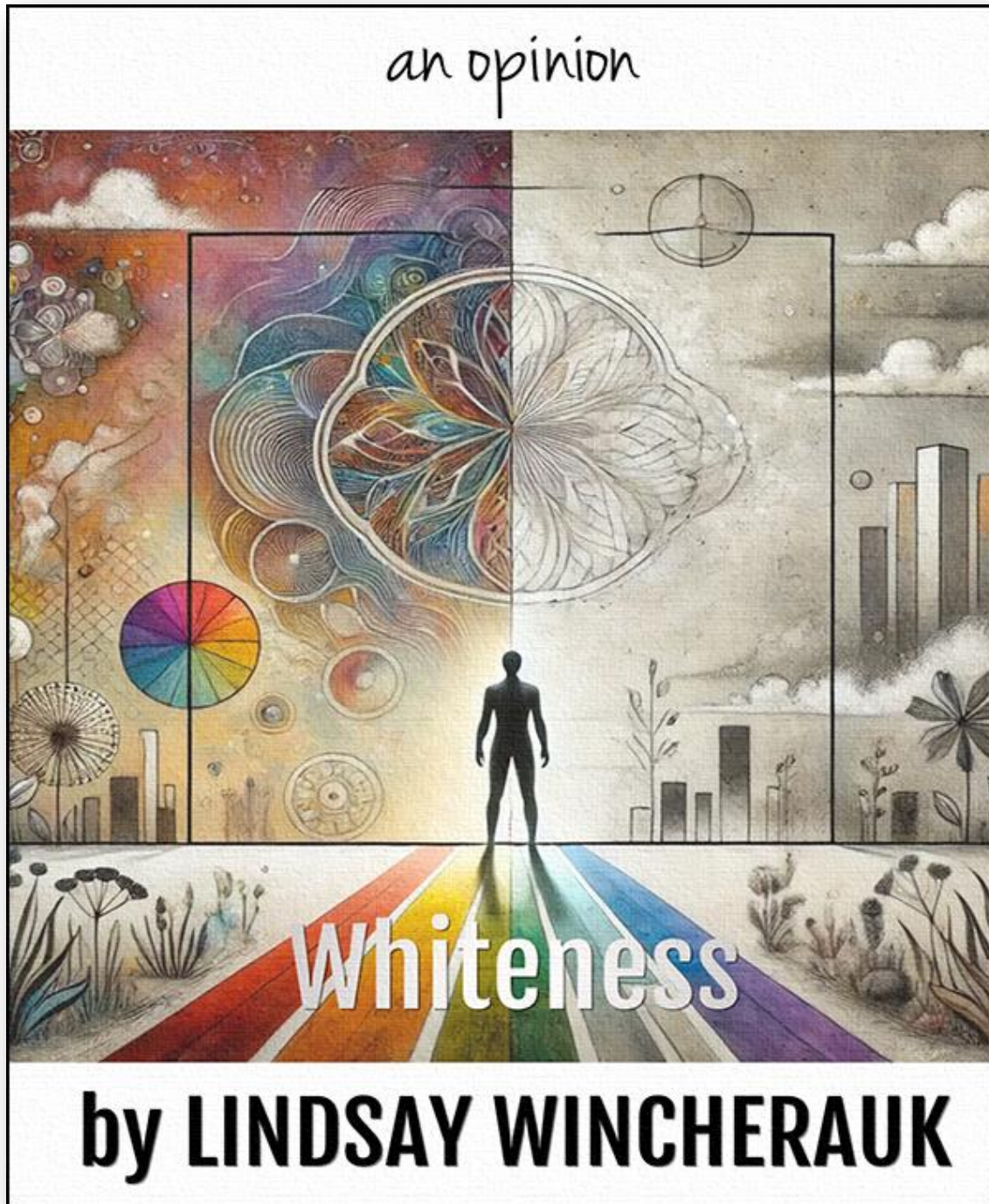


Whiteness  
**Whiteness**



Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

## 1.

### Whiteness

**G**rowing up in a sea of sameness, I didn't see Whiteness as a thing – it was just life. The water I swam in, the air I breathed. It wasn't until I began poking at the edges of that bubble that I started to feel the weight of what I didn't know – and worse, the comfort I'd taken in not knowing.

I've been toying with this for almost 65 years. Before moving to Vancouver in 1990, 99.99999999988% of my interactions were with other opaque individuals like me. Aside from the odd travel detour (Jamaica, North Dakota, and West Edmonton Mall) and a few schoolmates who looked different than I did, schoolmates I didn't take the time to get to know, my cultural indoctrination lacked flavour.

One outlier was Lawrence Laliberte\*, an Indigenous workmate who taught me a lot about difference. Tragically, I didn't truly listen. Instead, I clung to stereotypes. I saw him as "lazy," even as he covered for my absence at work, doing both our jobs while I dodged responsibility. The irony? I, the Caucasian, was stereotyping him while embodying the very behaviour I accused him of.

Looking back, my cultural palate was... bland. And no, the Saskatoon Folk Festival doesn't count as seasoning. I wonder what I might have learned if I'd truly listened to Lawrence or any of the voices I dismissed along the way.

Real connection doesn't happen in a bubble. It requires humility, curiosity, and the courage to admit you've been wrong. Yet, even today, conditioning runs deep. Some White folks pat themselves on the back for championing evolution while their words betray them. They'll say, "We're all the same," but the lived realities of those outside the bubble tell a different story.

\*Lawrence, ever the character, once tried to convince me to become a male stripper, offering to be my agent. I declined – probably for the best.

I used to think Lawrence's teasing offer to manage my stripper career was teasing. But now I wonder if he saw something in me that I was too blind to see someone running from themselves, hiding behind the easy camouflage of sameness. Maybe he understood better than I did how much effort it takes to unlearn.

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# Whiteness

## 2.

### The Things People Say: How ‘Trumps’ Come to Be



“So and so is one of us now,” people say when someone of a different ethnicity is “accepted.” The implication is clear: their difference is erased, their identity assimilated into whiteness. It’s not inclusion; it’s erasure.

“Switzerland is a model country because they’ve locked down their borders and kept manufacturing in their own country.” Statements like this reveal how nativism disguises itself as economic wisdom – the sentiment reeks of isolationism and a refusal to see how interconnected the global economy truly is.

Over the last decade – and yes, I hate to type this name – during the seemingly never-ending Trump era, I’ve realized how many White people are chameleons. They rail against him but secretly bask in his rhetoric. Why? Because his appeal to ethnic superiority feels comfortable. It’s lazy, but it’s also insidious, allowing them to avoid responsibility for evolution.

And then there’s Cousteau. At nearly 80, he laces every third word with casual racism. One day, he tried baiting a group into mispronouncing the name of Niger in a way that would sound like a racial slur. His desperation for validation was palpable. When no one took the bait, he didn’t stop, repeating himself like a broken record.

M, another regular at the table, complains loudly about Indigenous people on Truth and Reconciliation Day. He grumbles about “getting too much” while ignoring the atrocities of genocide and residential schools. His resentment doesn’t stop there. Seeing Black individuals at a nearby table, he remarks, “Don’t get too close to them; they all have Ebola.”

We’ve seen what happens when people look the other way, choosing comfort over confrontation. Prejudice festers in quiet spaces, fed by ignorance and fear. And while it’s tempting to retreat – to avoid the fight for the sake of peace – I know I can’t. My heritage, a mix of cultures and histories, reminds me that identity is complex and sacred.

Maybe that’s why I keep speaking up, even when it feels like screaming into the void.

Because the cost of silence is too high.

Because every joke, unchallenged, every stereotype left to stand pulls us further from the world we claim to want – one where acceptance isn’t conditional, and diversity isn’t erased in the name of belonging.

So, I’ll keep walking, talking, singing – evolving. Not because it’s easy but because it’s necessary.

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# Whiteness

**I**t's deeply troubling that, particularly in the United States, politicians have weaponized the complexities of addiction and the opioid crisis. Rather than addressing the systemic issues at the root of the problem, they deflect blame onto other countries. Even more disturbing is the delayed response—only acting when the crisis began devastating White suburban communities. Many of these individuals were workers seeking relief from the physical toll of decades spent in dying manufacturing industries. This opened the door for unscrupulous doctors to prescribe painkillers, reaping unimaginable profits. It's a stark example of White-on-White greed—sacrificing lives for financial gain.

3

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

## 3.

### Heavy Users

The same corporations gentrifying the world thrive on the inequality they claim to transcend. Coca-Cola operates in 200 countries, including Switzerland, pushing its products to create “Heavy Users.” McDonald’s has 40,000 locations across 100 countries, including Switzerland, preying on society’s fringes with cheap, nutritionally empty meals. Starbucks, with over 38,000 locations in more than 80 countries – including Switzerland – feeds caffeine addiction while selling an illusion of sophistication.

Each of these corporations peddles addiction in some form: sugar, salt, caffeine, or convenience. Coca-Cola fuels them all, its products coursing through the bloodstream of every society these corporations touch. They don’t need coffee shops to carry their drinks; they’ve already perfected addiction as a shared currency.

These companies promise connection and community but deliver the opposite. They design systems that erase individuality, churning out identical employees and consumers. A gentrified world is their ultimate goal – not because it fosters progress, but because it maximizes profit. Gentrification doesn’t just displace people from neighbourhoods; it strips humanity of its uniqueness, eroding culture, identity, and the dignity of work. What remains is a world sterilized of difference, designed to benefit the powerful few at the expense of everyone else.

Could it be their fault?

Or do these monstrous corporations, over time, evolve into something beyond control, steamrolling everything and everyone in their path? What might have started with good intentions becomes a ravenous beast with only one goal: profit at any cost. Meanwhile, countries cling to their narrow-minded ways of life, pretending that human needs and aspirations are somehow different depending on where you’re from. The truth is that every human being shares the same basic needs – security, dignity, and connection – and no border can change that. But the powerful few continue to pretend, perpetuating the myth that there is a way of life to preserve while enabling this hunger to consume it all.

As one former boss, a labour agency owner, bluntly said, “If we could only eliminate the workers, we’d be more profitable – they’re just an annoying necessity.”

Another executive at a Gigantic Insurance Company once remarked, “The perfect employee is married, in debt, and has a pregnant wife. Then we own him.” These aren’t isolated comments; they’re systemic truths.

And who bears the brunt?

In the U.S., it’s disproportionately people of colour, migrant workers, and the economically disenfranchised. Racism isn’t just a byproduct of this system – it’s a crucial feature.

Lindsay Wincherauk

## Whiteness

**T**he USA, a self-proclaimed land of opportunity, works tirelessly to keep suffering migrants searching for better lives out of the equation. Borders aren't about security; they're about control. A broken system isn't a problem to be solved – it's a business opportunity.

5

Corporate gentrification and systemic racism are two sides of the same coin. They strip humanity down to its most exploitable parts, turning people into numbers, communities into markets, and lives into labour.

The result?

A world where everything, even suffering, is for sale.

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

## 4.

### The Disease of 'I Did It All Myself'

I sit at my desk, crafting this piece. I'm watching a podcast about the founder of the place I have been forced to work to survive. But I'm not surviving. Every cent earned is gone before it's earned, as I became a casualty of corporate greed (former employer) – only to be exploitable once more. The founder of the company founded the company in the 80s in America – which couldn't be Whiter at the time as the non-white citizens were being ghettoized and kept on the outside of the American dream. The founder came from a challenging upbringing. But are we White folks self-aware enough to understand a challenging upbringing for us is far different from those we deem as other? I think not.

In the '80s and early '90s, the American dream was flailing in the advantage of Whiteness. The founder of the company I work for took a chance, and when another White person named Gates met with him and found him a White 'money man' – an introduction was made, and the money leaked into the hands of the man with a challenging upbringing – a global juggernaut was born.

Take a breath.

Consider how many pieces would have to fall into place for a non-white person to make it through the gauntlet of a predominantly White corporate world, especially in the 80s. The path to the 'money man' – that mythical figure who holds the purse strings – isn't just steep; it's rigged. Every meeting would be an endurance exercise, as the non-white individual would have to face wave after wave of institutionalized racism. For all the White people involved to break their conditioning – each person unlearning decades of bias and bigotry – is not only improbable but also unrealistic. In the 80s, the world was nowhere near prepared for this kind of transformation. If the founder of the company I work for had a non-white name, a non-white face, or skin darker than the norm, it's almost certain that the company wouldn't exist as it does today. The corporate structures were – and still are – designed to uphold Whiteness, and navigating them without succumbing to racial prejudice was, and is, an almost insurmountable challenge.

As I sit and listen, the founder says, "We are an experiential brand." I work there; I can say with the utmost confidence the experiential nature of the experience has been lost in the mundaneness of sameness and the forced small talk thrust upon temporary workers to 'connect' with customers who are no longer enjoying the experience. Instead, they are just feeding an addiction they can barely afford. It's shameful we live in a world where those working these gigs can't afford the experience of the place except for the slavery of the job.

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

**H**ow does this pertain to: “I did this all myself?”

In my opinion, it is the crux of the racist/bigoted soul. It is the justification for every comment. It is how people barely holding on can look down on those suffering or non-white and claim superiority.

White people seem to feel the need to believe there were no helping hands along the way. It’s a sickness.

I will never know, but the company I work for wouldn’t be what it is today if it weren’t for a White-rising food chain. I wonder if the company’s founder understands this podcast in which two White people are fawning over him about his genius—it wouldn’t be a thing if not for his colour.

7

My life has been a struggle, often – but at least I understand if not for my Whiteness – my struggles would have been tenfold. I resist and am sickened by every White person who doesn’t understand the upper hand they’ve been given and how, when their disease of entitlement and privilege seeps into other cultures – the entire human experience is in jeopardy.

Is that experiential enough for you?

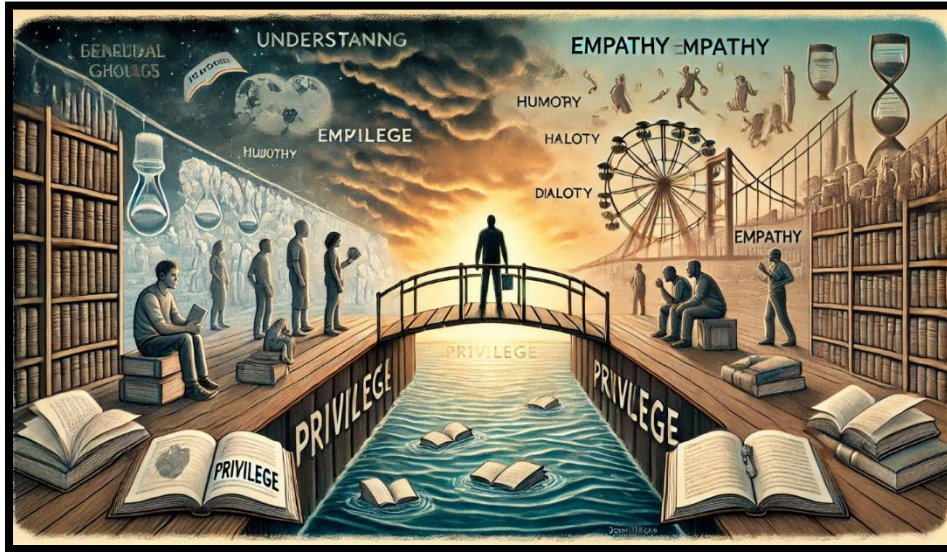
Lindsay Wincherauk



# Whiteness

## 5.

### Self Awareness – I’m A Neophyte



**Y**ou may be thinking by now, I despise Whiteness – and would be willing to give up my White card. I don’t. Rejecting it feels disingenuous because it’s not a card I chose to hold. Instead, I’m trying to understand how I could have been given such an advantage and still failed to maximize it. Or perhaps I have maximized it, and unfortunately, my high-water White mark is still in the shallow end – I can’t swim.

8

My days at work are often spent with coworkers four decades younger than I am. It’s a lonely world. When I leave it, I thirst for peers. Yet, at this stage of life, many of my peers are now half a decade or more older than me. In their worlds, life struggles – the kind that break you – are dismissed with “get over it,” as if time or resolve can simply erase trauma.

I vehemently disagree. Some traumas are too extreme to “get over.” I believe ‘wisdom’ comes from recognizing this and letting people know it’s okay to grieve certain things for the entirety of life. That might be where we find compassion, empathy, and understanding.

In the last four years, I’ve read 400 books on a wide range of subjects, both fiction and non-fiction. This pursuit of knowledge has been humbling, especially considering that over a million books are published annually. I’ve learned I know so little, but reading helps me bridge gaps in conversations, equipping me to engage meaningfully on topics like race, poverty, and injustice. When I share what I’ve learned with older friends, I sometimes get comments like, “That’s just one perspective.” Such remarks feel dismissive – akin to telling someone to “get over it” by reducing historical and systemic pain to a mere footnote of “those times.”

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

**W**orking with the younger generation emphasizes how far we have to go. Their energy is palpable, their openness refreshing, but it also highlights the stubborn resistance of the past—a past often defended by those who dismiss new ideas as fleeting or naïve. This generational divide mirrors the chasm between what was and what needs to be encouraged for a better future.

Comedy has become my way of processing this tension. I stand up at open mics because the pains of life have brought me to a place where I can find humour in most things—oftentimes dark. Even so, much of my mental energy remains tethered to the sadness and troubles of the world, including racism. Humour is my bridge, a way to connect and provoke thought without becoming a self-righteous jerk—something I’m always wary of.

9

How does any of this pertain to understanding the disease of Whiteness?

The disease, as I see it, is the unwillingness to acknowledge the helping hands that Whiteness affords. It’s a sickness of entitlement and privilege that seeps into other cultures and poisons the collective human experience. To grapple with this is to sit uncomfortably in self-awareness. It’s to confront not just the systemic advantages that Whiteness has provided but also the ways I’ve failed to use those advantages meaningfully.

I don’t despise Whiteness. I hate the blindness it so often breeds. I’m not asking to give up my White card. I’m asking to understand it fully, to hold it with the weight it deserves, and to use it responsibly—to amplify voices, bridge divides, and foster dialogue.

Is that experiential enough for you?

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

**M**y friend Carl is twenty-plus years younger than me and originally from New Zealand. When he first arrived in Vancouver in 2009, I was the first person he spoke to. Somehow, despite our age gap, we connected and hit it off. Over the past 15 years, we've built a friendship that, while infrequent – we only meet once or twice a year – has been profoundly meaningful.

Early on, I was fortunate enough to help Carl and his friend Nick secure their first jobs in Canada. Both are now married with children, thriving in their own lives. While I don't take credit for their journeys, Carl often reminds me how much he appreciated our initial connection and my understanding of the human condition.

Carl's life wasn't easy – his father left early, abandoning his family. My relationship with my father has been tumultuous: I've watched him die once literally, a second time metaphorically, and today, I still don't know who my father is. This shared experience of loss and trauma has bonded Carl and me. We both understand the need to shed the weight of the past, even as we recognize how impossible it is to escape it entirely.

10

What makes Carl unique is his openness. Despite our decades-long age difference, our conversations are deeply introspective and honest. We often reflect on our privilege – how, despite our hardships, the cards have been mainly dealt in our favour.

This brings me to the topic of Whiteness. Carl and I understand how our skin colour has afforded us opportunities others may not have. If I weren't White, it's unlikely I'd have been in a position to help Carl secure that first job all those years ago. Our friendship has taught me that privilege isn't just about individual effort or luck; it's about a system favouring some while making life infinitely more challenging for others.

I feel fortunate to have a friend like Carl. In our conversations, I find solace and a reminder of the complexity of life – not just in the struggles we've overcome but in the awareness of the advantages we've been given.

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

6.

## I. DO. NOT. HATE. WHITE.

A friend once casually announced, “I’ve been diagnosed with PERFECT COLOUR VISION.” He dropped this bombshell so nonchalantly that it didn’t get the *thunderous* attention a statement like that deserves. To make it even *better*, he said it right after Carl had mentioned he was colour-blind.

He slipped ‘PCV’ in as nonchalantly as he slipped in, “You guys know I absorbed my twin brother in the womb” – also void of the attention it deserved.

I need to digress for a moment: Who even goes to a professional to be diagnosed with seeing colours *better than anyone else*? What is that Specialist called? And a follow-up to the queries—did the previous titleholder of Perfect Colour Vision die peacefully in their sleep or was there foul play?

Now, can I bring this back to Whiteness and Racism?

Probably not.

If my friend epitomizes visual perfection, it must be an unbearably lonely world.

So, what *is* Normal? Whiteness? Oh, please.

My friend, The Mayor, and I don’t think Normal exists. The Mayor may think Whiteness exists. I on the other hand, don’t.

Just like “PERFECT COLOUR VISION” boils down to one person with an oddly specific talent (parallel to remembering produce codes), “NORMAL” and “WHITENESS” are equally reductive. They leave no room for anyone else when reduced to a single standard.

Here’s the thing: PCV, Normal, and Whiteness hooked up. The result? They figured out that the only thing that makes sense is one humanity: DIVERSITY. Everything else is just marinating in greed.

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

## 7.

### The Disease is Invasive

I've had friends and acquaintances caught up in the sensitive subject of race say, "They're racist toward us," as if that's a valid justification.

True or not, I can't know. And honestly, I don't care. I willingly refuse to participate in that. I can only write this piece from one perspective: a 45-48% NORWEGIAN (?) - WHITE 64-year-old, blessed by curiosity, opinions, conversation, and understanding, trying to make sense of life. *So, Charlotte, frankly, I don't give a damn (channelling Whom) – which might be the Whitest thing I've ever written.*

As for the disease being invasive, what I mean for now is this: the disease of 'Whiteness,' although amplified over the last decade, seems to be spreading into other cultures. It's coupled with the "I Did it All Myself" sickness, and as they walk in lockstep, the world becomes a little colder and sicker every day. What was once primarily a White problem – ENTITLEMENT AND PRIVILEGE – has now been embraced by more and more people from different cultures. (I'm writing this from a White perspective, and I'm not naïve enough to think these two viruses (E + P) don't exist in other cultures, but what I'm saying is that as more and more people in different countries get White-washed into believing that the most valuable thing in life is protecting their money, the more the pandemic of GREED and WHITENESS (c/w: bigotry and racism) will continue to grow and fester.)

And often, this runs adjacent to FASCISM, NATIVISM, POPULISM, and EVEN MORE RACISM, all of which slow the evolution of kindness.

12

Lindsay Wincherauk

# Whiteness

8.

## A Better Way

**R**ecognizing my limited worldview wasn't a revelation but a reckoning. Every day, I'm faced with either leaning into that discomfort or retreating to the safety of what I've always known. Growth isn't linear, and the conditioning always whispers in the background. But the soul, I think, craves truth. And the truth is this: Whiteness, unchecked, narrows the world.

It wasn't just Lawrence who tried to show me. It was all the voices I ignored, the lives I glanced past, and the stories I dismissed as 'not mine.' To pry the world open, we must listen—to each other and the truths that make us uncomfortable.

Only then can we move beyond sameness to something richer, fuller, and more alive.

It's not just individuals like me who have to pry the world open—institutions, traditions, and the stories we tell ourselves about who belongs and who doesn't. Undoing Whiteness isn't just personal; it's collective.

Like NORMAL and PCV, it doesn't exist.

13

Lindsay Wincherauk