breweries here,” says Greaves. “It’s been really cool to be part of that.” Plus, he says, the model of partnering with local artisans and businesses is scalable. “We’d love to take the concept to other communities in Ontario and beyond in the future.”

Outdoor amenities
The motel’s lobby does double-duty as a gift and bottle shop featuring products from local businesses. The tree-canopied motel is set 90 metres back from a quiet road with a view of Calabogie Lake. The motel’s lobby does double-duty as a gift and bottle shop featuring products from local businesses.
Tracking the ups and downs and twists and turns of cryptocurrency’s cryptic origins—and predicting what the future holds for digital money

Coin Toss

by Sarah Laing

In 2021, cryptocurrency officially went mainstream: Bitcoin hit an all-time high, buying-and-selling platform Coinbase went public, El Salvador passed a bill that will make it the first country where crypto is legal tender and Kim Kardashian West did sponcon for altcoin Ethereum Max. We mined this commodit-y’s roller-coaster history to see how we got here—and look at which big factors will shape where this wild ride goes next.

High

Satoshi Nakamoto published a white paper that defined the concept of “blockchain” for the first time and laid out the concept of Bitcoin.

Low

In January 2011, one Bitcoin could be bought for $0.30 US.

Low

In 2021, cryptocurrency would buy today.

Low

On May 22, 2010, a Florida man bought two Papa John’s pizzas via a Bitcoin message board, where he connected with a man who agreed to purchase the pies for him in exchange for 10,000 Bitcoins. Sure hope the high of being part of the first cryptocurrency commercial transaction was worth the roughly $620 million that BTC would buy today.

Low

The world’s most expensive ‘za

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Low

A clearing that does not spark joy

In 2013, James Howells accidentally threw out a hard drive containing 75,000 Bitcoins he had mined four years earlier. He’s been trying to retrieve it—and his $400 million-plus potential fortune—ever since.

Low

Crypto’s first big scandal

OneCoin was going to be the crypto to rule them all—until it turned out to be a Ponzi scheme.

Low

Bitcoin’s bubble bursts

Starting January 2018, the crypto bubble began to deflate. One digital-asset index lost 60 per cent of its value by September, and Bitcoin cratered from near $20,000 US to $3100 US by December.

High

Elon Musk makes Dogecoin his pet project

There are thousands of cryptocurrencies, but only one that Musk promised to literally take to the moon, triggering a volatile run for the satirical coin in early 2021. Dogecoin is the most famous of the meme coins—niche cryptos that can suddenly skyrocket when finance influencers plug them. As we’ve seen with the Akita Inu and Shiba Inu coins this year, as long as the Internet loves a meme, these currencies will continue to pop up.

High

China tests a digital yuan

The People’s Bank of China began developing a national digital currency in 2014, and this year the government started real-world trials, giving away millions in digital currency in a number of test cities, including Shenzhen, Chengdu and Suzhou. Experts predict a worldwide trend will emerge in the next five years where more central banks will issue their own digital currencies in order to compete with the big, privately owned players.

High

What’s next for cryptocurrency?

“A significant percentage of the bitcoin mining happening in China was fuelled by coal. Since China cracked down on mining, the majority of miners are moving to North America, where there’s more of an emphasis on using clean energy. We won’t know the impact for quite a while, but the industry is doing a lot to try to make crypto’s energy usage more renewable.”

Low

Ask an Expert

Can crypto be greener?

“The existing cryptos we have now will never become standard currencies. The crypto that will use in the future as an everyday medium of exchange hasn’t been invented yet. There’s no compelling reason right now to use current cryptos for groceries or gas. It’s so easy to pay with Canadian dollars. Why would I jump through hoops? And then by the time you pay for your coffee, the price might have changed because of crypto’s volatility.”

Low

What’s next for cryptocurrency?

28% of Canadians currently have cryptocurrencies in their investment portfolio


5,000+
cryptocurrencies are in circulation globally as of August 2021

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There are thousands of cryptocurrencies, but only one that Musk promised to literally take to the moon, triggering a volatile run for the satirical coin in early 2021. Dogecoin is the most famous of the meme coins—niche cryptos that can suddenly skyrocket when finance influencers plug them. As we’ve seen with the Akita Inu and Shiba Inu coins this year, as long as the Internet loves a meme, these currencies will continue to pop up.
journalist Katrine Marçal describes her new book, Mother of Invention, as a look at the continued exclusion of women from innovation. In her native Sweden, only one per cent of venture capital goes to women and, globally, more than 60 per cent of venture-capital funding flows to companies led by men. “That’s obviously a problem when entrepreneurs are trying to invent products for everyone,” says Marçal.

Mother of Invention is the follow-up to her first book, Who Cooked Adam Smith’s Dinner?, a feminist look at the 2008 financial collapse that was high-fived on Twitter by Margaret Atwood.1 We spoke to Marçal about the ways in which inventors, inventors and technocrats cling to gender bias, keeping good ideas from seeing the light of day.

Many of us are working from home these days. The idea of running a WFH business had a horseless carriage—the first combustion engine, gasoline-powered car—created by Karl Benz in 1885. It could have been this half-baked thing because at first, Benz wasn’t quite sure what he’d invented. It took Bertha Benz, his wife and an investor in his company, to convince him that what he had created was not just a new form of engine but a new form of transportation. She went behind her husband’s back and drove the invention on the road to prove to him that it was how he should sell it, market it and develop it.

1. In 2020, only 2.3 per cent of VC funding in North America went to women. For Black women, it was less than 0.5 per cent.

2. Atwood called it “a smart, funny, readable book on economics, money, women.”

3. Bertha Benz was the first person to test-drive the Benz Patent-Motorwagen over a 105 km journey. She also invented brake lining.

4. Shirley hired 297 women and 3 men. She was worth more than $220 million at the height of her success.

5. “The Robots Are Coming for All in Accounting” is one such headline, from a March 2021 story in The New York Times.

How does this impact the knowledge economy? We’ve all seen the headlines saying that robots are coming to take our jobs.2 Well, many areas that are female-dominated, such as early-years education, will not be as easy to automate as male-dominated sectors. Machines will also probably not excel at communication, reading a room or performing other tasks that are very important to the economy. So what does that mean? AI is more likely to take roles away from men than women. We will have a shift to valuing the more so-called “women’s skills.” And that’s very interesting.

1 Katrine Marcal in the garden of her home near London, U.K. Her new book is out on October 19.

Mother of Invention contains many historical examples of how sexism gets in the way of innovation. You lead off with what you describe as “the mystery of rolling luggage.” A suitcase with wheels came about only in the 1970s—were women. The assumption was that no existed well before their official launch in 1978. It could have been this half-baked thing because at first, Benz wasn’t quite sure what he’d invented. It took Bertha Benz, his wife and an investor in his company, to convince him that what he had created was not just a new form of engine but a new form of transportation. She went behind her husband’s back and drove the invention on the road to prove to him that it was how he should sell it, market it and develop it.

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ack in the early aughts, a Colorado-based foam-footwear brand became synonymous with two things: functionality and a striking lack of flair. Crocs were inspired by designs that its founders acquired from a company in Quebec City called Foam Creations. They were never meant to be stylish—in fact, they were originally intended to be boat shoes. But the gnomish slip-ons quickly became fodder for magazines, blogs and latenight TV shows, all of which contributed to the consensus that Crocs were a shoe not to be caught dead in. And despite remaining an acceptable footwear option for kids—their cartoon colours and collectible “Jibbitz” charms gave them staying power among the under-10 crowd—by 2009, eight years after producing its first pair, the company announced plant closures and layoffs.

Flash forward a decade and sales are booming. Not only that, Crocs are showing up everywhere, including runways, red carpets (Questlove wore a gilded pair to this year’s Oscars) and celebrity social-media feeds. So, what changed? Certainly not the look. While Crocs now come in a variety of styles like flip-flops and even ankle boots, they are still undeniably ugly.

Crocs’ second coming began in 2016 when its jaw-dropping union with designer Christopher Kane was unveiled during London Fashion Week. It has been powered by a clever string of collaborations—with pop stars like Justin Bieber, luxury fashion houses like Balenciaga and food brands like Kentucky Fried Chicken—that not only lean into Crocs’ very garishness but take it over the top. (The KFC Jibbitz charms smelled like fried chicken.)

Crocs cultivates desire by producing limited editions of its collaborations and giving very little notice before their on-sale date. That’s been especially appealing to the all-important Gen Z consumer, a demographic that can’t wait to show their TikTok followers how they scooped up a pair. “New customers may initially seek us out for a limited-edition drop,” says Molly Wilhelm, director of product line management. “But it’s our hope that once they discover us, they’ll become more open to the brand and take a chance on the other styles.”

The strategy is paying off. The company had record revenues of $1.4 billion US in 2020, and reported a 93 per cent increase from Q2 2020 to Q2 2021. Crocs did more than two dozen collabs during that period. The partnerships are bizarrely wide-ranging, the wackier the better. A recent collab with DJ and producer Diplo spawned tie-dye Crocs that sprouted glow-in-the-dark toadstools. Another pair, with L.A.-based brand Chinatown Market, were completely covered in plastic turf, inside and out. But it’s the niche collections, like 2019’s partnership with Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, that are pushing the craze to extremes. Pairs of the $70 US shoes are still going for more than $1,000 on resale sites.
1. The CB Fizz
Star mixologist Evelyn Chick’s signature creation for this very magazine is made with the distilled non-alcoholic spirit Seedlip Garden 108 and a raspberry basil shrub. Find the recipe at canadianbusiness.com.

Non-alcoholic spirits, made with all the finesse and precision of the hard stuff, are the next big thing. Photographs by Kate Ince / Styling by Nicole Billark

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Joe Mimran, Lead Judge
Tracy Moore, Judge
Michele Romanow, Judge
Samantha Yammine, Judge

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“Of all the beautiful products in the world, which ones are made with intention and create an impact?”
—BYRON PEART, PAGE 30

Design
Non-alcoholic craft cocktails are having a moment. By 2024, the consumption of low- or zero-alcohol distilled spirits is projected to increase by 31 per cent, according to an industry study conducted in 10 countries, including Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. To meet demand, beverage brands are coming to the table with a selection of non-alcoholic products with artisanal bona fides and layered flavour profiles. Here's a roundup of some of our favourite Canadian products in the category, as well other great stuff for the sober sipping set.

4. Lumette London Dry Alt-Spirit
This alternative to gin is distilled in B.C. using premium botanicals. Mix with an upmarket tonic of use as the spirit substitute in a sour cocktail. $36 for 750 ml, enjoylumette.com

5. Sobrii 0-Gin
From Stratford, Ont., this crisp and aromatic elixir is distilled using juniper berries, coriander, allspice, star anise and local ginseng. $35 for 750 ml, sobrii.ca

6. Acid League Proxies
Based in Dundas, Ont., this company blends juices, teas, spices and bitters to make its limited-edition wine alternatives. $70 for three new Proxies each month, acidleague.com

7. Benjamin Bridge Piquette Zero
This winemaker, based in Wolfville, N.S., has launched an alcohol-free wine-style drink. It's like a citrus grove in a can, with notes of bergamot, lime, yuzu and blood-orange peel. $49.50 for 22 250 ml cans, benjaminbridge.ca

8. Solbrü Restore
This sugar-free gingery elixir from Winnipeg is made with organic-mushroom extract, dandelion root and licorice. Best served on the rocks with a slice of citrus. $33 for 750 ml, solbru.ca

9. ACID LEAGUE PROXIES
Based in Dundas, Ont., this company blends juices, teas, spices and bitters to make its limited-edition wine alternatives. $70 for three new Proxies each month, acidleague.com

10. Liquor cabinet $1,370 from sundays-company.ca
Mid-century style, made of white oak, by Canadian company Sundays.

8. Lyre’s White Cane Spirit
$47 from lyres.ca
Made by the reigning cool kid of the international non-alcoholic market. Lyre’s is valued at $140 million US.

9. Gradient glasses $60 each from sense.com
Covetable cocktail glasses from lifestyle brand Lateral Objects.

10. The rice straw $12 for 50 from ecosmartsupply.com
Longer-lasting than your usual soggy paper straw.
The Pearts are part of a new wave of retailers that lament throwaway culture, while still being pro-consumption.

founded in 2019, two years after the Pearts left Want Les Essentiels. (Want was purchased earlier this year by Quebec outerwear brand Quartz Co. The new owners have closed down its bricks-and-mortar stores and turned solely to e-commerce.)

Goodee is philosophically consistent with Want, mixing business with design rigor and social responsibility, but it’s also the first time the brothers are publicly doubling down on diversity. The Pearts are especially keen to create a pipeline for under-represented talent. “We didn’t feel like there were many others like us in the fashion world, particularly at the high end,” says Byron. Goodee’s current brand roster is 50 per cent female-led and 45 per cent BIPOC-owned. “We’re creating space for new voices,” says Dexter. “It’s like, enough with the words. Show us the actions.”

Goodee’s early success reflects a broadening consumer interest in ethical purchases. In its first 18 months, the company raised $4.6 million in funding, with contributions from BDC Capital, Good & Well and Joe Fresh founder Joe Mimran. It also earned B Corp certification, due in part to its mandate’s alignment with the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The site’s staff is lean at 16, and there are pop-up partnerships with New York’s Whitney Museum and Nordstrom. The latter is home to the Goodee 100—a 100-piece collection of decor essentials priced at $100 or less.

The product listings on the Goodee site include bios describing the makers’ social clout, along with virtuous gold badges that read “carbon reduction” and “corporate reporting.” Initially, the Pearts were jetting off to meet the artisans, a hands-on way of vetting the quality of the furniture, bath and body products, toys, accessories and other items that are featured on the site. Then the pandemic hit, and they pivoted to receiving referrals from customers and other makers, which has created the kind of community feedback loop they wanted for the company from the start. (The Pearts picked up travel again in September, with trips to design fairs and vendor meet-ups in Copenhagen and Paris.)

Right now, the brothers are focused on building their digital and merchandising teams and connecting with evermore ethical designers. They’ve also designed a Goodee-branded house line—including totes, hoodies and hammam towels. Old habits die hard. “As much as we are curators,” Byron says, “we are also creators.”

A s identical twins, Byron and Dexter Peart have always had a built-in meeting of minds. When the Montreal designers launched the cult brand Want Les Essentiels, they combined their tastemaking abilities and became known for impeccable luxury bags, sportswear and footwear. With their newest venture, Goodee, the 49-year-old Peart siblings are thinking bigger.

Goodee is an online home and lifestyle marketplace that brings together good and great products. The site is, in the brothers’ words, “a big-tent vehicle for design and greater purpose. The site is, in the brothers’ words, “a big-tent vehicle for design and greater purpose.” It features a curated collection of bright, joyful, finely crafted products featuring the world’s best artisans. It’s a big-tent vehicle for design and greater purpose.” It features a curated collection of bright, joyful, finely crafted products featuring the world’s best artisans and “[transactions] are part of a new wave of retailers that lament the churn of throwaway culture while still being pro-consumption.” Goodee simultaneously drives desire for consumer goods, with a compound quarterly growth rate of 50 per cent through COVID, while keeping the return rate for merchandise at a meager five per cent. (Amazon, by comparison, has up to 40 per cent returns in some categories, such as consumer electronics and clothing.)

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Box Office

Calgary-based furniture company Re+U nails the art of the prefab workspace

by Simon Lawson

Anyone working from home knows, the kitchen-island office has its limitations. Enter the ModBox Studio, a 10-square-metre prefab shed by Re+U that’s inspired by the classic cottage “bunkie”—but seriously souped up. “A lot of our customers live in the inner city,” says Keith Moe, founder of the Calgary-based company. “People there want space, since the houses are smaller than in the suburbs, but they also love the neighbourhood and don’t want to leave.”

At $30,000 to $40,000, including installation, the ModBox is a lot more affordable than putting on a home extension. And the process is simple: The Re+U team puts in helical piles or a concrete pad for the ModBox to sit on and then either crane-lifts the shed into place or brings it in pieces and assembles it on-site. The all-season unit is built according to residential standards, with a vapour barrier, airtight walls and high-quality insulation. It comes pre-wired for Wi-Fi and has a range of add-on options, including a deck and custom cabinetry. Once it’s plugged into a power source, it’s ready for your Teams meeting.

When Moe launched the ModBox concept last December, he imagined people using it as a home office or maybe a gym—as many of them do. But clients are getting creative, too. “One guy turned it into a cigar room for him and his buddies,” says Moe, “and another client, who has an amazing LP collection, now uses it as a private listening space.” Units can also be combined to create much bigger spaces. “You could put two modules together to create an office with a meeting room,” Moe adds. “Or put four together and have a tiny house. The possibilities are endless.”

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Youth entrepreneurs and artists are the spark driving a better future for us all. Since its inception, more than 1 million young people have participated in the Fondation Michaëlle Jean Foundation’s programs—contributing their creativity and skills to create lasting change and build vibrant, inclusive communities.

This year, although the pandemic brought its own set of challenges, the Foundation seized an opportunity to hold virtual discussions dedicated to social justice and education, through a digital edition of our National Black Canadians Summit. The FMJF is committed to amplifying youth-led solutions, allowing young entrepreneurs, artists and changemakers to reach their full potential.

Let’s continue the conversation around youth entrepreneurs throughout the month of October. Our next virtual event, on October 26, focuses on redefining entrepreneurship and employment to be an inclusive space for all.

Stay up to date with National Black Canadians Summit events, and help us continue to support young people across the country by visiting our website www.fmjf.ca

Together, we are stronger!

Since its creation 10 years ago, the Fondation Michaëlle Jean Foundation’s (FMJF) initiatives have transformed lives and revitalized communities across the country. Help continue to support the mission of the Foundation by donating today at www.fmjf.ca
Before launching natural-lipstick brand Bite Beauty in 2011, Susanne Langmuir spent much of her time experimenting in a makeshift lab in her Toronto home. “Many of my best products have been conceptualized in my kitchen,” she says. Two short years after Bite lipstick collections went on the market, they were selling out at Sephora stores in Canada, the U.S., and Australia and Langmuir had opened a flagship in Manhattan, where customers could custom-blend their own lipstick colours over a glass of bubbly. By 2014 Langmuir had struck a deal to sell a majority share of the business to LVMH-owned Kendo.

Langmuir left Bite in 2019 and was quickly on to her next venture: SL&Co., a makeup and skin-care innovation lab, where she formulates for her own concepts and does private-label development for other brands that are looking to produce sustainable, organic products. Since opening, the lab has come out with two new brands: An-hydra, a waterless skincare line, and Lixr, a collection of mood-boosting aromatherapy lip balms.

Langmuir’s 167-square-metre facility in Toronto’s west end is a vision of all-white cabinets stocked with Ecocert ingredients, such as bentonite clay, amino acids and organic lavender, sourced from suppliers as far as Japan and as close as Langmuir’s...
I start my day with a French-press coffee, and then I’m either formulating or working in the house,” says Langmuir. She bought a 21-hectare organic farm in Meaford, Ont. She bought the property in 2014, fulfilling a dream of having a place where she could get her hands dirty. “I had travelled around the world working with growers, suppliers and producers, and I was fascinated by the idea of trying farming myself,” she says. Now Langmuir grows her own lavender, calendula and sage, which she dries on racks in the drive shed and then transports to her Toronto lab. There, she infuses the herbs into organic jojoba oil and adds them to Lixr products. “Everything on the farm has a purpose,” she says.

Langmuir fell in love with the farmhouse at first sight. It reminded her of the South of France. The stone building dates back to 1867, and it was renovated in 2012 by its previous owners, who added an extension. Langmuir now spends about half the year there, with her son Charlie and Coco, her 10-year-old German shepherd, focusing on farm work during peak seasons. “This year, the harvest was two weeks early in July because of intense heat and a shortage of rain—and then too much rain,” she says. Two local farmers who help her manage the property have taught her organic farming methods like crop rotation, companion planting and weeding by hand. In the next year, she hopes to add chickens and goats to the mix. “Goats are great grazers, clearing weeds and fertilizing naturally,” says Langmuir. “Plus, they bring so much character to a farm.”

Langmuir enlisted local organic farmers to teach her how to distill essential oils from her crops. “I had travelled around the world working with growers, suppliers and producers, and I was fascinated by the idea of trying farming myself,” says Langmuir.
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23. Elevate & Explore Black Nova Scotia Inc.
24. Faded Living Inc.
25. FemmesBrill Inc.
26. Floaty Pooch Inc.
27. FreshFind Inc.
28. Fruit & Veg To Go Corp
29. Girl Gang Strong Inc.
30. Goldzn Training
31. Grain Data Solutions Inc.
32. Gray Routes AI Inc.
33. Hempergy Corporation
34. Homer's Inc.
35. I-Access Solutions Inc.
36. Inspirely Education
37. Isle + Indies Studios Inc.
38. Jovic Energy & Project Services Ltd.
39. Kasih Mental Health Inc.
40. Kejlo Designs Inc.
41. Kite Electric Ltd.
42. NKS Therapy
43. LIOHAN Inc.
44. Little Havana Café
45. Maozino Entertainment Group
46. Mahara Lifestyle Incorporated
47. Mely AI Technologies
48. My Well Self
49. Naj Hair Company Incorporated
50. Neo Juicery Ltd
51. Netact Services Inc.
52. Never Was Average
53. New Pie Co.
54. Nigerian Caterers Ltd.
55. Nippon Sake Imports Corp
56. Notonwise Canada Inc.
57. Onlythestrong Inc.
58. Opopee Inc.
59. Organic Bytes Inc.
60. Orisha Creative
61. Pachira Social Enterprise Inc.
62. Periculum
63. P.I.S.E. Entertainment
64. Raven Rising Enterprises Ltd.
65. Reachout Solutions Inc.
66. Remix Snacks
67. Ruh
68. Salam Toronto Media Inc.
69. Sanka
70. Schooio Learning Inc.
71. Six Cinquieme Inc.
72. SJP Consulting Corp.
73. Snapsmile
74. Street Bites Toronto
75. TalkMaze
76. Taste of Jamaica
77. Thawrih
78. The Biscuit Eater Cafe & Books
79. The Fittest Inc.
80. The Food Equity Project
81. The Garden Collective
82. The Sistines Inc.
83. The Venue Global Inc.
84. Thiah Management and Consulting / Naturally Gorgeous Curls
85. Thinking Audio Inc.
86. The Islands Caribbean Cookshop
87. Triden
88. Trotman Communication
89. Unleash Forward Inc.
90. Urban Magique
91. virtualdoers
92. Welkom-U Inc.
93. Warton Residence Inc.
94. Wolastoq Maple Products
95. Wreck Beach Beverage Corporation
96. Xenia Education Inc.
97. 11824686 Canada Inc.
98. 12374765 Canada Inc.
99. 199Z
100. 2187669 Alberta Inc.
They broke glass ceilings, raised millions in venture capital and disrupted everything. Inside the brains of 10 Canadian rule breakers.

Kayla Grey hosts The Shift, which premiered on TSN in May. “It’s the kind of conversations you’d be having in your group chat,” she says.
Kayla Grey started out as a beat reporter in Manitoba and B.C., shooting and editing her own footage. Now she hosts The Shift, a buzzy new show on TSN. Here, she talks about hosting her way to the top, learning to give up control and how she turned a napkin doodle into her dream job.

**I always wanted to work in sports. At a young age, growing up in Scarborough, Ont., I watched baseball games and wrestling with my grandparents. Whatever sport I was watching would make my heart beat so fast. I loved talking about the games, I loved debating about the players, I loved being on my favourite teams.**

I went to the College of Sports Media in Toronto for a two-year program in radio and television sports broadcasting. To me, sports television was the greatest reality show in the world, and I wanted to be part of it. I thought I could bring a fresh perspective and help tell these stories in a way that resonated with people who looked like me.

After a few years paying my dues with reporting gigs in Manitoba and B.C., I joined TSN’s team as a radio producer in 2015. From there I got an opportunity to be an update anchor on TSN 660, an all-sports talk-radio station in Toronto, focusing on the Leafs, the Jays, the Raptors and TFC. Every half-hour, I’d announce the scores and talk about the big sports headlines of the day—and then the minute would run out and that was it.

In 2017, I asked TSN’s live-events producer if I could do sideline reporting during BioSteel’s All Canadian basketball games, which showcase the best high school basketball players across the country. And I got a yes! It was my first TV gig with TSN. But it was short-lived: The broadcast only lasted two quarters because one of the trucks had a power outage. It just went dark. And that’s how my first television appearance ended—with a blackout.

I kept hustling, getting comfortable with the sports-TV industry at live events, where I reported from the sidelines, ringside or even from the commentary booth. The name of my game was to show up incredibly prepared, and I built a lot of relationships. These especially helped me in smaller markets, where I didn’t know what was what. During this time, I developed my onscreen style. I pride myself on delivering the news the way I would regularly chat in person. A story has to be accessible to make the most impact.

A couple of years later, the managers at TSN suggested I audition for SportsCentre, and in January 2018 I debuted as an anchor. I am the first Black woman to ever host a flagship sports-highlight show in Canada. But I didn’t even want to talk about being a “first” that day. I didn’t want people to think that was the only reason I was there. I braced myself for the fallout, and it came—there were people using the N-word on Twitter. I remember sitting at my anchor desk, and the countdown to air was in my ear. I said to myself: “Kayla, girl, if there is any spark in you, you better find it right now. You’re going to find some confidence in this moment of uncertainty. Do not let anybody see you sweat.”

The idea for my new TSN show, The Shift, began because I needed a release from the heaviness of summer 2020 and the discourse around racial justice. We were having those conversations in our everyday life and on television too, and it stayed with me long after the segments were done. So I said to myself, “Okay, don’t talk about it. Be about it.” And I started jotting down ideas for the kind of show I wanted to host. I’m not even kidding—I wrote my first segment ideas on a shredded napkin. I was imagining a show that didn’t shy away from anything. I wanted to make sure we didn’t feel muzzled or confined and that we could just exist.

It took courage to go from doodling my ideas on a shredded napkin to pitching them—and that’s where the show actually started to take shape. I brought the idea to the TSN brand-partnerships team, who believed in it and worked their tails off to make it happen. In the process, I had to really flip my perspective and ask, “Why not me? Why not that show?” Ken Wong, an executive producer, helped bring this conversation to the bosses. With a little luck, it all came together.

The Shift, which premiered in May, is a mix of news, short features, panel discussions and interviews with athletes, musical artists and actors. We’re talking about all things sports and entertainment and breaking down the biggest headlines of the day in new ways. It’s the kind of conversation you’d be having in your group chat. It’s tough to be a first. I’m aware that viewers might make decisions about people who look like me based on how I perform, and that creates a lot of pressure. But I’m also learning that I have to shed some of that weight. I don’t have control over everything, and that’s okay. There’s an easy part to all this too, which is that I love what I do. I’ve heard from so many viewers that when they watch The Shift, they feel seen. That never gets old. —As told to Pacinthe Matte"
when I graduated from the Ivey Business School in 2010, I did what all my peers were doing: I got a job at an investment bank. I spent two years as an analyst at Merrill Lynch, where I used to work 70 to 100 hours a week. One time, I pulled two all-nighters in a row to prepare for a presentation. I didn’t leave the office for three days—not even to go home and shower. At the meeting, I kept falling asleep. My heart wasn’t in the work. I quit the bank and spent three years in private equity. Soon I realized I wanted to build a business of my own. So I decided to get my MBA at Columbia University.

In the summer of 2016, between my first and second years in business school, I met the entrepreneur Fabrice Grinda when he did a lecture at Columbia. He’d scaled and sold a couple of multibillion-dollar companies and now heads up a VC firm called FJ Labs, which was an early investor in Alibaba and Airbnb. I told Fabrice about one of my early business ideas—a marketplace where restaurants could rent their space to people who want to host events during off hours. He said, “Listen, I think you’re really smart. But that’s a terrible idea. Why don’t you just come work for me instead?”

And that’s how I became a core member of the investment team at FJ Labs. During my years there, I spent a lot of time thinking about real estate. My family lives in Calgary, and in 2014, when oil prices dropped, the city went through a recession. I had relatives who wanted to sell their homes but couldn’t find buyers.

This sparked the idea for Properly, a business that could streamline the process for sellers by purchasing property directly from them. FJ Labs led a $3.6-million seed round, which helped me start the company. Here’s how it worked: A client who wanted to sell their home would visit our website and enter information about the property, which we would run through an algorithm to predict its value on the open market. We’d buy the home from the customer in cash for that price, minus a five per cent broker’s fee. We’d then get it ready for sale and put it on the market. If we sold the home for more than what we quoted the homeowner, we’d refund that money back to them. If the home sold for less, we’d eat the costs.

We started out in Calgary, because I knew the market there. My co-founder Sheldon McCormick and I crashed on my parents’ couch while we drummed up business. We called people who listed their homes on Kijiji and tried to convince them to sell their home with us. We had a lot of doors shut in our faces. But in the end it worked. We purchased our first house for $600,000 and sold it for the same amount. Within a year, 20 per cent of sellers in Calgary were coming to us before listing their homes on the market. Soon after, we raised $12 million in Series A financing, most of which came from a fund called Prudence.

When the pandemic hit, we took a pause—we didn’t know what changes were coming in the market and how long they were going to last. In August 2020, we shut down our Calgary office and focused all our energy on building a new business in Toronto. We started offering something we call “sale assurance,” which allows people to unlock the equity on their old home before it sells. That way, they can buy their dream home as soon as they find it and avoid the listing process. Within two months, we were matching our revenues with the old business model. Since then, we’ve been growing by 100 per cent every couple of months. We just closed our Series B round of financing, raising $44 million led by Bain Capital.

From here, the plan is to build Properly into an end-to-end partner for Canadians in every major city across the country. Despite the success I’ve had thus far, I feel like I’ve barely scratched the surface of what’s possible. —As told to Isabel B. Slone

Anshul Ruparell quit the banking business to follow in his dad’s entrepreneurial footsteps. His start-up, Properly, is revolutionizing the art of the real estate transaction—and racking up millions in VC capital.

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Patients were consistently waiting up to 10 hours to see a doctor, and everything always seemed rushed. I became concerned that our system wasn’t providing the care that people deserved.

There was one week in 2014 when three friends and relatives tested me asking about various minor medical problems. I was able to diagnose them all accurately via text message. They didn’t have to go to the hospital, and I got to provide care while relaxing at home on my balcony. “This could be something,” I thought. I reached out to a developer friend of mine named Stuart Shank and asked if he’d be able to build a platform where patients could see doctors on demand.

The Maple app is simple. You log in and enter your symptoms, then the app uses your location to match you directly with a doctor or nurse practitioner who can provide care in the next couple of minutes. The nurse or doctor provides diagnoses, treatment plans, even prescriptions. We treat conditions like UTIs, eye infections and stomach bugs. We also have specialists on the app, including dermatologists, endocrinologists and therapists.

We did a soft launch in January 2016—and it was crickets. In the first month, we had one patient. Eventually we decided to do a more formal launch the following year. We hired a PR agency, did a bunch of media and paid for digital advertising. From then on, growth was pretty steady. Bit by bit, we were able to bring in VC firms that were willing to write big cheques. We closed our Series A round of $14 million in 2019.

The pandemic was an absolute rocket accelerant for us. We tripled our client base and revenue in the span of two months. By that point, we had a wait list of about 600 doctors who wanted to work with us. The pandemic made people realize that virtual care is not only effective, but it was the norm, not the exception.

I believe, by and large, we’ve been able to provide a better standard of care for patients than they would receive at a hospital or walk-in clinic. We hear from patients in remote areas who used to drive hundreds of kilometres to get health care. Now they can see a doctor in three minutes. We have one disabled patient who was not strong enough to withstand the ER’s long wait times and had skipped doctors’ visits for years. Now she’s able to get regular care from home. — As told to Isabel B. Slone

Shiva Baby, about a sugar baby who encounters a client at a shiva, premiered at TIFF in 2020 to critical acclaim. Since then, its 26-year-old writer, director and producer Emma Seligman has become an indie-film darling and is now working on her second feature film and an HBO TV show.
Cathy Tie was 18 years old when she founded Ranomics, her first start-up—an achievement that caught the attention of billionaire Peter Thiel. Her second company, Locke Bio, is bringing the Shopify model to digital health care.

**CATHY TIE**

Founder and CEO, Locke Bio

My motivation to excel started early. By the time I was in high school, I was working with professors in U of T’s immunology department. After graduation, I went on to study in the school’s molecular genetics department, working on rare genetic mutations. That’s how I got the idea for my first start-up, Ranomics. It’s a company focused on improving the accuracy of genetic testing and the ability to assess a person’s risk for disease.

At 18, I was eager to try new things and wanted to change the world along the way. I spent countless nights in my dorm room drafting up my business plan. Eventually, I was accepted to IndieBio, a start-up incubator based in San Francisco that offered $100,000 US in seed capital, along with the opportunity to network with people, do more research in the lab and improve the product. A year later, I was selected for the Thiel Fellowship, an annual program created by the billionaire PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel, which provided $100,000 US in funding and two years’ of dedicated mentorship to a select group of young entrepreneurs.

The catch was that I’d have to drop out of school to focus on the business. It was not an easy decision. My parents were strict and expected me to follow a traditional path. But in the end, I went for it. It took more bravery than it did intellect.

After the program ended, I moved back to Toronto to set up Ranomics. We offered genetic-testing analysis, and gene-mutation libraries for protein and enzyme engineering. Our clients included Mount Sinai Hospital and the Beijing Genomics Institute.

I stepped down as CEO at Ranomics in 2017 and created my second start-up, Locke Bio, two years later. I’d realized that despite their massive growth, digital health brands lacked the software they needed to launch and scale effectively. So my team created back-end tech they could use to set up a telehealth business quickly and affordably. Any e-health enterprise that wants to set up a direct-to-consumer online platform can do it through our software—the process is as simple as setting up a Shopify store. Our software makes it easy for them to manage payment, dispense medication, customize patient-intake forms and schedule consultations. Patients are getting as comfortable with prescription delivery as they are with online shopping. In the past year, we’ve received funding from investors like Anne Wojcicki from 23andMe, 10x Capital and Origins Pharmacy.

My personal philosophy is to always ask, “Why are we doing this?” I’ve been around people who were afraid of failure. I had to suppress that instinct and force myself to take risks, challenge norms and keep going without fear. Looking back, things that I once thought were impossible have come to pass. And that positive feedback loop helps me push forward.

I was able to learn organically how to manage a company, raise capital and run operations when I was still a teenager. I didn’t learn that in any school. I’m grateful to my support system, the people who gave up their time to teach me about business—and I intend to pay that forward to future entrepreneurs.

Locke Bio is growing fast. The first time I saw people putting in orders in our Slack channel, they were coming in every couple of minutes. My journey has always just consisted of small triumphs like that—fleeting moments of happiness before you realize there’s still a lot more work to do. —As told to Pacinthe Mattar

“Patients are getting as comfortable with prescription delivery as they are with online shopping”

PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA CHOU
Writer Christian Allaire’s love of storytelling and cultural artistry led him to the fashion industry in New York. Now, he’s challenging the status quo at Vogue.

CHRISTIAN ALLAIRE
FASHION AND STYLE WRITER, VOGUE

My love of design stems from my culture—seeing beautiful regalia at powwows, and my sister dressed for jingle dancing. I’m from a small town where there was no “fashion” going on, but I would read Vogue and watch Fashion Television. I knew I wanted to be a part of that world.

I went to Ryerson University for journalism and started meeting other Indigenous creatives and designers, and I thought: “I want to write about Indigenous fashion.”

During school, I interned at Flare for almost two years. Being a student and juggling an unpaid internship was not easy, and it’s not possible for a lot of people. I was lucky I had my parents’ support.

I got my first paying job through former Flare editor Mosha Lundstrom Halbert. She was in New York at Footwear News and needed an assistant. She hired me before I even graduated. I’d wanted to move to New York City since, like, middle school. To me, it felt like the heart of the fashion industry.

After three years there, I started freelancing for Elle and Refinery 29 and, during this time, I got a message from the author and editor Mary Beth Leatherdale; I’d met her in college when I was featured in a book she did called Dreaming in Indian. She said, “Hey, I’m working with Annick Press to develop its children’s programming. Would you want to do a book?” It was so out of the blue, but the more I thought about it, the more I knew it was an amazing opportunity. When I was young, I didn’t see any books about Indigenous fashion, so I wanted to do one that highlights traditions from a bunch of different cultures. The Power Of Style came out last fall. It’s still mind-blowing whenever I see my book in a store. I’m like, “I really did that, huh!”

While I was writing it, I started working at Vogue on a freelance, seasonal basis. One of the first stories I did was a roundup of six Indigenous designers who are using fashion to reclaim their culture. Vogue hadn’t really covered Indigenous fashion before, and it ended up getting tons of traffic and was shared like crazy. We quickly realized there was an appetite for this type of content. I accepted a full-time position in August 2019.

More recently, the fashion industry has been pushing conversations around inclusivity and diversity. When I would pitch these types of stories in the past, I often heard, “We don’t really want to do that right now.” There’s no excuse for not covering Indigenous designers, because they are very easy to find. Social media has been an amazing resource for story ideas.

As for what’s next, I would love to have a more senior lens on the work we’re doing at Vogue, but for now I’m just happy writing and I want to continue doing that in new ways by expanding the mediums I’m working in. I just love what I do.”

—As told to Odessa Paloma Parker

As a securities lawyer, Eric Richmond was fascinated by the emerging crypto market. His company, Tetra Trust, is Canada’s first regulated crypto custodian—basically a bank for your Bitcoin.

ERIC RICHMOND
CEO, TETRA TRUST

I’ve always had an entrepreneurial bent. I started my first business in high school, arranging bus trips from Toronto to Buffalo Bills games. In my 20s, after earning a combined MBA and JD degree at Western, I became a corporate and securities lawyer at Blake Cassels & Graydon LLP, a large law firm in Toronto. When I first heard about cryptocurrency, I was fascinated: There are so many legal implications surrounding digital-asset tokens. In my spare time, I became a crypto expert, attending conferences and reading everything I could about it.

In early 2016, I took a job running the legal department at Coinsquare, a platform that allows Canadians to exchange their traditional funds for crypto; it had just closed its first round of funding and was valued at $400 million. This was the height of the crypto bubble, and in the next few months, the market fell off a cliff. That period was known as the crypto winter, but it presented an opportunity to Coinsquare. The company used the time to acquire other firms and build a better user experience. At Coinsquare, for the first time, I had a sense of ownership over my work. I had the chance to grow a business—and an industry—from the ground up. Working at a start-up is go go go, but it was so rewarding that I didn’t mind the pace.

Almost as soon as I joined the company, we realized the Canadian space was missing a dedicated crypto custodian—essentially a company that holds crypto in trust for its clients. We’d all heard stories about people losing their private key, which is a code you need to access your funds. If it’s gone, so is your crypto. A crypto custodian removes that risk. At the time, Canadians had three options for storing their crypto: They could store it themselves in a special device, they could use an unregulated custodian or they could use a foreign custodian. At Coinsquare, we wanted to create the first crypto custodian regulated by Canadian law. We decided it would be called Tetra Trust, and in mid-2019, I was appointed CEO.

At Tetra Trust, we use military-grade hardware security modules—also used to secure traditional banking—to store digital currencies. Coinsquare hit a rough patch in 2020, when the OSC alleged a securities breach. The CEO stepped down, and the company paid a $2.3-million settlement. It turned out to be a huge opportunity for me. The new CEO and the board asked me to take on the role of COO at Coinsquare, in addition to my position at Tetra.

How do I manage both roles? I’m really good at context switching. At Tetra, which is still a start-up, I wear more hats, doing everything from quality assurance to product and user-interface changes. I work from around 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and go back online between 8 p.m. and midnight. In between, I help my wife as much as I can—we have a newborn son, which of course makes juggling these responsibilities even harder.

I’m able to work from home now, and in that sense, COVID has been a blessing. Recently, I was on a call holding my son, who wouldn’t stop screaming. The person on the other end said, “Don’t worry—I have four kids, so I don’t even hear it.” You juggle, but you make it work. —As told to Liza Agbita

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As a securities lawyer, Eric Richmond was fascinated by the emerging crypto market. His company, Tetra Trust, is Canada’s first regulated crypto custodian—basically a bank for your Bitcoin.
As a child, three things I loved were math, video games and sports. I knew I wanted to do something technical when I grew up. I first learned about AI as an undergrad at the Universidad Pública de Navarra in Spain, and I was hooked. Not only was it mathematically challenging, this technology was also going to have a transformational effect on our lives.

After undergrad, I worked in medical imaging, which was really interesting: How do we extract knowledge from pixels? That led me to my Ph.D. in computer vision, which is about interpreting sensory data from cameras. It was fascinating—and would become very useful in my later career in self-driving.

My first job in that arena was as a professor at the Toyota Technological Institute, an academic research institute affiliated with the University of Chicago. Throughout my career, there have been moments when I had to make a tough decision to do one thing and not the other. Deciding to become a professor was one of those moments, but it wasn’t really a question, because I love to help people develop their potential. When I later made the jump into industry—as chief scientist for Uber’s self-driving unit—it was to better understand the problems I was researching through access to a large program and resources.

Self-driving quickly became my obsession. When this technology is at scale, it will save so many lives. Improving safety on the road is one of the most important motivators for me. I know too many people who have had severe traffic accidents. While I was at Uber, I realized that this industry is stalled and in need of a fresh, innovative approach to commercialization. That’s why I founded Waabi—because we needed to start something new.

We formally became a company in January this year, and our team is now made up of 40-plus experts who are at the forefront of innovation in self-driving. Waabi takes an AI-first approach that’s built on what we’ve learned about self-driving in the past two decades. We’re very open about the ins and outs of our technology, where it does and doesn’t work and the proper metrics for assessing its performance. This transparency helps all parties—such as regulators, investors and even the public—to get a clearer understanding of how the technology works and, in turn, paves a path to broader adoption of the technology. We believe the technology that will go to market first will be for long-haul trucking. There’s a real business need. It’s one of the most dangerous professions in North America, plus there’s a chronic shortage of drivers, which COVID has only made worse.

The $100-million funding we secured this spring has been our biggest milestone so far. It’s helping us achieve our ultimate goal of bringing self-driving closer to commercialization.

One thing that got me here is that I never give up. I take a deep breath, I look back at what I’ve already done and I keep going. As a woman, or any minority, you have to accomplish 10 times as much to be recognized. I’ve experienced discrimination over the course of my career, and it’s something many female engineers still struggle with, but I never lost the drive to overcome the roadblocks. Now that I’m a leader, it’s about not just what I can accomplish but what my team can accomplish. We can do so much more together.

—As told to Sarah Laing

Earlier this year, autonomous-vehicle company Waabi raised $100 million in initial capital, one of the largest Series A funding rounds in Canadian history. The Toronto- and California-based business is the brainchild of Raquel Urtasun, the former head of R&D at Uber’s self-driving unit.

Raquel Urtasun
Founder and CEO, Waabi

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called Grassfed Ventures to do some investing and advising in the cannabis industry. One of the first meetings we had was with Judy Blumstock, the founder and CEO of Diamond Therapeutics. She told us about psilocybin-assisted therapy and how effective it is—like 10 years of psychotherapy in a single afternoon. We spent a lot of time thinking about what we could do with psychedelics. Unlike cannabis, which had a clear platform to build a business, psychedelics weren’t mainstream yet. So we cold-emailed Michael Pollan, whose book How to Change Your Mind had recently come out.

And we had conversations with other leaders in psychedelics. The consistent feedback was that the industry needed new clinical infrastructure to deliver these therapies, because this is not the kind of stuff you want to do in a doctor’s office with white walls and fluorescent lights. We had started and sold a business in one stigmatized medical area, so we knew we could do it again.

Field Trip was born from there. The company was initially funded by Joseph, Hannan and me, as well as our other two co-founders, Mujeeb Jaffer and Ryan Yermus. We did our first round of financing in July 2019 and opened our first ketamine clinic in Toronto in March of 2020. Since then, we’ve opened six more clinics—in the United States and Amsterdam. But our most pivotal moment happened recently: We closed a round of financing led by Bloom Burton, which brought in some of the world’s leading and most sophisticated biotech and pharma investors.

We now have two divisions. There’s Field Trip Health, which is building out our physical infrastructure; we’ll be at 20 locations before the end of 2021. And we have Field Trip Discovery, which is centered around advancing preclinical work on a next-generation psychedelic molecule that we expect to have approval for by 2027.

As we continue to grow, my role is about honing the brand strategy and acting as an ambassador, not only for the company but also for psychedelics more broadly, helping to bring them into the mainstream. It’s not just about bringing a business to market; it’s about creating a movement. It’s about changing how people think about mental health and their lives. —As told to Odessa Paloma Parker
Kimberly Kaplan spent a decade at Plenty of Fish before becoming an adviser for tech start-ups and angel investors. Now, the Vancouver-based entrepreneur is reinventing dating for the next generation with Snack—a new app that’s like TikTok meets Tinder.

I had this lightbulb moment near the end of 2019 when I saw a TikTok video of a woman trying to use the app to date. I thought: “Video dating is going to be the next wave.”

To be honest, I don’t think I really knew this would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path. I did a degree in geography at Queen’s and then a master’s in international development. I ended up going into advertising, which I never thought would be my eventual path.
The founders of Flash Forest are in the race of their lives to scale up their business and save the planet.
Further validation came in early 2020 when the partners launched a Kickstarter campaign. More than 1,600 backers raised $180,000 to support Flash Forest’s automated environmental idealism, smashing the team’s initial $10,000 goal. Soon after, the four founders gained a fifth team member in Greg Crossley, an engineer. The project caught the attention of news media. A small army of intrigued venture capitalists, non-profit forestry folks and climate academics came on board. Before long, Flash Forest had an adviser in John Innes, the dean of forestry at the University of British Columbia and a key player on the IPCC team that shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore.

Early friends-and-family and equity-funding rounds raised $400,000 and $1 million respectively. The start-up also received grants totalling $3.5 million, including one worth $1.8 million from Emissions Reduction Alberta.

This bottle-rocket combo of good PR and funding paved the way for Flash Forest’s upgrade from backyard target practice to a proper headquarters in Brampton, Ont., and a 17-person org chart that’s stacked with specialists in business development, engineering, geomatics, mechatronics and plant science. “Many of them came to us,” says Bryce.

Flash Forest isn’t the only drone-reforestation company in the game: there are Dendra Systems based in Oxford, England, and Seattle’s DroneSeed, to name just two others. The advantage that Flash Forest has on its competitors is speed and seeds.

A single operator can control a fleet of drones that can fire hundreds of thousands of flyers in a matter of minutes. The company’s pods—developed by a team of botanical specialists—contain tree seeds, nutrients and helpful fungi known as mycorrhiza, all of which help seedlings settle into their eventual drop sites and survive months in the field.

Tyler Hamilton, a director specializing in cleantech at Toronto’s MaRS Discovery District, has followed Flash Forest’s rise. He refers to the pods as the company’s “Cadbury secret.” This spring, Flash Forest was recognized as one of 10 “champions” of the Mission from MaRS: Climate Impact Challenge, which assesses the potential of Canadian start-ups to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in carbon-heavy industries such as transportation and energy.

MaRS connects winners to advisers and funding sources. Hamilton and his team of judges were particularly impressed by the way Flash Forest “nailed the seed science,” which Cameron says is where the team is focusing its IP development.

The start-up’s founders estimate that they’re on track to manufacture hundreds of thousands of pods a day at their Brampton warehouse over the next year. “They’re not like some dried pellets that just sit there on the surface and don’t take root,” says Hamilton. “Because of the design, these guys dissolve upon exposure to moisture, so they’re off to a good start once they hit the ground.”

The team’s goal, Bryce says, is to promote “biodiversity over monocultures,” replacing every site’s natural topographic smorgasbord. Flash Forest has tested its technology across the country, as far west as the rainforests of Vancouver Island and as far east as southern Ontario. The team has consulted local nurseries, governmental and forestry agencies and First Nations leaders. Occasionally, they’ve travelled to lower latitudes, sourcing seed varieties that aren’t native to their planting areas but are robust carbon-suckers and stand a better chance of weathering the warming mutations of climate change.

As for how the seeds get into the wild, that’s where Flash Forest’s suite of drones comes in. Once a pilot location is confirmed, a mapping drone is sent to survey the land. It creates a flight path that avoids unplanted spaces like lakes and roads. Once it lands, the drone can share its plotting data with the rest of the fleet. One operator can oversee five drones simultaneously, which is a direct threat to the quick-harvesting techniques practiced by the timber industry. Flash Forest’s drones can fly as low as three feet above a clear patch of land. They

When the wildfires came through B.C. this summer, they moved like lightning. At the height of the crisis, more than 40 fires burned, covering one million hectares of land. In some cases, the devastation was instant.

On June 30, the town of Lytton, at the nexus of the Fraser and Thompson rivers, hit a record temperature of 49˚C. Within 20 minutes of the mayor’s evacuation notice, it had been engulfed in flames. More than 90 per cent of the town was destroyed, two people died and more than 1,000 residents were displaced. The damage in Lytton alone is estimated at $78 million, and the priority now is to make the area habitable again—and to replace its trees.

Reforestation is a vital and time-sensitive part of wildfire recovery. Without trees, the soil will eventually erode, threatening habitats and ecosystems. Now that climate change has made wildfires a given in western Canadian summers, trees are in constant danger. It’s time to fight fire with...drone? The Flash Forest comes in. The start-up, based in suburban Toronto, is the first reforestation company on the Canadian market that uses unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, to plant trees. Flash Forest has run some of its most successful pilots in the pliable, eager soil of fire-ravaged sites using a proprietary combination of automation, aerial-mapping software and meticulously engineered seed pods that regenerate ecosystems—and fast.

The UAVs can plant far more efficiently than humans. Hamilton and his team of judges were particularly impressed by the way Flash Forest “nailed the seed science,” which Cameron says is where the team is focusing its IP development.

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Flash Forest’s CEO, Bryce Jones, speaks with the relaxed cadence of someone who works outdoors, but it’s clear he thinks in moon shots. Jones currently lives in southern Ontario, but at heart, he’s a west-coast kid who has fond memories of surfing Vancouver Island and spending time at the lake in the Okanagan Valley. When it comes time to describe himself, though, he uses words like “curious” and “entrepreneurial” rather than “outdoorsy.”

Jones studied engineering, worked as a solar-energy consultant and spent time tree planting. He initially passed on a few other environmental-start-up ideas before deciding to develop a proof of concept in the spring of 2019 for what would eventually become Flash Forest’s bread-and-butter tech. The idea had few technological hurdles—drones are relatively affordable. They’d become increasingly sophisticated over the past decade and mainstream enough that people wouldn’t write them off as experimental. They could potentially address the challenge at hand: When trying to outpace the effects of climate change, you need to act fast.

By the summer of 2019, Jones had teamed up with his older brother, Cameron—one of a frustrated climate-policy worker with the Government of Alberta, now the chief operating officer at Flash Forest—as well as Angelique Ahlström, a former tree planter who previously worked as COO of blockEDU, a Canadian tech-ed firm. Ahlström is Flash Forest’s chief strategy officer. She met Bryce when the two attended the University of Victoria. The fourth founder of the company is Andrew Lauder, an experienced product designer and Shopify veteran who’s worked with the Jones brothers on ventures in the past.

The Flash Forest team’s first drone test flight took place in the backyard of one of Lauder’s relatives. The prototype was fairly makeshift: It was an M600 drone that Bryce had modified with a pneumatic deployment device and packed with rudimentary seed pods. The pods contained a mix of off-the-shelf ingredients and garden-variety soil mix. They were cast using a 3-D printer that belonged to his engineering school. Its flight was amazing validation, says Bryce. As a former tree planter, he was well aware of Canada’s diverse and perilous topography, vast tracts of which can only be used by air.

Flash Forest brings drones to what has historically been a bag, shovel and itty-bitty-seedling fight. The Flash Forest crew hopes to plant one billion trees by 2028—a goal that’s ambitious and optimistic, yes, but imperative.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, we need to limit atmospheric temperature increases to 1.5˚C in the next decade or risk facing environmental catastrophe. One way to do that is to increase our collective forest cover by 1 billion hectares. To do its part for our mental catastrophe. One way to do that is to increase our

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becoming successful in Canada is crucial for Flash Forest. If they can make drones work here, the founders can pave a path to the global adaptation of their technology. They’ve pulled pilots in diverse ecosystems already but the team is zoning in on reforesting boreal forests in Russia, Scandinavia and Canada, we’ll make a very strong ecological footprint,” says Cameron.

Boreal forests absorb 703 gigatons of carbon annually, compared to the 375 gigatons taken in by their tropical counterparts. “If we can master that, not only will we have access to them, citing a shortfall of workers. “We see ourselves as helping their efforts with advanced tech,” she says.

Cracking Canada, however, comes with a good amount of political and commercial slowdowns, many of which the MaK’s climate-tech springboard was specifically designed to surmount. The Flash Forest 8 tree team has cast a wide net for partners. They want to work with NGOs, forestry companies, universities and corporate sponsors keen to meet the reforestation pledges embedded in corporate social responsibility mandates. Canada’s government agencies—saddled with urgent greenhouse gas targets, tree-planting labour shortages and limited nursery space for seedlings—are also obvious prospects.

Flash Forest has its one-billion-tree mandate, but the federal government’s goal is double that by 2030. The Two Billion Trees program is one part of a climate-friendly election promise from the Liberals, who budgeted $3.16 billion in 2019 to expand Canada’s urban and rural forest cover by 1 million hectares over the next decade. That’s roughly the size of Prince Edward Island.

But the program is already riddled with snags. The government allocated funding specifically to traditional burlap-sack-and-seedling operations. The pandemic slowed the program’s initial rollout. Conservative environment critic Dan Albas even scrapped four years’ worth of work on a concept that mitigating climate change is an all-hands-on-deck effort. At the same time, they know that mitigating climate change is an all-hands-on-deck effort.

The Joneses say that they’ve also switched to entirely manual tree planting: high injury and turnover rates,” says Bryce says his team is very strong and hybrid spruce. They’ll also be workshopping red pine, coastal Douglas fir, western hemlock and hybrid spruce. They’ll also be workshopping different deployment mechanisms while in the field; their all."
The Edmonton Elks spent nearly $2 million on their rebranding, which included an overhaul of the Commonwealth Stadium, seen here during a game in September.

The game

For years, Edmonton’s football club was excoriated for its insensitive name, and for years, the team didn’t change it.

Then their sponsors threatened to drop them.

Inside pro sports’ reckoning with racism.

By Luc Rinaldi

Photographs by Jason Franson
IN RURAL MAINE, BUT ALMOST NONE OF ITS STUDENTS WERE INDIGENOUS.

When Natan Obey was a teenager, he played on a high school hockey team called the Indians. His school was located next to a reservation where he was the only Indigenous player. Opposing teams taunted him with slurs. As a member of the team, Obey had to wear their logo: a red face, skin painted, hair braided. At home games, fans in headaddresses bellied faux-Indigenous chants, and the mascot’s costume was a stereotype of a First Nations chief. “It was incredibly hurtful,” says Obey. Not only were his peers mocking his culture, he says, but they were also using Indigenous customs as a form of entertainment.

That was the early 1990s, when Obey had little power to change a team name. Today, he has more sway: Obey is president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, an advocacy organization that represents 65,000 Inuit across Canada. In 2015, soon after his election, the Canadian Football League’s Edmonton Eskimos advanced to the Grey Cup. Obey had long believed that Edmonton’s club, much like his high school hockey team, had no business calling themselves by a name that many consider to be a racial slur. Now that he was a cultural leader, he figured it was time to speak up. A few days before the big game, Obey wrote an op-ed for The Globe and Mail in which he implored the team to rebrand, explaining that most Inuit no longer call themselves by that name. Some never believed that Edmonton’s club, much like his high school hockey team, had no business calling themselves by a name that many consider to be a racial slur. Now that he was a cultural leader, he figured it was time to speak up. A few days before the big game, Obey wrote an op-ed for The Globe and Mail in which he implored the team to rebrand, explaining that most Inuit no longer call themselves by that name. Some never believed. “It isn’t a term we use to describe ourselves in 1910. Throughout the 20th century, while the Edmonton club was playing football, real Inuit were facing inhumane treatment at the hands of government. When the Supreme Court first ordered the feds to administer health care to Inuit, officials struggled to spell and pronounce their names. In 1940, they introduced an identification system in which Inuit wore numbered leather discs around their necks to access social services.

The feds dropped the dog-tag system in 1971 and replaced it with an equally degrading program, forcing Inuit, who often went by single genderless names, to adopt Christian names. Thanks in part to an error-riddled Life cover story in 1956, Inuit entered the North American imagination as, in the magazine’s words, the world’s last “Stone Age survivors.” In 1980, Indigenous people from across the Arctic formally agreed to call themselves Inuit and, in effect, drop the name that had been foisted upon them. Edmonton won the 2015 Grey Cup, but they couldn’t vanquish the controversy surrounding their moniker. Obey’s op-ed turned the team’s name into a matter of national concern. Around the same time, Murray Sinclair, the head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, called for other sports organizations—most notably the NFL’s Washington team, which also used a racial slur in its name—to rebrand. Justin Trudeau, then-Alberta premier Rachel Notley, and the mayors of Edmonton and Winnipeg began coaxing Edmonton’s team to rename themselves. Piles of handwritten letters from schoolchildren arrived at the club’s HR, agitating for a rebrand. The Inuk throat singer Tanya Tagaq was more pointed, tweeting, “My unpopular opinion is fuck the name Edmonton Eskimos.”

The uproar surprised Len Rhodes, then president and CEO of Edmonton’s football team. At the time, he says, he considered the name to be a respectful ode to Inuit strength and resilience. But he was troubled by the fact that people were offended, and he wanted to start talking about a name change. “I didn’t want the courts and politicians to make decisions for us,” he says.

In 2016, Rhodes invited Natan Obed to Edmon- ton to discuss the name with senior management. “There was a lot of learning that needed to happen,” says Obed. “There wasn’t a lot of understanding of who Inuit were, where Inuit live and how Inuit are affected by this moniker.” Soon after, Rhodes wrote a strategic plan recommending that the Edmonton team consider changing their name by 2021. The word was outdated, but the stakes were huge—they had to think about ticket sales, merchandising, sales, brand equity. And, so, the proverbial football was kicked down the field.

Rhodes couldn’t have anticipated the way professional sports would transform in that time. In 2016, when Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the national anthem to protest racial injustice, millions of fans boycotted the NFL. Today, entire pro sports teams kneel together, and many clubs have refused to play scheduled games, all in solidarity with the social uprising against police brutality and anti-Black racism, especially following the 2020 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. In Canada, the recent recovery of more than 1,600 unmarked graves at former residential schools has spurred a similar reckoning with racial justice. But as the nation moves toward progress, it is also stuck with the relics of an ugly past. Administrators and elected officials now have to decide what to do with offensive team names and mascots, statues of slaveholders and schools named after dead colonizers. The city of Toronto recently voted to rename Dundas Street, which honours an anti-abolitionist politician. Ryerson University will rebrand, too, owing to its namesake’s colonial legacy. For these institutions, Edmonton’s football team offers a lesson. Changing an offensive name isn’t just about doing the right thing. It’s also about the bottom line.

IN RURAL MAINE, BUT ALMOST NONE OF ITS STUDENTS WERE INDIGENOUS.

Obed is Inuk—he grew up in Nunatavut, along Labrador’s Sheep River—so he stood out, especially on the ice where he was the only Indigenous player. Opposing teams taunted him with slurs. As a member of the team, Obed had to wear their logo: a red face, skin painted, hair braided. At home games, fans in headaddresses bellied faux-Indigenous chants, and the mascot’s costume was a stereotype of a First Nations chief. “It was incredibly hurtful,” says Obey. Not only were his peers mocking his culture, he says, but they were also using Indigenous customs as a form of entertainment.

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that Inuit impressions of the name varied wildly. The mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, a longtime fan of the team, said he didn’t mind the name. Meanwhile, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, the director of the seal-hunt documentary Angry Inuk, implored them to drop it. Some Inuit asked why the team hadn’t come sooner. And, according to Allan Watt, the team’s VP of marketing, many others said there were more pressing issues to address, like food and housing insecurity. “And for us to come rolling in wanting to talk about the name of a football team? It’s like, ‘What the fuck are you guys doing here?’” he says.

The PR giant Edelman conducted a survey on behalf of the franchise, which found that eight in 10 Inuit in the Yukon and Northwest Territories opposed a name change. But in northern Quebec and Labrador, where people are less likely to be fans of the team, only a third objected to it.

Meanwhile, non-Indigenous fans seemed largely untroubled by the issue. According to a 2017 Insights West poll, only 12 per cent of Albertans took offense to the team name. Among season-ticket holders, Rhodes says, the number was about the same. A local sports reporter even told Rhodes that fans would run him out of town if he rebranded the team. Tom Richards, a board member who played for the club in the 1980s, fielded complaints from former players. “The guys didn’t like it, but they came to understand why it was happening,” he says. “We were trying to make sure we were doing the right thing and not just reacting to social noise.”

A multimillion-dollar rebrand was not an appealing undertaking. The club had lost $1.1 million in 2019 and were on their way to posting a $7.1-million loss in 2020—the consequence of a season cancelled by COVID. After nearly four years of meetings and polling and outreach, the board announced that the team would keep the original name and increase northern engagement—that is, they would send players to Inuit communities to play football, speak at anti-bullying seminars and celebrate local festivals.

But, as Obed had warned, the issue did not go away. Days after the murder of George Floyd, the team posted a statement on social media. “We seek to understand what it must feel like to live in fear going birding, jogging or even relaxing in the comfort of your home,” it read. “We stand with those who are outraged, who are hurt and who hope for a better tomorrow.” On Twitter, then-Nunavut MP Mumilaaq Qaqqaq slapped back, “If you really ‘seek to understand’ start by changing your team name.” She told APTN News that the team had no right to make money off a derogatory term. “If people won’t listen to us about this issue, how can we expect people to listen to us on bigger items?”

Norma Dunning, an Inuk researcher and professor at the University of Alberta, says the decision to keep the name seemed like an affront to Inuit who’d voiced their discontent. “There were just so many people crying about they felt,” she says. “You really have to be willfully blind to ignore that.”

IN JULY OF 2020, BELAIRDIRECT, A LONGTIME SPONSOR, THREATENED TO CUT TIES WITH THE TEAM IF THEY DIDN’T CHANGE THEIR NAME. THE NEXT DAY, EDMONTON’S CLUB ANNOUNCED THEY WOULD ACCELERATE THEIR NAME REVIEW PROCESS.

**The old Edmonton mascot, Punter (above, left), stands with the new mascot, Spike the Elk, at a game in September.**

A week later, the gambling website Sports Interaction, which was in the process of negotiating sponsorship terms with the team, publicly requested a rebrand, too. Sports Interaction is owned and operated by the Mohawks of Kahnawake, a community of 8,000 near Montreal. “We felt a responsibility to do the right thing, probably more so than anyone else,” says Dean Montour, CEO of Mohawk Online, the parent company of Sports Interaction. “We’re First Nations-owned. We’re not like any other major corporate sponsors that Edmonton has.”

Norma Dunning tracked the team’s public sponsorship struggles with interest. “At the end of it all, money talks,” she says. Working with the non-profit Progress Alberta, she created a webpage where, with one click, people could send a blanket email demanding change to $6 of the team’s major sponsors. Nearly 2,000 people participated, flooding partners’ inboxes. Those companies, in turn, started contacting the club’s office, fed up with the deluge. “Our sponsors were getting too many phone calls,” says Tom Richards. “We’re a community-owned team, and corporations are happy to support us. But they’re not in the business of answering phone calls and defending our name.”

The board was in a bind. If they kept their name, they risked losing some of their sponsors, which accounts for their single biggest revenue stream: more than $8 million in annual ticket sales. But irate fans rarely follow through on such threats. In 2014, Michael Lewis, the author of *The Big Short*, studied several American colleges that changed their team names because they were considered offensive. He found that revenue remained stable in the year following the rebrand and increased in subsequent years. “Threats of boycott are empty,” he wrote in *The New York Times*. Refusing to shed a problematic name, he added, “orders on
Alberta linguists—team experts and University of missions. After consulting to create new equipment and merchandise. They also head and a football enveloped by antlers. before deciding on their two logos: a green-and-gold elk he says. Watt and the board saw hundreds of sketches this instance.’” he says. “There was no handbook on rebranding. We took ownership of the rebrand. “It was not an easy pro-

In his absence, Allan Watt club canvassed their fans for ideas. They received more than 14,800 sub-

murred to change it. The transformation was complete.

began furiously updating their Commonwealth Sta-

dium to include massive new murals, dozens of green-and-
yellow flags and a gargan-
tuan 60-metre-long elk head painted on the field. “We had no idea the amount of rebranding that was neces-

sary,” says Watt. “I’m sure we’ll keep finding the old name tucked away in places we had no idea it was.”

Between the new logo, fresh gear, the stadium over-

haul and sundry adminis-

trative changes, Edmonton’s CFL team spent roughly $2 million on the rebrand. “In the short term, yes, it was an expense,” says Rhodes. “But in the long term, I believe the return on investment will be at least tenfold.” In the wake of the rebrand, merchan-
dise sales spiked. Instead of boycotting the Elks, fans stormed the team store, which had to extend its hours to meet demand. By the end of August, the team had sold as much merch as it normally moves by November.

Spurers applauded the new name and on the jumbotron. The coaches wore in Elks jackets and carried Elks

T

eam to run for provincial office; he

thought the name tucked away in places like antlers and galloped in celebration. The transformation was complete.

CB—FALL 2021


toked ownership of the rebrand. “It was not an easy pro-
cess,” he says. “There was no handbook on rebranding. We couldn’t open to page 64 and say, ‘Here’s what you do in this instance.’”

First, the team trademarked the new name, formally rein-
corporated the business and registered a new URL. Then they hired the advertising agency DDB to create a logo. Watt wanted it to be modern yet iconic and versatile enough to appear on jerseys, helmets, football fields, keychains, hats, socks and beer cozies. More than anything, it had to be cool. “We want kids to want that logo on their pyjamas,” he says. Watt and the board saw hundreds of sketches before deciding on their two logos: a green-and-gold elk head and a football enveloped by antlers. The team then worked with their apparel manufacturers to create new equipment and merchandise. They also

In response, the university created an annual powwow event, introduced an Indigenous-languages course, hired more Indigenous faculty, increased education about colonial history, placed an explanatory plaque beside the statue of Ryerson and com-
misioned a task force to probe the school’s relationship with Indigenous people—it did everything short of chang-
ing the name. Anne Spice, an assistant professor of Indigenous environmental knowledges and a Tlingit member of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, says that even in early 2021, a name change didn’t seem to be on the table. “It was frustrating to see the institution drag its feet on this,” she says.

The children’s bodies were recov-
ered, and the university could no longer rationalize the Ryerson name. In August, the school’s task force recommended changing it, among other actions aimed at respecting Indigenous people and history. The university accepted all of its own recommendations, and a new name is now on the horizon. “Indigenous fac-

ulty, students and staff have been talking about this for a long time, but it wasn’t taken up until the university looked bad,” says Spice. “It shouldn’t take the recovery of children’s graves for us to see the institution drag its feet on this.”

Ryerson and the Elks are the excep-
tions, not the rule. Across the country, schools, statues, teams, streets and entire towns bear names that veneer ugly aspects of Canada’s national identity. To those with the power to change them, Natan Obed offers the same advice he gave to Edmonton’s CFL team six years ago. They can defend their institutions’ history, consult Indigenous people, form task forces, hire PR firms and conduct online surveys, or they can save time, money and heartache and simply act. The issue will not go away. To wit: his high school hockey team. In 2009, Maine became the first state to outlaw Indigenous team names, nicknames, emblems, and logos. More than three decades after Obed first laced up his skates, his former hockey team is now known as the Coyotes.
trust
noun. /trəst/
Firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.
(Also: confidence, certainty)

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Rules and recommendations for building a future-focused business—from Canadian companies who’ve got it all figured out by Andrea Yu

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“You have a stronger business when you have employees who are focused on their own health and wellness.”
— Tara Ataya, Page 79
How to create pay transparency

The do-gooders at FoodShare implemented a public pay grid, added a salary ratio system and bumped up junior employees’ wages by 25 per cent.

In April 2017, Paul Taylor was appointed executive director of FoodShare, a non-profit in Toronto that hosts community markets, sells affordable produce boxes and organizes school nutrition programs. One day, Taylor asked one of his colleagues what food justice meant to her. “She said, ‘Food justice means having decent work.’” Taylor recalls. The comment stung. At the time, FoodShare’s lowest-earning workers were paid minimum wage. “We were supporting communities that had been made vulnerable,” he says, “but we were doing so on the backs of workers who were vulnerable themselves.”

When Taylor joined the organization, FoodShare had a pay grid, but it was inconsistently applied and not accessible to employees. “It wasn’t clear to me that people were being compensated based on a principle of equal pay for equal work,” Taylor says. He sat down with his senior leadership team, and by July of 2018, they had rolled out some significant changes to their pay schedules.

First, they created a transparent pay grid and increased wages for individuals at the bottom by 25 per cent. “Employees can see what we compensate for various roles at various levels,” Taylor explains. The organization was able to pay for the wage increases by amplifying its fundraising efforts and boosting sales of its produce boxes. It also nixed salary negotiations for higher salaries, employers often perceive them as pushier than white applicants who made the same requests.

Another change was the introduction of a ratio system, which ensures that the highest-paid worker at FoodShare earns a maximum of three times that of the lowest-paid worker. “We were talking about the effect that growing income inequality has on food insecurity, but we were perpetuating it ourselves. It seemed disingenuous,” Taylor says.

The changes have been hugely effective, he says—there’s less turnover, less need for recruitment and less time and energy spent filling vacant positions. The calibre and quality of job candidates has also improved. “People want to work at an organization that reflects their values,” he says. Since it implemented these policies, FoodShare’s staff has grown from 60 full-time equivalent employees in 2018 to more than 100 in 2021, and its annual revenue has grown from $6.4 million in 2018 to $10.7 million in 2020.

Taylor argues that pay transparency should extend into the corporate world but believes that most executives and company owners are too preoccupied with profit to take action on their own. Instead, he says, we need government mandates forcing businesses to update their policies. In the meantime, he’s continued to encourage pay transparency in the non-profit ecosystem. In June of 2021, FoodShare sent out an open letter to the non-profit job board Charity Village asking that it make compensation information mandatory for all job listings posted on its website. Since then, more than 90 organizations have signed the letter, including Greenpeace Canada and Doctors Without Borders.

People want to work at an organization that reflects their values,” says FoodShare director Paul Taylor.

Doctors Without Borders.

In Canada, university-educated BIPOC employees earn, on average, 87.4 cents for every dollar earned by their white peers.

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F or artificial intelligence, 2015 was a watershed year. Suddenly machine learning was faster, cheaper, scalable and able to solve more complicated problems. At IBM, the leadership realized they required more software developers who were knowledgeable in AI to keep up. But Steve Astorino, VP of development, data and AI, encountered a shortage of skilled workers in data science and machine learning. Like many new technologies, AI had grown faster than the industry could train a new workforce.

So IBM set out to tackle the problem head-on. First, the company partnered with post-secondary institutions—including Queen’s University, Carleton University and Bow River College—to create curricula and develop training in high-demand skills through a program called Learn@IBM. “Research and innovation is happening jointly between IBM and these programs, students and professors,” Astorino says, which in turn helps drive student interest in the field. Since these academic partnerships started in 2017, more than 2,000 students have received IBM micro-credentials related to analytics reporting and visualization, data prep and machine learning. “The calibre of applications that we...
get coming out of universities is improving,” Astorino says. “And there are a lot more data scientists now than there were three years ago.”

The company has also partnered with the Society of Women Engineers on the Tech Re-Entry Program, designed to help women who have taken a break from their tech careers update their skills. They offer training in digital and collaboration methodologies, as well as data science. Graduates aren’t guaranteed employment at IBM, but many do end up with jobs at the company.

One participant, a former government IT developer, had taken four years off to raise her son. She completed two six-month terms with the Tech Re-Entry program, where she picked up cloud computing and two new programming languages. By January 2021, she was working for IBM full-time as a software developer.

Upskilling is a necessary investment for companies like IBM Canada. “Without this skilled workforce, we would not be able to modernize as quickly as we need to,” Astorino explains. “We’re using AI in everything. Without upskilling, we cannot move at a fast enough pace. The market is too competitive, and it would be a huge hit.”

AI isn’t the only place IBM needs a trained workforce. Next up on Astorino’s radar is quantum computing, which enables computers to perform calculations in the span of minutes instead of weeks. That technology is unfolding at a slower pace than AI, so IBM Canada is engaging teenagers through a two-semester Introduction to Quantum Computing course, offered at select high schools. “We’re reaching out early to get interest from students,” says Astorino. “You’d never have seen a data science high school course before. Now, you just do a search on the internet and you can see how many people are doing AI, quantum computing and cloud computing fresh off graduation. It’s pretty impressive.”

**How to modernize employee benefits**

Hootsuite revamped its package to offer 100 per cent mental-health coverage, family-planning perks and 10 bonus days off

In the pre-pandemic days, the social-media-management platform company Hootsuite had a one-size-fits-all benefits package. Its insurer was Sunlife Financial, which offered Hootsuite employees standard coverage for prescription drugs, vision care, dental and accident insurance. Then came COVID. The Hootsuite brass quickly realized they needed to make some radical moves to ensure their benefits optimally supported their 1,100-odd employees, who were working remotely, juggling jobs and childcare and experiencing heightened stress and uncertainty.

The company’s office in Italy was the COVID canary. As early as February 2020, the country was crushed under the weight of soaring case counts, strict lockdowns and packed ICUs. And so, in addition to their five paid sick days, Hootsuite offered staff in all of its offices 10 so-called COVID Days, which they could use however they wanted. Tara Ataya, the company’s chief people and diversity officer, reports that employees used COVID Days to spend time with their families, to look after sick loved ones and as mental-health days.

As 2020 progressed, Ataya and her team kept thinking about how to update the company’s benefits package. What would workplace benefits look like in a post-COVID world? They began by surveying staff to better understand how they were coping with the pandemic, how their existing benefits were working and, most importantly, what was missing from the equation. They followed up with focus groups involving staff from different levels of the company.

Hootsuite employees reported that their major concerns surrounded mental health and work-life balance. There were as many different needs and stressors as there were staff, and the one-size-fits-all approach no longer made sense. Employees wanted more mental-health and wellness support, plus some flexibility in how their care was delivered.

The leadership team, meanwhile, looked at various strategies: increased mental-health coverage, better family-planning perks and 10 bonus days off. They wanted more mental-health and wellness support, plus some flexibility in how their care was delivered.

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The leadership team, meanwhile, looked at various providers. In the end, they chose to stick with Sunlife but change up the offerings.

Hootsuite’s updated plan, which rolled out in April 2021, covers 100 per cent of mental-health treatments in North America. To address work-life...
balance, the company introduced half-day Fridays during summer months and an annual company-wide wellness week, when everyone unplugs and takes some extra paid time off as a company. Hootsuite even held a contest to incentivize workers to take a break—employees who used up all their vacation days would be eligible to win prizes like trips for two to Bali, Lisbon or Las Vegas. As a result, staff took twice as much time off in 2021 as they did in 2019.

Surveys also indicated that family planning and financial planning were priorities for staff. So Hootsuite created retirement savings programs—401K and RRSP matching—and added coverage of fertility treatment, including egg freezing. To further modernize its plans, the company also began covering gender-affirmation procedures and their associated costs.

Staff can now choose from three benefit plans. All employees have access to certain benefits, like mental-health spending and fertility support, but they can also tailor their plans to their individual needs and preferences: A staffer can choose a plan with higher coverage for dental care, for example, or they can choose a lower dollar amount but more flexibility to spend their funds on things like fitness equipment or transit passes.

In the end, the new perks cost nearly twice what the old ones did. Hootsuite spent $3.3 million on benefits and other employee expenses between January and July 2021, compared to $1.66 million over the same period in 2020.

And it’s worth every penny. For Ataya, funding employee wellness is a no-brainer: Employee-engagement scores have soared from 66 to 81 per cent over the course of the pandemic. When employees are supported, they tend to be more productive. “We’re creating a stronger business by making sure that you have employees who are focused on their own health and well-being and by giving them the resources to do that,” she says.

**HOW TO TRACK PRODUCTIVITY**

_How to track productivity_

Acto is a platform for pharmaceutical and life-sciences companies to communicate with sales reps, health-care providers and patients, and its success has exploded with the health-tech boom. The company’s revenue swelled by 158 per cent in 2019, and the following year it secured $11.5 million in Series A funding. At the same time, CEO Parth Khanna was looking for a way to create company goals and transparency around productivity. As part of the company’s approach to performance management, Khanna created a scorecard system, which measures company-wide goals—like revenue targets or customer satisfaction—on both the departmental and the employee level. Each manager creates goals for their team, weighting them so staff understand how best to spend their time. Theres a scoring scheme—a heat map—that shows an employee’s specific skills, duties and roles. For example, a marketing manager’s scorecard might dictate that she spend 50 per cent of her time managing

- the team, 25 per cent dealing with the budget and 25 per cent developing new processes and systems. When employees satisfy their goals, they’re rewarded with bonuses. The scorecards also help separate productivity from busy work. For example, being on Zoom calls all day might not necessarily translate to progress and achievements for the company. “If I’m just going from meeting to meeting, we’re not moving as a team,” Khanna explains. “I can be busy, but the organization is not productive.”

According to Wafa Saeed-Irizzi, Acto’s VP of marketing, while employees work from home during the pandemic, the scorecards keep people from working in silos. By looking at their scorecards, team members can see how their tasks contribute to their manager’s and director’s goals, which then contribute to company-wide goals. “The scorecard system is to help remind everyone of the company’s why, the department’s why and the personal why to reinforce those values and objectives,” she says.

**The Power of Positivity**

Fernand Vartanian of Ontario-based Onlia on how insurance companies can advocate for safer roads with positive reinforcement instead of penalties

What’s new in the world of insurance?

Over the last few years, drivers in Ontario have been eligible for discounts or incentives based on safe driving behaviour. Recent regulatory changes mean that now some providers of pay-as-you-drive policies could increase a customer’s premium if the tracking in these programs reveal risk to the provider. Behaviour like speeding, distracted driving, quick braking, and acceleration could come with a price tag.

At Onlia, we believe in motivation over discouragement, and rewards over penalties. Our telematics-based app, Onlia Sense®, enables us to give cash back to our customers for safe driving. Encouraging positive road usage. For our customers, a personal drive score determines the share of reward received, with the opportunity to increase rewards with continued and consistent use of Onlia Sense over time.

But data tracked in the app is not tied to a customer’s premium, and won’t impact prices. Not all providers follow this philosophy, and some drivers who opt for a pay-as-you-drive may see an increase in what they pay if they take too many risks.

What’s different about Onlia in relation to other insurance providers?

Onlia rewards safety. Depending on where a person is on their Onlia journey, our simple rewards system encourages loyalty through positive reinforcement. Our rewards include discounts for being safe, like more than $500 annually on your auto insurance policy, including a 10% conviction-free discount, 10% graduated licensing discount, 2% winter tire discount and more. You can get extra cash back in your wallet of up to $400/monthly or $480 a year for driving safely with Onlia Sense.

Can you explain the concept of “behavioural economics” and how it plays into Onlia’s model?

We take a prevention-first approach to insurance, grounded in principles of behavioural economics. Research in behavioural psychology tells us that consistently acknowledging positive behaviour is an effective way to change action. But we know change doesn’t happen overnight, so Onlia’s built tools and resources that help put Canadians on the path to become safer drivers and homeowners over time.

How has the pandemic impacted the insurance industry?

In April 2020, regulatory changes made it possible for insurance companies to provide vital relief to their customers. Onlia was happy to be able to give a month of free premium to its customers, which helped alleviate the financial impact of the pandemic, affording immediate savings at a time when Canadians needed it most.

Why should corporations embrace the inclusion of home and auto insurance as part of group benefits?

Car accidents are the leading cause of traumatic injury and death in North America. In Canada, there are almost 3,000 fatalities caused by motor vehicle incidents each year, not to mention thousands of physical injuries. Lost productivity on the job is immeasurable and causes higher insurance benefit premiums on a traditional health and wellness program.

With an understanding of how auto-related accidents affect overall wellness at the employer group insurance level, Onlia’s insurance program puts a focus on prevention. We work with group benefits providers to customize discounts and help educate staff on how to be safer on the road. Safe drivers mean less road incidents, which is great for an employers’ bottom line, and the lives of their employees.
Goodbye to...
The Business Lunch

The work-from-home life comes with a sweet set of perks: the 30-second commute, the yoga-pant uniform, the Netflix sneak when you need a break. But there is one thing we miss about those pre-pandemic days: the unabashed indulgence of a work lunch. To be clear, we’re not mourning the three-martini boys’ club. We’re not even mad about the demise of client lunches. Nobody likes a client lunch. The event we’re wistful for is going somewhere nice to whinge, and eat, and occasionally plot the takeover of the company, with your work confidantes. Many of Canada’s best lunch spots were early casualties of the pandemic—places like Montecito and Brothers in Toronto, Yew and Basha in Vancouver, Moishes and Balsam Inn in Montreal. And yet, out of this tragedy a more limber restaurant industry has emerged. In Toronto, the fine-dining staple Alo (known for its $300 tasting menu) has transformed into a burger shack, while new and delicious takeout spots are sprouting out of condo kitchens and prefab pop-ups. Eating lunch at your desk has never been more satisfying—and who says you can’t invite your vaccinated colleagues over? —Emily Landau

10,000 restaurants in Canada closed between March and December 2020

Can you believe...

10,000 restaurants in Canada closed between March and December 2020

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