

## PWRT 5003 - Reporting on Culture

**Industry: Pop Culture / Transmedia Franchise**

**Recent Event: Pokémon Day 2025**

### Pokémon Day 2025

#### After 29 Years, Our Battle Breaks Free from Turn-based and Nintendo

Marking the Anniversary of the Japanese release of Pokémon Red and Green on February 27, 1996, Pokémon Day was first celebrated in [2016](#) for its 20th Anniversary. This year, on February 27, 2025, a 19-minute video started with the greeting of Tsunekazu Ishihara, president and CEO of The Pokémon Company, "It is now possible to enjoy Pokémon each day in various ways." Unlike usual Pokémon Day, this year's key updates have stirred countless celebrations and elaborations, not only for a long-awaited trailer but also for unexpected feats of mechanics innovation.

#### What Happened?

Hailed by Forbes as "one of the [highest-grossing franchises](#) of all time," with \$10.8 billion in annual recorded retail sales (2023), Pokémon's success is no fluke: they never put all the eggs in the same basket. The 19-minute broadcast demonstrates that Pokémon is never going to miss one possible fan and infuse its products into every venue of life: "The Pokemon Concierge," a new season of stop-motion animation at Netflix, a pile of mobile games targeting different audiences, card games, and video games.

#### Pokemon Card: TCG & Mobile Game

Pokémon trading cards is never a new thing. They have been a big business since their release in the 1990s. It boomed again with a new wave of fandom and attention during the pandemic, and this craze has heightened with the launch of the TCG mobile game. The enduring, nostalgic love of Pokémon has seen their popularity peak once again, and people are not surprised to see [Logan Paul paid 5,300,000 for a Pokémon card](#). [Frederique Tutt](#), a toy market expert at Circana (a market research firm), explained that the digital game "brings players back into the Pokemon brand," In contrast, the physical cards "remain the heart of the brand, something collectors want to own for playing and trading."

To commemorate this year's Pokémon Day festivities, the game launched a new themed booster pack Triumphant Light, allowing players to leap into the world of the card's illustration and capture Arceus — the almighty God of the Pokémon landscape.

For the original trading card, the official launched a new deck featuring Mega Evolution, known as "the Evolution that transcends Evolution." It has unlocked new mechanics, potentials, and strategies. Although the Mega Evolution Pokémon boosts your team's strengths and durability with higher attack and HP, you will lose the game immediately once it is knocked out. The new

mechanics have elevated the intensity of battle, making every mistake irretrievable, every match more nerve-wracking yet thrilling in its density of opportunity.

### Pokémon Champions

Pokémon has claimed most of the blockbuster mobile game titles, from daily wandering (Pokémon Go), resting (Pokémon Sleep), serious battling (Pokémon Unite and Pokémon-EX) to leisurely cozy gaming (Pokémon TCG and Pokémon Café Remix).

However, the franchise will never submit to rules, conventions, and complacency. While every fan buzzed for the Pokémon Legend Z.A. trailer, they dropped an unexpected second gift—Pokémon Champions, a brand-new multiplayer game focused entirely on Pokémon battles unshackled by Nintendo's consoles but available on iOS and Android. Planned by Game Freak (developer of the core game) and developed by Pokémon Works (responsible for the animation of the main game), this title has engaged the best brains of the Pokémon development team. Players can import their Squirtle from Gen1 to [Pokémon Home](#), a cloud-based service for storing and transferring Pokémon across the main series. The Pokémon Champion makes it a hub for competitive battles with players worldwide. With new technologies — Ishihara's vision of "Pokémon each day" comes alive, we could eventually reunite with our old buddies and team up with them again to challenge new players with our phones in hand.

### Latin America Language Issue

The Company has also introduced the language support of Latin American Spanish in its upcoming main title; however, the absence of Portuguese has upset and stirred disillusionment among Brazilians, with 30% using Portuguese, who have pleaded for language support for a decade. Worse still, on March 1, 2025, the prices of all Pokémon games on the Nintendo Switch [soared by 17% on the Brazilian Nintendo eShop](#), worsening discontent. This further decreased the country's accessibility of Pokémon Core series games.

Perhaps the vision of creating a universally accessible Pokémon world still requires years of tinkering, tweaking and persistence. This is not the company's first encounter with backlash due to language issues. Since Generation 7 (Sun Moon), Pokémon has attempted to localize its games by providing different language options and unifying Pokémon names. The idea was alluring. However, due to the unique geopolitical relationship between China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, Nintendo's abrupt decision to make the Mandarin transliteration of 'Pikachu', pikaqiu, regardless of these regions' distinct translation strategies, [has irritated adults and young people in Hong Kong](#). They protested loudly on the street to safeguard their intimate childhood memories and dwindling Cantonese culture. To avoid public backlash, all animated series episodes and movies released in Hong Kong afterwards, as well as all public events, use the English pronunciation of 'Pikachu' instead of its Mandarin name 'Pèihkâyāu.'

## Pokémon Legends: Z-A

*Introduces Thrilling Series First "Real Time" Battles*

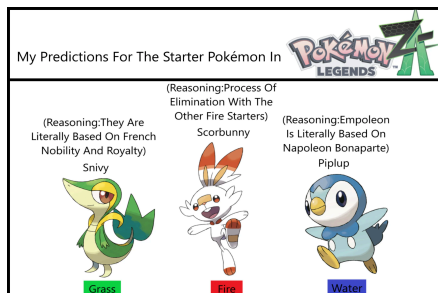
Like Pokémon Legend: Arceus, which serves as a prequel to the previous generation, Pokémon Diamond and Pearl, the new Pokémon ZA, is a spin-off postquel to the main title — Pokémon XY. However, the central stage would only be in Lumiose City instead of the whole Kalos region. Since Pokémon XY was based in France, fans exercised their creative flex. They thoughtfully predicted that ZA starters would also have closer ties to France: Piplup, Scorbunny, and Snivy, which resemble Napoleon, Olympic, and French Nobility.



Pokemon XY: Kalos Region, with Lumiose City in the centre



Pokemon Legend ZA: Lumiose City



Fan's prediction:  
Snivy, Scorbunny, Piplup



Actual starters:  
Chikorita, Tepig, Totodile

However, perhaps to echo the central ethos of “unexpectedability” on Pokémon Day, the official introduces Chikorita, Tepig, and Totodile instead. Although contradictory to their initial prediction, many players express their love and nostalgia for these three starters. They would love to try Chikorita for this generation, a Gen 2 starter known for being too weak to be chosen by a few players.

The game mechanics innovations make trainers go wild after a one-year wait because such updates have indeed taken 29 years of waiting. In animation, we can always see Ash effortlessly commanding his Pikachu to dodge opponents' attacks, but we can never technically do so in the game. Pokémon video games used rigid mechanics in which battles were turn-based; you and your opposite are taking turns to attack each other until either's HP hit zero with a mournful cry. We cannot hit the "dodge" button easily as Ash does, only by chasing that luck that the opponent has missed its attack or you have a high friendship level with your partner that they will dodge or survive attacks. The game mechanics improvement allows players and Pokémon to escape from a merciless Flame Burst breezily to survive the stressful battles.



Traditional turn-based



Real-time battle in ZA

### *Epic Storytelling and Foreshadowing for 10 years*

Pokémon had a storytelling flair that moved players without hours of dialogue and chapters. In a Guardian article, "What the weird world of Pokémon can teach us about storytelling," Caroline O'Donoghue described the Pokémon games as "full of stories like this: half-written, euphemistic, full of hints and Easter eggs, and characters who allude to things that often never happen."

Starting from Pokémon Crystal (2nd Gen), the leading game series has been deploying at least two story arcs with the protagonist's growth journey in becoming the Champion in parallel with another journey of beating the villain and capturing the box legendary Pokémon. Each generation captures a paradoxical and timely theme: nature and destruction (Gen 3), Time and Space (Gen 4), Heroes and Villains (Gen 5), etc. The recent Scarlet and Violet (Gen 9) rocked all the players with an unexpected story arc and futuristic theme. The villain was the Professor's AI replicate (robot): the original professor died, and the one that was talking with is a robot built to act and think exactly like the original professor. We never knew the original professor.

With the upcoming title "ZA," Pokémon has already hinted that the new game would continue the unfinished story of an old character, **AZ**.





AZ first appeared in XY as an 8-foot-tall man with an immortal body. He used to be a king who imposed his will on others: He waged war and created a genocidal weapon that made his beloved Pokémon (Flottee) run away from him. He then spent 3,000 years stewing in the magnitude of his mistakes and the arrogance he displayed. He watched other people live their lives, came to understand normal people, and gained more perspective beyond the sheltered one he had as a king.

Although many Pokémon fans have described XY as underdeveloped, with only three legendary Pokémon, this epic tragic man still lingered in many players' hearts. With more game footage released, fans are happy to see AZ again, who has undergone a journey from King to homeless man and eventually to hotel manager (now having a job and a home). He is doing great and running a hotel that serves people.



### *Mega Revolution*

Absent from recent mainline games since XY, Mega Evolution has been the most well-received and most missed game feature, as it always offers a “new life” to some old Pokémon by boosting their statistics, types and appearances. The comeback of the Mega Evolution was duly applauded on the internet. Unlike in the previous version, where every player could enjoy a keen sense of cheater’s glee with the over-powered mega form, the developer has thoughtfully introduced the time-limit of mega evolution within the new real-time mechanics, suggesting that your mega Garchomp will be returned to its original form during the battle within the time limit. In other words, your Pokémon cannot sustain its mega-evolution form for the whole fight, making it fairer and more sensible.

Fans also look forward to the mega-evolutions of the three starter Pokémon, anticipating that their mega forms could give them a more handsome appearance and an extra type that overcomes their current disadvantages. Especially for the pathetically "weak" chikorita, adding a Fairy type would boost its power and reverse its status in the game.

### **What were the stakes?**

#### What we know from leakage: Scrapped Eeveelution?

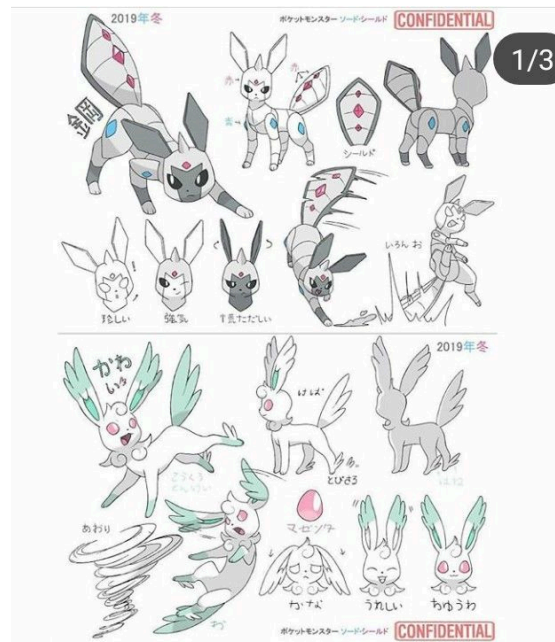
Game Freak experienced a [massive data leak](#) last year on 12 October 2024, releasing countless files, including employee records, unused concepts, and uncomfortable stories. In addition to the creepy Pokemon-Human love folklore of Typhlosion that stained many players, the leak also disclosed the unused evolution designs, one of which is a flying type Eevee, which was initially planned to launch in Pokémon Sun/Moon.

Eevee is the most famous Pokémon outside of Pikachu. The official has devoted so much attention to it that it has eight evolution forms, also known as "eeveelution." As one of the most profitable Pokémon, the company has designed cute merchandise, launched the title "Let's Go Eevee" with "Let's Go Pikachu," and celebrated "[Eevee Day](#)" every November 21 (there is no "Pikachu Day"), suggesting their unique position in the franchise.



Senior management forbade the proposal due to its resemblance to fan art, suggesting Pokémon's commitment to innovation and novelty. Pokémon would like to impress and excite players with original designs. However, with increasingly high-quality fan art available online, it becomes harder for the company to design another eeveelution, making some fans urge other fanart designers to "stop designing new eeveelution."

However, some fans observe that each new eeveelution was based on introducing [new game mechanics](#): Gen 2 showed off a new day and night cycle, which was used to evolve Eevee into either an Espeon or Umbreon. Location-based evolutions were introduced in Gen 4, which is how we got Lefeon and Glaceon. Then, the Fairy type was introduced in Gen 6, the birth of Sylveon. With the introduction of new mechanics – dodging, fans anticipate that there might be new eeveelution.



Some fans suggest that a fighting type Eevee could be called “Champeon”

### The 30 Anniversary of Pokemon: next year

Next year, Pikachu turns 30. Although the company is notoriously "tight-lipped" in their title updates, this event set the foundation and heightened expectations for Pokémon's 30th Anniversary. As ZA is more like a spin-off, fans are more eager for the new main title, which introduces new regions. With the aforementioned data leakage, Gen 10 is already under development.

The questions were whether they could deliver the promised game on time, how they manage so many IPs while maintaining quality, and whether Gen 10 could maintain their inexhaustibility in introducing hundreds of new Pokémon with new mechanics and cutting-edge technology.

### Terrible Resolution

While Pokémon titles have gone through a "glow-up" transition from pixelated art to 3D art style with a revamp of all Pokémon models since Gen 6 (Pokémon XY), their resolution and graphic quality remain a significant issue. Players have criticized it as "painfully low quality." Observant players also find from the trailers that the quality of the new title is still unsatisfactory. It may be a serious crime for many video games, but for Pokémon, it might not be the case.

Indeed, graphics were never Pokémon trainers' concerns. Pokémon Scarlet and Violet hold the No. 7 spot with 24.36 million sales, and "Pokémon Sword"/"Pokémon Shield" is the

sixth-best-selling Switch game with 26.17 million sales. Both games are criticized for their terrible images. No matter how much transformation they have gone through, they find joy and nostalgia with the pixel art, great music, and story and characters. As a Pokémon trainer pointed out, "I don't care about graphics either, and I'm just here for an interesting story and good character customization."

### Repeated History?

Another group of skeptical trainers also pointed out that the company may repeat the history when XY was launched ten years ago. XY was the first Pokémon title launched on a 3DS platform that did not use pixelated art. Due to the massive workload in creating 3D models, the storyline of XY was the most underdeveloped and blandest. After waiting for another year for the update, players found that the second trailer was underwhelming, without many extra details and new Pokémon designs disclosed, making them suspect that the new title was still underdeveloped at the stage, especially when coupled with lots of ambitious initiatives and the unsettled image quality issues. When Yuji Kitano, president and CEO of Creatures, Inc., said, "Please give us a little more time," fans pleaded with the Pokémon Company; they would rather wait one year or more for a polished game than a half-finished product – (i.e. XY). Although we cannot validate the speculations, we can only wait until autumn to see the final products.

### **Conclusion**

The global adoration for Pokémon is one of the most surprising yet inevitable successes in gaming history. It began humbly without stunning graphics, brilliant mechanics, or cute female characters (You could only choose a male protagonist in the first two generations). The franchise's long history has undergone many trials and errors, no matter Gen 6's half-finished story, Gen 7's translation controversy, or Gen 9's terrible graphics. They win players' hearts with exceptional storytelling, delicate character constructions, and mightily original innovations.

The Pokémon Day 2025 wasn't just a celebration; It was a reunion with an intimate childhood friend who was once as imperfect as us, presenting a better version of self who has overcome their adversities—turn-based limits, platform chains, unfinished tales. The Chikorita once we joked, might sprout wings and soar. In Next year's Pokémon Day, when the 30th-anniversary looms, will Gen 10 be realized in the new console (Switch 2), dazzling with hundreds of new Pokémon? Will a new eeveelution come out? Will a more compelling epic be crafted? A Reddit comment rings true, "The biggest mistake a Pokémon fan can make is assuming that a pattern exists or will be followed."

When I interviewed Xander Torres, a Digital Writer for the Pokémon Company, I asked him what made him excel in this job. Without much hesitation, he replied, "I would say that I really enjoy Pokémon. I think I'm just a nerd. Honestly, I think that's kind of the biggest thing about me. I enjoy card games. I enjoy Pokémon as a brand, so I'm always very energized to try and cover things differently than others might at work." Perhaps Xander's words resonate with many Pokémon employees burning their midnight oil for the timely release of ZA.



Pokémon is nurtured by a team of developers who genuinely love and grow with this franchise. They do not treat this as a mundane job but strive to curate the best version of their brand. Let's wait for Feb 27, 2026, when we see Pikachu turning 30 and presenting a trove of innovations, ambitions and passions that rocked us again.