

What actually happens in semester breaks

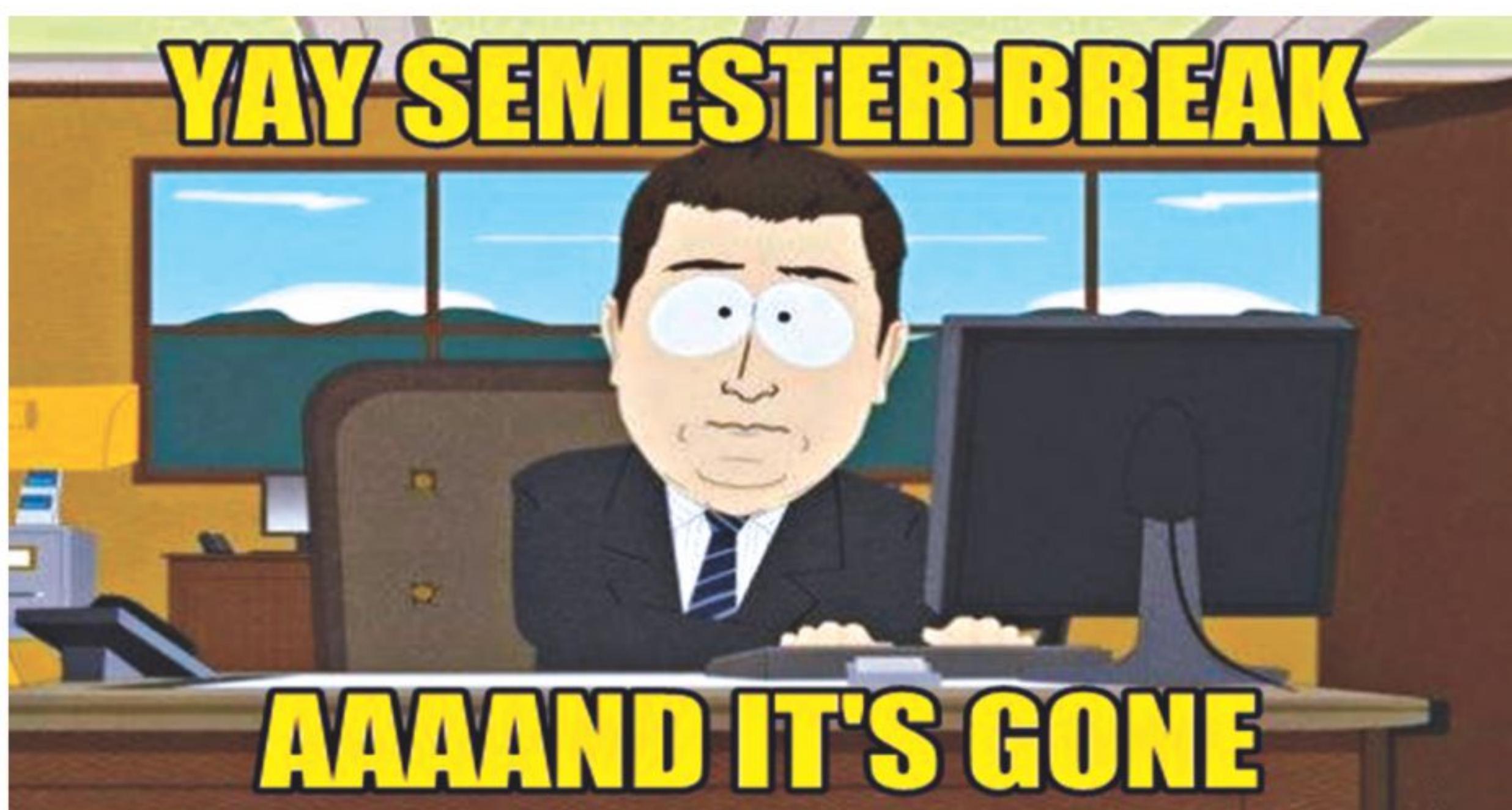
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Semester breaks are like New Year's resolutions - you always keep high expectations of them working out as planned knowing very well that it almost always ends in disappointment.

The last few days of classes often start off with you daydreaming about that much needed getaway, planning out day-to-day adventures in your mind. It is at the time of these trips that inconveniences ever so conveniently swoop in to result in the cancellation of your plans *cough*chikungunya*cough*.

Now, to soothe your wanderlust, you find yourself staring at the TV screen, watching travel channels showing off the wondrous beauty of places you would've otherwise been visiting at that very instant. Hence, you're left with a sense of profound sadness and thoughts of what ifs.

Next comes the mainstream "I'm going to learn something new this vacation" expectation. You end the semester with the realisation of your several shortcomings and attain a newfound motivation to improve in those areas. These short-lived motivational episodes fade away faster than one hit wonders in the 90s. That



piano lesson you always wanted to take or those Photoshop tutorials you wanted to watch on YouTube, almost never work out. Soon you find the new semester knocking at your doorstep, with your skills remaining the same, leaving yourself with regretful should haves.

Speaking of regrets: weight loss. Semester breaks or any form of vacation for that matter, is often picked out as that time of the year when you promise yourself you'll work on getting rid of some of

that body fat and trim up your "food baby" once and for all. However, when the time finally arrives, the "I'll start from tomorrow" becomes part of your altered routine. In most cases, you end up in your couch all day, munching on any form of food you find while staring at the TV screen with a guilty conscience. Other times, you simply fall into this endless loop of eat-sleep-repeat cycle that you seem unable to get out of.

Although watching TV is supposed to

be the easy part, it often secures a place in your "failed attempts of trying new things" list. This is a result of our slight inclination towards monotony, or at least that's the case for me. Often times you make a list of new shows and movies you'd check off your watch list during vacations but end up binge-watching familiar ones like *Friends* for the umpteenth time. I'm not entirely against this given that I have been guilty of it several times in the past.

Safe to say, semester breaks are simply a getaway to a string of long weekends coupled with the catalytic ability to unleash your rather lazy self, allowing it to take charge. At this time, everyday is an opposite Thursday where your will to be more productive is inversely proportional to your weight gain, with the latter increasing with lightning speed as days progress. However, if you succeed in recovering just in time before the new academic session starts, you'll be just fine.

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WITNESSING HUMPBACK WHALES IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN



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On April 25, 2017, our family and some family friends visited Victoria Island in British Columbia, Canada, to watch the whales in the Pacific Ocean.

We started our journey to Vancouver in the morning – an 11-hour journey by car. It was long but fun; we went through Banff National Park in Alberta, and were able to see lots of mountains and animals in the wild. The weather was sunny, but it would sometimes change to rain and even snow for minutes when driving uphill. On the way, we passed Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, Kamloops, Salmon Arm, Golden, Revelstoke, Hope and other beautiful towns.

At 8 AM the next day, we took a ferry to Victoria Island, and reached our destination after two hours. The island was beautiful, just like a garden. There were so many fun things to do like water taxi, motor boat, diving, sea plane, etc.

The next day around noon, we boarded a motor boat arranged by our tour operator. There, a marine biologist gave us a brief presentation about whales and safety measures to be undertaken during the trip. After a couple hours, we reached a spot almost 27 nautical miles away from the island, where the humpback whales were located.

Soon after, our guide Judy informed us that we were very close to a mother whale. Also that it lives in the Mexican coast and during springtime she travels here, as it's her feeding zone. All of us were looking for a whale nearby; my father had his camera ready to take pictures. After a few minutes it

appeared, just twenty metres away from our boat. We were delighted to see its tail because when it did, we realised how big the creature really was. We sighted the whale again after a while, and this time it jumped out and dove back into the water, much to our amusement. We had similar sightings a few more times and every time she did the same thing. The whale also made a "whoosh" sound every time it leapt out of the water.

It took me a while to realise that I was not watching television – that it was happening right in front of my eyes. It was a fabulous experience. I realised that the whale was bigger than our boat and if it hit, the boat would capsize. An adult humpback whale weighs about 36,000 kilograms. We came to know that the previous year 4 whales had died due to collision with boats. We stayed at the spot for 15 more minutes and on the return trip saw many sea lions and even got a glimpse of a bald eagle.

It was like a dream come true to have witnessed whales in their natural habitat in the Pacific Ocean. After returning home, I googled to know more the humpback whales and I was delighted to learn that the species is not endangered rather they are increasing in number. We should all work to conserve the whales and all the other species of animals in the world. I would request to not pollute the marine environment and to not hunt whales. Let's make our world better so that every creature can survive without the threat of being extinct.

The writer is a grade VI student of Rundle School, Calgary, Canada.