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# TIKTOK GOVERNMENT-BASED BAN

*by Ronnie Neiman, Editor-in-Chief*

Photo Credit: Pixabay

February saw the ban of TikTok on government devices in Ontario. On Feb. 28, the Canadian government joined the European Union (EU) and the United States Senate in banning TikTok from government-issued devices. That means the app has been removed from all federal government-issued cellphones and users won't be able to download it in the future.



TikTok is a wholly owned subsidiary of Chinese technology firm ByteDance Ltd., which appoints its executives. ByteDance is based in Beijing but registered in the Cayman Islands, as is common for privately owned Chinese companies. While the ban isn't Canada-wide, the app isn't seen as trusted as it is a Chinese-owned app. There are security concerns over using the app.

The app has been banned on government devices in Canada, Belgium, Denmark, New Zealand, Taiwan, the UK and the US. The EU told its staff to remove the app from phones it has issued, and also recommended they remove

it from private devices on which official apps are installed. India has banned TikTok outright because of security concerns. Afghanistan has also banned it to prevent young people from "being misled".

Governments fear that 5G equipment installed by Chinese firms in foreign countries' networks contains "backdoors" through which data can be passed back to Beijing. Through companies such as Hikvision, China is the world's largest producer of security cameras. It is thought that that these could also be secretly feeding intelligence

to China. TikTok insists it gathers no more data than other social media apps, and is independent of the government.

In 2022, it admitted that some of its staff in China could access user data gathered in Europe, but it says that it is working on ways of keeping such information within Europe.

It may seem as though espionage being a possibility is motivating several countries to ban the app, being safe online should still be a priority. Only share data that you want shared. Be smart, be safe.



## CANADA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES CALL FOR FAIR DIGITAL PRICING WITH A NATIONAL EBOOK CLUB

*Sent by Agility Distribution*

The 2023 selection for Un livrel/One eRead Canada is *Tatouine* by Jean-Christophe Réhel

Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) is inviting readers from coast to coast to join the country's largest bilingual digital book club and raise awareness of the need for fair access to digital books and audiobooks. As of April 1, until April 30, over a thousand public libraries will participate in One eRead Canada, a nation-wide campaign offering access to one book for one month and with zero waitlists.

"Books are an essential means of connecting and understanding the world around us," says Åsa Kachan, current CULC Chair. "The importance of equitable access to digital books and audiobooks has never been as evident as it has through this pandemic. We've seen demand skyrocket, yet exorbitant costs for eBooks prevent public libraries from meeting the demand."

CULC reports that restrictive costs, licensing, and availability of content prevent public libraries from providing adequate access to the volume and variety of sought-after titles, including the diverse voices emerging across the literary landscape. One eRead Canada demonstrates what less restricted access could provide, including a shared experience and connection during difficult and isolating times, such as a pandemic.

This year's One eRead selection, *Tatouine* by Quebec native Jean-Christophe Réhel, is expected to resonate with readers recovering from social isolation. The novel's protagonist feels disconnected from people and the world around him. The reader is brought along as he recounts his experience living with a genetic disease, his financial hardships as he cycles through a series of unfulfilling jobs, and the highs and lows of family and romantic relationships. In response, he turns to *Star Wars* and other pop culture diversions to relate to and to escape from his surroundings. *Tatouine* is relatable and imaginative, capturing the struggles and small triumphs of the daily grind and modern existence with humour and a poetic rhythm.

powerful and often hilarious story of one man's journey living through the ups and downs brought on by self-isolation. Having lived through the pandemic, *Tatouine* is a book many Canadians will surely relate to," says Leslie Weir, the Librarian and Archivist of Canada. "I applaud One eRead for having chosen this book available in French and English. A national bilingual book club is the most fitting expression of our drive for more equitable access."

*Tatouine* will be available for free to download in eBook and eAudiobook formats on local libraries' digital platforms in both the original French and translated English languages. An accessible version will be made available through the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS). There will be no waitlists; only a library card is needed from one of the participating libraries across Canada.

Readers are also invited to look for announcements of upcoming virtual events, such as interviews with the author and translators, and a library-hosted podcast about *Tatouine*. Visit [1ereadlivrelcanada.ca](http://1ereadlivrelcanada.ca) for dates and follow along on the One eRead Canada Book Club Facebook group for updates.

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### About Un Livrel/One eRead Canada

One eRead Canada is an annual digital, bilingual, cross-Canada book club initiated and supported by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) to help Canadian public libraries promote digital reading awareness and issues. The program was started in 2019 and has previously featured *Glass Beads* by Dawn Dumont (2019), *Vi* by Kim Thúy (2020), and *The Break* by Katherena Vermette (2022). It features a title with no waitlists for one month, in both French and English via eBook and eAudiobook formats for a bilingual reading or listening experience. Readers are invited to share their experience through the national Facebook Group and via related events hosted locally and nationally throughout the month.

### About Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CBUC)

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council was formed in 2008, formalizing groups whom had met for more than 25 years to better library service in Canada's populated urban areas. CULC has members from the 51 largest public library systems in Canada, along with Library and Archives Canada and the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. CULC's mission is to facilitate advocacy, collaboration, and research that strengthens and promotes the value of Canada's urban libraries as integral to a vibrant democracy, a strong economy, and thriving communities. More than 75% of all Canadians are served by a CULC member library, whose activities comprise more than 80% of Canada's public library total.



Photo Credit: Pixabay

"This is an extremely



## THE PLAY'S THE THING FOR WINNIPEG PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKING AT BUMUSIC

BU NEWS

Carolyn Gray has made a writing life for herself in Manitoba. It has not been an easy journey, she says, but she has persevered.

On Tuesday, March 28 she will present a public talk at Brandon University (BU) that reveals how she has made it as a writer and playwright in this province. The talk will be held in Room 206 of Clark Hall from noon to 12:30 pm. Gray will take questions at the end of her talk. The event is free and open to all.

The talk is part of the ongoing Creative Writing Literary Exchange speaker series in the Department of English, Drama, & Creative Writing at BU.

Gray has written for the stage over the past several decades and been produced professionally by Theatre Projects Manitoba, zone41 theatre, the Winnipeg International Children's Festival, and many independent theatre companies.

She was a founding member of the Adhere and Deny Object Puppet Theatre that produced innovative puppet theatre for many years in Winnipeg.

Her theatre work has taken her on tour across Manitoba, to other parts of the country, and overseas to England. She was a longtime collaborator with British playwright and actor Alan Williams, who exported the experimental methods of the acclaimed Hull Truck Theatre to Canada.

Gray's life in theatre has spawned a rich trove of stories and experiences for her to share with local writers of all levels and at every stage in their development. It gives her great joy, she says, to reflect on her rewarding life in the writing trenches and to possibly inspire other writers to make their breakthrough.

She was the recipient of the John Hirsch Award for Most Promising Writer in Manitoba in 2008 and the Manitoba Day Award in 2007 for *The Elmwood Visitation* (Scirocco), a play that explores Winnipeg's history in the 1920s as a renowned centre for psychic research. The Manitoba Day Award, for research excellence with a Manitoba focus, is presented yearly by the Association for Manitoba Archives.

Gray is the author of *Dean Gunnarson: The Making of an Escape Artist* (Great Plains). It was a book project that satisfied her personal interest in mystery and magic.

Currently, Gray is the editor of

the literary journal *Prairie Fire* out of Winnipeg. She teaches creative writing sessionally at BU and also finds time to write for true crime television.

This event in the Literary Exchange speaker series is supported by the Rowe Fund and the Department of English, Drama, & Creative Writing at Brandon University.

For more information, contact Dale Lakevold at [Lakevold@BrandonU.ca](mailto:Lakevold@BrandonU.ca) or 204-727-7413.



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# ORIGIN OF APRIL FOOL'S DAY

By Ronnie Neiman, Editor-in-Chief

When did April Fools Start? Why did it Start? When did it become a prank-based Holiday? These are all questions I have regarding April Fools.

The holiday is celebrated on April 1 each year and has been celebrated for several centuries by different cultures, though its exact origins remain a mystery. While its exact history is shrouded in mystery, the embrace of April Fools' Day jokes by the media and major brands has ensured the unofficial holiday's long life. Some historians speculate that April Fools' Day dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, as called for by the Council of Trent in 1563. In the Julian Calendar, as in the Hindu calendar, the new year began with the spring equinox around April 1. People who were slow to get the news or failed to recognize that the start of the new year had moved to January 1 and continued to celebrate it during the last week of March through April 1 became the butt of jokes and hoaxes and were called "April fools."

April Fools' Day spread throughout Britain during the 18th century. In Scotland, the tradition became a two-day event, starting with "hunting the gowk," in which people were sent on phony errands (gowk is a word for cuckoo bird, a sym-

bol for fool) and followed by Tailie Day, which involved pranks played on people's derrieres, such as pinning fake tails or "kick me" signs on them. There's also speculation that April Fools' Day was tied to the vernal equinox, or first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, when Mother Nature fooled people with changing, unpredictable weather.

In modern times, people have gone to great lengths to create elaborate April Fools' Day hoaxes. Newspapers, radio and TV stations and websites have participated in the April first tradition of reporting outrageous fictional claims that have fooled their audiences.

In 1957, the BBC reported that Swiss farmers were experiencing a record spaghetti crop and showed footage of people harvesting noodles from trees. In 1985, Sports Illustrated writer George Plimpton tricked many readers when he ran a made-up article about a rookie pitcher named Sidd Finch who could throw a fastball over 168 miles per hour.

In 1992, National Public Radio ran a spot with former President Richard Nixon saying he was running for president again... only it was an actor, not Nixon, and the segment was



all an April Fools' Day prank that caught the country by surprise.

In 1996, Taco Bell, the fast-food restaurant chain, duped people when it announced it had agreed to purchase Philadelphia's Liberty Bell and intended to rename it the Taco Liberty Bell. In 1998, after Burger King advertised a "Left-Handed Whopper," scores of clueless customers requested the fake sandwich. Google notoriously hosts an annual April Fools' Day prank that has included everything from "telepathic search" to the ability to play Pac Man on Google Maps.

For the average trickster, there is always the classic April Fools' Day prank of covering the toilet with plastic wrap or switching out sugar and salt.



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## PRO SERIES PERFORMER COMBINES TURKISH AND WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

BU NEWS

Western Manitoban audiences will have the rare opportunity to hear a master of the kanun, a Turkish stringed instrument, when Didem Başar visits for a pro series performance on Friday evening at 7:30.

The concert is a collaboration with the Continuum Series through Virtuosi Concerts of Winnipeg. It will feature Montreal-based musicians Başar and Patrick Graham, percussion, sharing the stage of the Lorne Watson Recital Hall with string players from Manitoba. Joining Başar and Graham will be Winnipeg performers Momoka Matsumura, violin; and Jennifer Thiessen, viola; along with Brandon University (BU) School of Music faculty members Kerry DuWors, violin; Leanne Zacharias, cello; and Marika Galea, double bass.

"One of the wonderful things about the pro series is that every concert brings the possibility of experiencing something you have never heard before," said Greg Gatien, Dean of Music at BU. "This performance will be prime example of that as our wonderful and talented School of Music faculty welcome some incredible guests for a memorable evening of music."

Başar began her music education at the Istanbul Turkish Music State Conservatory at the age of 11 and earned Bachelor and Master's degrees in Turkey before

moving to Canada in 2007. She currently teaches kanun and Turkish music at the Centre des Musiciens du Monde in Montreal.

The kanun has a trapezoid shape that allows for different lengths of strings on the instrument. Virtuosi Concerts describes the kanun as elegant in timbre and capable of flourishing melodies, writing that the audience will hear a set of works for kanun, percussion and strings, composed by Başar, that are "the product of a 30-year musical journey synthesizing her Turkish music background and her Western classical music education."

Graham is a multi-percussionist, who has combined elements of Japanese, Indian, Irish and Mediterranean rhythms into his work. His 2009 CD *Rheō* was named one of the top 13 albums of the year by the CBC Radio program "The Signal."

Originally from Osaka Japan, Matsumura performs regularly with the Winnipeg Symphony and the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra. She has been a member of the Hartford and New Haven Symphony Orchestras and the Plymouth Philharmonic. Thiessen is the Artistic Director of Virtuosi Concerts and worked as an independent musician in Montreal for two decades before returning to Manitoba.

DuWors is an acclaimed soloist, chamber musician and Associate Professor at BU, who has won awards including the Grand Prix at the 26th Echardt-Gramatté Competition. Best known as a jazz bassist, Galea is an Assistant Professor at BU, who was named one of CBC Music's best 35 Canadian jazz artists under 35 in 2017. Zacharias is an Associate Professor in the School of Music who performs widely as a soloist and explores new musical territory, literally, with past concerts and installations in varied locales, including art galleries, chimneys, stairwells, rowboats and other unorthodox sites.

"This is truly a dynamic and eclectic collection of musicians, all with the common trait of being superb at what they do," Gatien said. "I can't wait to see and hear what they have in store for us on Friday night."

Tickets will be available at the door. General admission is \$20, while there is no charge for School of Music or Conservatory students.

The School of Music gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Manitoba Arts Council.

Please note that seating in the Lorne Watson Recital Hall is limited and that programs are subject to change. For an up-to-date listing of pro series and student performances, please visit [Events. BrandonU.ca/Events/Category/Music](https://www.brandonu.ca/Events/Category/Music).

Please contact the School of Music at [Music@BrandonU.ca](mailto:Music@BrandonU.ca) with any accessibility considerations.



Photo Credit: Brandonu.ca



## FROM VIDEO GAME TO SMALL SCREEN: A REVIEW OF THE LAST OF US

By Mallory Johnson, Assistant Editor-in-Chief

The first season of the critically acclaimed new HBO Max/Crave show *The Last of Us* recently wrapped up, and I am a huge fan! The hit show is based on a video game of the same name. It took some convincing for me to start watching the show, and once I started the first episode, I quickly became obsessed. The show stars Pedro Pascal (*Narcos*, *The Mandalorian*), Bella Ramsey (*Catherine Called Birdy*, *Game of Thrones*), Anna Torv (*Fringe*, *Mindhunter*), Merle Dandridge (*Station 19*, *Truth Be Told*), and more. The show follows Pedro's character Joel, and Bella's character Ellie who are on a journey through a post-zombie-like-apocalypse United States. I was hesitant to watch the show as I am not a fan of zombie media. I don't watch *The Walking Dead*, but the monsters/"the infected" in *The Last of Us* are different (in my opinion, they are less scary and realistic looking). Before I go any further, here is a MAJOR SPOILER ALERT. Also, trigger warnings for: blood and gore, death, war (prominent theme), loss, grief, suicide (shown and discussed), murder, disease (prominent theme), gun violence, pandemic discussion, the apocalypse, a few animal deaths (for hunting purposes; no family pets are killed), an attempt at sexual violence (shown and hard to watch), discussion of cannibalism, abduction, fire/arson, abandonment, violence, a cult, drug use and dealing, addiction, torture, body horror, police brutality, fascism, PTSD, flashing lights, swearing, childbirth (shown), a plane crash, and a car crash.

The performances done by main characters Pedro Pascal as Joel and Bella Ramsey as Ellie are phenomenal and highlights of the show. Some scenes and the major themes of the show are very difficult; the show is not a light and fluffy comedy, so major props to Bella and Pedro. I have not played the game that the show is based on, but I have seen on TikTok and YouTube that the show is VERY accurate to the game and even uses exact lines of dialogue in the show which is amazing. I have started watching people play through the game on YouTube and it is very cool to see for myself how well they adapted the game.

The first episode, with a whopping one hour and twenty-minute runtime, provides necessary context about how the world ended up in the zombie-like apocalypse. The conversations eerily mirror conversations regarding COVID-19, which is very unsettling. We also get necessary background into Joel's life, as the end of the world was beginning. SPOILER ALERT AHEAD: We see as Joel tragically loses his only daughter, Sarah, after she was shot, even though she was innocent and was perfectly fine. It's heartbreaking, as Joel desperately yells for help and cradles Sarah. Her tragic death is commentary on how the real threat was the government and

soldiers, not the Infected. After this, we are taken twenty years later to 2023, where the main action of the show takes place. What is haunting about the disease present in this show is that there is no cure or vaccine. However, Ellie is immune (and had already been bitten) so she is safe.

Easily one of the best, most heartfelt, and easily the most heartbreaking episodes out of all nine in the first season is episode three. We see the love story of two adult men named Bill and Frank. Bill is a smart survivalist who is totally content living alone if it means he is safe. He has set Home Alone style traps and cameras all around to prevent getting infected. One day, a healthy, unarmed man named Frank falls into one of his traps and asks for a meal. Long story short, Frank ends up staying for more than just a meal and they live a long and safe life together until they poetically end their lives on their own terms together. The end of the episode is devastating, but the tough subject matter was handled very well.

In my opinion, after episode three, the tone of the show had a major shift. It felt a lot darker and more brutal, but it was still enjoyable. Something I noticed about this show is that they love to introduce new characters, have viewers get attached to them, and then kill them off before the episode even ends. Another one of my favorite episodes is number seven, which provides viewers with more context and background for Ellie, and yet another heartbreaking LGBTQ+ love story. In this episode, which is set three months before Ellie met Joel, she is seen spending time with her best friend Riley after sneaking out. They go to a deserted mall, which Ellie has never been to, and they have the time of their lives. Unfortunately, they get attacked by an Infected and both get bitten. They decide to ride it out together and "poetically lose our minds together" as Riley says - except Ellie is immune, so she is fine...however, Riley is not. This episode had some beautiful, tender love between Ellie and Riley who shared a kiss together after Ellie was crushing hard.

Episode eight is easily the most brutal and hardest to watch episode of the whole season. It combines some of my least favorite horror tropes: cults, cannibalism, sexual violence, and religion. It reminded me of the horror show *Midnight Mass* at the beginning of the episode. Ellie nearly gets sexually assaulted, but she defends herself and murders her attacker. She is understandably traumatized and finds Joel outside; and becomes



his unofficial daughter when he comforts her, which is one of my favorite moments in the show. I loved that some actors in the show also voiced characters in the game, and that it was filmed in Alberta! Overall, I really loved this show and cannot wait for season two. I am very glad that my sister convinced me to watch it; I had no idea what I was missing! Now that the first season is done, I need a new show to watch on Sunday nights. I am giving *The Last of Us* a whopping 10/10 and wish I had more episodes to watch!

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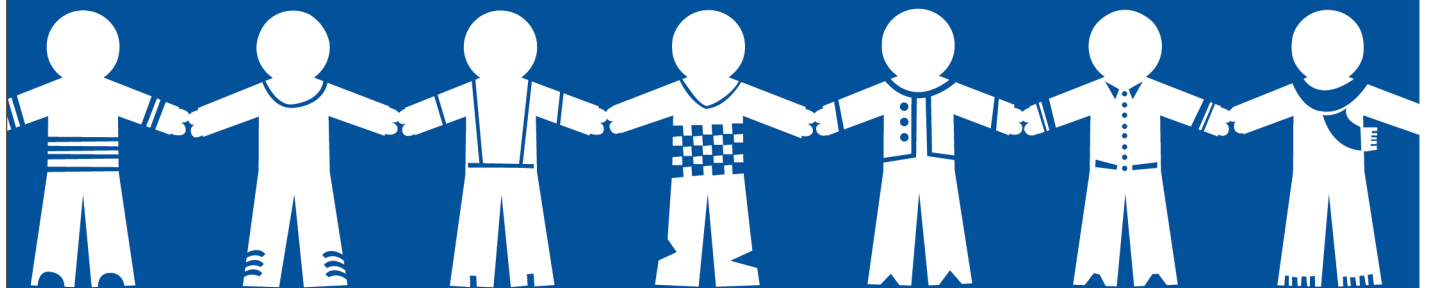
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