

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, seen from the side, looking at a tall, decorated Christmas tree. The tree is covered in white lights and gold and silver ornaments. The background is a warm, textured wall.

# the reflector

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# SAMRU advocacy results in proctoring adjustment

Daniel Gonzalez

Staff Writer



**With remote learning continuing on into the winter 2021 semester at Mount Royal, students have raised concerns about exam proctoring, which SAMRU recently advocated reform for. Photo courtesy of PxHere**

The shift to online and alternative education has caused many changes to how students learn. But, after a rise in advocacy by the Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU), one aspect of learning in a virtual environment — exam proctoring — will be less of a concern for students in the upcoming winter 2021 semester.

“Generally speaking, exam proctoring is the act of monitoring a student while they write an exam to ensure academic integrity,” said Carly Bullough, vice-president academic of SAMRU, in an email.

“At MRU, this typically happens inside the classroom with a professor watching to ensure that students completing their exams are not using any prohibited materials to answer questions.”

However, since the university has transitioned to online course delivery, the use of third-party proctoring software to disable certain features on students' computers, and of webcams in classes, has worried

some students. Bullough and her work with Mount Royal University (MRU) administration is changing how these tools will be used by professors.

“In my own research, I've found conflicting data that does not necessarily support or negate evidence that using online proctoring solutions ensures academic integrity,” said Bullough.

“However, anecdotally, I've heard from hundreds of Mount Royal students over the last eight months that the thought of taking a proctored exam online would cause them even more stress and anxiety in an already overwhelming period in our lives — this is why I've been advocating for alternative solutions, and I'm happy to say that I've been fairly successful thus far.”

Professors will no longer be able to make webcam usage mandatory for any class, and they cannot be used as a determining factor for grades or participation in the upcoming semester.

“Some students do not have access to adequate internet

bandwidth or stable Wi-Fi required for webcam use, and some students do not have access to a webcam at all,” Bullough said.

An additional problem that students may have is in regards to privacy. “Some students have concerns with their professors and other students having visual access to their environment, and experience anxiety and stress knowing that anyone could be looking at them and their home or personal space throughout the duration of the class.”

Although Bullough recognizes the advantages of webcams in the classroom, she thinks that “requiring students to use their webcams puts some at an unfair disadvantage, and this has been recognized by the university.”

MRU will not be requiring online proctoring for all courses in the winter 2021 semester. Also, professors will not be able to make online proctoring software necessary for students without providing notice on the course syllabus at the beginning of the term.

The university uses software provided by the company Proctorio. The same software is used by the University of British Columbia and several other institutions across Canada and the United States.

“Proctorio is generally not as invasive as other exam proctoring software for two main reasons. The first being that it does not require another person to watch you through a webcam, the second being that all the personal data it collects is fully encrypted and never shared with anyone,” said Bullough.

Although this system is less intrusive, it can still be considered troublesome for some students.

“Software that uses artificial intelligence to monitor students writing exams has been shown to adversely affect those who tend children while working and studying from home and students with darker skin colours,” says Bullough.

Bullough has been speaking with MRU administration since the advent of online delivery regarding this topic. But, only a small group of professors did request that a proctoring agreement be reached for their courses based on the course material.

“There were about six professors that requested a proctoring solution for their courses by the end of the summer, of which only one will be moving forward with it,” said Bullough.

All 26 students in the sole course are already aware that it is being used.

“Additionally, the professor of this course agreed that webcam use cannot be required, and so only a temporary browser lockdown and suspension of cut and paste functioning will be used.”

According to Bullough, online proctoring in 2021 is going to be instituted similar to the fall semester.

“Whether or not a course will have proctored online exams will depend on the professor and the nature of the course material,” said Bullough.

“But for the vast majority of MRU students, online exam proctoring will not be required or expected.”

In addition to these changes, Bullough has worked with the university to provide students with laptops that they can loan from the library. This service is also available for students who are not registered in classes that have an online proctor.

“If students who would be required to take an online proctored exam do not have access to a webcam, or if they are not comfortable with downloading the proctoring software on to their personal computers, they can borrow a computer that meets all the technical requirements.”

As the winter semester approaches, Bullough anticipates that there will not be any major shifts in how students receive their education online.

“Things are still changing on a regular basis, but I am confident that as of right now, there aren't any major changes planned for the winter semester,” she said.

“There are lessons being learned every day on all sides: students, professors and staff at Mount Royal are all trying their best to get through this pandemic while navigating novel challenges.”

Bullough and the rest of SAMRU are available for any students who have problems or concerns with online learning, she says. She advises anyone who is struggling to contact the Representation Executive Council.

“I know that times are overwhelming, stressful, and difficult right now for a lot of students out there, and as a fellow student myself, I want to offer my support to everyone.”



# International education – during a pandemic

*How MRU is granting international opportunities during COVID-19*

**Christian Kindrachuk**

Web Editor

While the COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily halted the physical experience of international education, it has not stopped students from seeking international opportunities. The international education office at Mount Royal University (MRU) is adapting to the new normal as interest in studying abroad continues.

With 316 international students attending MRU this semester — up from last year's 249 — the university's international education program has continued to see growth, according to Dianne MacDonald, director of international education at MRU.

"I think students have more time to think about it and plan, and you know, just really ponder," says MacDonald.

"It's just human instinct — when we're all confined to our homes or limited bubbles, it's exciting to think about what kind of opportunities might be on the other side."

While there isn't as much mobility for students with classes being taught online, international education needed to adapt quickly to this change when the pandemic began earlier this year.

"It shifted very dramatically, and very quickly. In March, when we were going into lockdown, we actually, at that point, made the decision to bring all of our students who were abroad home; several remained because they felt that they were in fairly secure positions," says MacDonald.

This was at a point when MRU was projected to see 11 per cent of graduating students having international experience — well above the five per cent outlined in MRU's strategic plan for 2025.

"We have very ambitious goals around meeting our target, that is, five per cent of graduating students from Mount Royal will have an international experience," said MacDonald.

"Obviously, we'll just

continue to aspire to meet those goals and really encourage as many students as we can to get involved and get engaged in international opportunities."

Samuel Velazquez, an international business student at MRU who worked with an ESL program through the summer of 2019, thinks the opportunities from international experiences are still worth it.

"I think the world that we live in now [is] so diverse, and especially Canada, we have people from all over the world and I think it's such a valuable skill to ... just be able to have an open mind and think internationally," he says.

Velazquez — who is originally from Panama — completed an internship there, independent from MRU, doing work with the Canadian and Peruvian embassies, which led him to switch his major from general management to international business.

Velazquez got to learn more about different cultures and connect with students by working with the International Student Support Centre as cultural events lead last year on campus, and continues to volunteer with the centre.

"What appealed to me was that I wanted to share my experiences of how great MRU is, and the diversity, with other students," says Velazquez.

One way to still have this experience during the pandemic is a virtual exchange where students will take classes at other universities while staying at home.

"It's an amazing learning opportunity for students to take a course. We've got several students that are taking courses in Spain, France, Austria, potentially Mexico," says MacDonald.

"It opens the parameters a little further, and we also have virtual internships happening

as well."

Velazquez sees this as a good start for international education, since in-person learning is currently out of the question.

"If students are looking into studying abroad or working internationally, I think definitely look into it and try it, because at least it gives you a small glance of what it can be and [it] prepares you for that," he says.

The international office is hopeful that interest will remain, even though any chance to travel has been canceled at least until spring 2021. However, almost 70 students have expressed interest in studying abroad in the near future, and 40 out of 50 students with exchanges planned for the winter 2021 semester have deferred them to the fall.

"I think as soon as we're free to fly we're going to see a real boom, so that hasn't diminished. It's not a surprise, but it's good to know that there remains a strong interest to go abroad, I think people are just going to be itching to get away," says MacDonald.



**Samuel Velazquez, an MRU international business student who switched his major after working abroad. He recommends students partake in an international experience if they can — even during COVID-19. Photo courtesy of Samuel Velazquez**



**While you may not be able to travel right now due to pandemic restrictions, international experiences remain an option at MRU, from wherever you happen to be. Universities from around the world are offering the chance for MRU students to take their courses remotely. Photo courtesy of MRU International on Instagram**



# How COVID-19 is impacting economies from Calgary to Ottawa

**Noel Harper**

News Editor



**Eight months into the COVID-19 pandemic, all three levels of government updated citizens on where they stand financially, after doling out relief funds and adjusting funding to certain economic sectors. Photo courtesy of Needpix**

As the second wave of COVID-19 continues to drastically affect all levels of government in Canada, November granted Calgarians a peek at how their municipal, provincial and federal leaders alike are dealing with the economic impact of the pandemic and other ongoing issues.

The City of Calgary passed its 2021 budget adjustments on Nov. 26, offering taxpayers an overall decrease of 1.77 per cent, following \$90 million in budget reductions proposed by city administration.

"Thanks to a lot of really hard work by city administration, we were able to achieve that tax decrease without massive changes to the services people need every day in the midst of a pandemic," said Mayor Naheed Nenshi.

Originally, a three per cent tax decrease was considered for the city before the impacts of COVID-19. Of full-time city workers, 162 will lose their jobs due to budget cuts.

Notable about this year's budget deliberations at the local level was the spotlight put on police funding. For months leading up to November, council considered defunding the Calgary Police Service by five per cent over the next two years, putting the resulting \$20 million into community-based safety initiatives.

Police Chief Mark Neufeld himself considered re-allocating funds from the service, saying that, "Over the years, we've become the default first responders for a

variety of social issues."

Ultimately, however, police funding was neither increased or decreased. Instead, \$8 million in reserve funding will go to a community safety framework for crisis-related issues.

Meanwhile, ahead of the next upcoming provincial budget in February 2021, the Alberta government offered a glimpse at the books as part of its mid-year fiscal update. The province has shaved \$2.8 billion from its projected deficit, which remains at \$21.3 billion heading into the next fiscal year.

Alberta Finance Minister Travis Toews conceded that the province's plan to balance the budget by the end of the current government's term in 2023 has become less likely, given not only the COVID-19 pandemic, but the continued economic downturn and decreased oil prices.

"Reluctantly, but necessarily, we will have to delay balancing the budget," Toews said.

Alberta's previous budget, tabled just weeks before the start of the pandemic, projected a deficit of \$6.8 billion. The province is forecasting \$4.8 billion in COVID-19-related relief funding this year.

Going forward, Toews said, the province will focus on future plans to balance the budget following the effects of COVID-19, as well as bringing spending in line with other provinces, in what he describes as fiscal "anchors."

A projection of nearly \$3 billion more in revenue than was predicted last quarter is

in part due to federal transfers. The Alberta government is set to receive \$6.6 billion through major transfers from the federal government this fiscal year.

Speaking of, the Canadian federal government's recent economic statement revealed a projected deficit of at least \$381 billion, as it continues to financially support the nation through the pandemic. The deficit could go as high as \$398 billion depending on the nature of COVID-19's second wave.

"This is the most severe challenge our country has faced since the Second World War," federal Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said of the nearly ten-fold deficit increase since the government's previous budget.

Since March, the federal government has spent a total of \$322 billion in COVID-19 aid measures. It aims to cut up to \$260.4 billion from its deficit by the next fiscal year.

Pandemic-related spending shows no signs of slowing down, as the government announced \$25.1 billion in new measures for businesses impacted by COVID-19 and to help the economy after the pandemic has passed as part of the economic statement.

Also on its way is \$1 billion for long-term care and senior care facilities across the country to improve infection control over the next three years. The federal government says it is prepared to spend up to \$100 billion over the next three years as a post-pandemic stimulus package.

## MRU FILES

**Noel Harper**  
News Editor

### MRU experiences COVID-19 outbreak, amends pandemic policy

Mount Royal University (MRU) continues to plan for the worsening COVID-19 pandemic. Having already moved most classes online for winter 2021 and opening campus for limited in-person exemptions only, the provincial government's new guidelines have resulted in further restrictions.

Masks are required at all times on campus when others are present, unless you are alone in a closed-off room, MRU clarified.

"Our experience has been that some individuals interpreted the mandate to mean that the wearing of masks was not necessary in ... 'non-public' areas if physically distanced," the university told The Reflector.

The recently enacted one guest policy in the MRU Residence re has been rescinded, and capacity of the Recreation Centre has been reduced to 25 per cent.

As of Nov. 26, MRU reported a total of 13 student cases of COVID-19 "with a connection to Mount Royal," with no evidence of spread on campus.

However, that number changed Nov. 30 after an outbreak was reported in the Cougars men's hockey program. Of the team, 18 members, including coaching staff, have tested positive.

The team has ceased training and all positive members are self-isolating, according to a statement from the university. Due to new provincial restrictions, the Cougars exhibition games in early December were previously cancelled.

## THE REFLECTOR

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## Removing the “gathering” from holiday gatherings

Cassie Weiss  
Features Editor



**Last week, the provincial government announced a public health emergency, placing greater restrictions in order to stop the spread. The holidays will inevitably be different this year, but holiday lights are still shining bright around the city. Stay safe this holiday season and we will see you in the new year. Photo by Cassie Weiss**

It's really hard for me to imagine a Christmas without my family. We've always had our challenges, but somehow, every holiday we always find ourselves back together, eating turkey and mashed potatoes amongst a sea of ripped wrapping paper and curled ribbon.

I think back to that time only a short year ago, before COVID-19 swept the country and created an isolation that shows no signs of ending anytime soon. It seems like a faint memory — a ghost of the holiday's past, where hugs were welcome and we easily shared beverages and snacks off each other's plates.

The holidays were a time for us to gather, but this year we are being urged to do the exact opposite. According to the newest health regulations set out by the Alberta government, indoor gatherings are not permitted and can be subject to a \$1000 fine.

Although these regulations are meant to only last three weeks, it's possible that those late night holiday parties we

were all so fond of will now be links to a Zoom channel where your closest friends stare at you from worlds away. Work holiday parties will likely now be emails and words of encouragement coming from a computer screen while *Grey's Anatomy* plays in the background and the kids cry for your attention.

I think about this new form of the holidays — one where we stay home away from our loved ones — and it makes me sad. How many of us look forward to this joy-filled holiday each year, and how many of us now just pray for an end to the madness that is the pandemic we are currently experiencing? Too bad this is not something Santa has the ability to deliver.

But as I sit and wallow in the idea of not going home, I think of something else — a strange type of freedom that comes in the form of comfort.

How many of you have to travel for the holidays? I think we would be surprised by the small amount of people who don't spend at least one or two of their days off traveling to

different cities.

Now, how stressful is that traveling? Making the gate on time, stopping to use the washroom, needing coffee and snacks and time to stretch your legs or give your eyes a rest — it all adds up and pushes into the time you have for yourself. This time is precious and key to getting the much needed break we all deserve after a full year of work, school, deadlines and study sessions.

But, what if you didn't have to travel? What if you could stay home instead, bundled up in blankets, drinking homemade hot chocolate bombs and watching your favourite holiday show while a blizzard rages outside? Would the holidays be more relaxing?

We're about to find out.

Maybe this is the year that you start a new tradition instead of letting the sadness of not being with family take over. Maybe this year, you can obtain a valid tree-cutting permit, head to the mountains and hand-pick a Christmas tree. Maybe this

year, you can bring the tree home and decorate it with lights and tinsel and sit in the dark, wintery evening as red and green lights dance around your warm living room, instead of waiting until you travel back home to embrace the holiday spirit.

I've spent the last few years without decorations, never being home enough over the holidays to enjoy them, and the thought of a treeless house this year was enough to make me cry. If I was going to be home, I might as well make the absolute most of it — Christmas stockings and all. Besides, there is nothing quite like sawing down your very own original Kananaskis Christmas tree.

This mentality saved me a lot of grief. As COVID-19 cases rise rapidly across the province, settling into a contactless holiday seems like an inevitable situation we are all going to have to accept sooner or later.

We could spend the next month miserable, wishing for human contact and upset because we don't get to taste grandma's famous pumpkin pie, or we could ask grandma to send us the recipe and we could just try and make it for ourselves.

Being isolated this holiday doesn't have to be a bad thing, and the sooner we can admit to ourselves that 2020 is going to be different, no matter how you look at it, the sooner we can all get back to spreading holiday cheer.

COVID-19 has taken a lot from us, but this pandemic doesn't get to take the holidays away. The holidays are what you make of them, so make them yours — video chat with your family, build a snowman with your roommate, have a socially distant s'more-making contest with your partner. Whatever you decide to do, if you do it with love and joy... Well, isn't that what holiday spirit is all about?



**Although there has been a public health emergency announced by the provincial government, there are still ways to enjoy this holiday season. Starting a new tradition like decorating your own hand-picked and chopped tree is one way to make the most out of this Christmas. Photo by Cassie Weiss**



# Here are 4 of the creepiest yuletide characters that you've probably never heard of

**Ed Ghost**

Staff Writer

Around this time last year, *The Reflector* gave you a list of strange holiday traditions, and this year we want to expand on some of the scarier yuletide characters that exist around the world. Here are four of the creepiest, and the traditions that go along with them.

## Mari Lwyd

Wales is known for its abundant sheep population, beloved children's author Roald Dahl, having one of the most difficult European languages to learn, and in South Wales, an anonymous "floating" horse skull at your door beckoning for you to let it come into your home, drink all your beer and eat your food. Wait a minute... That doesn't sound like your average Christmas caroler.

The Mari Lwyd is a wassailing folk tradition that was first documented in the 1800s — though it is said to predate Christmas itself, it is often performed around the same time of year. The tradition consists of your mates dusting off their finest horse skull (which we all have laying around, right?), adorning it with bells and other colourful babbles, attaching it to a pole and a bedsheet so as to conceal themselves, knocking on your door and requesting — via rhymes called "pwnco" — entry into your home so that they may help themselves to your hospitality.

And the only way to stop the horse from coming in? Singing back reasons and riddles as to why it shouldn't. This goes back and forth until the horse acquiesces, or you give up and let it in your home to do as it pleases, which sometimes includes stealing things and chasing the person the horse "likes." There is good news in all of this though — if the Mari gains entry into your house,

it's said to bring good luck for a year.

## Krampus

By now, it would be hard to find someone who hasn't heard of the Krampus, thanks to the internet and the 2015 movie of the same name. In the last few years, this half-goat, half-demon has gotten a lot of attention, and frankly, he's so cool that he deserves a little more.

We all know about Santa's naughty or nice list, but did you know that in central Europe, if you're naughty, you don't get coal — you get taken by one of St. Nicholas' sinister sidekicks to his lair in hell, presumably never to be seen again? (Just kidding, he'll let you go after a year of torture.) Sounds scary, right? So we may as well celebrate it.

There are a few celebrations dedicated to the Krampus, one being Krampuslauf — where thousands of men dress up in their best devil costumes and take to the streets to drunkenly cause mayhem and mischief all as an ode to the demon, and to "inspire" children to be on their best behaviour. Children are encouraged not to catch any of the demons' attention while they roam the streets to prove they've been good.

The Krampus has been the snake-tongued companion to Kris Kringle for centuries, and prior to kidnapping the children, he was known to beat them with birch sticks and whip them with the hair of a horse before stuffing them into a cramped whicker sack.

That handful of chimney ash for not sharing your toys sounds a lot less harsh now, huh?

## Frau Perchta

The first two creatures of folklore are incredibly tame compared to Frau Perchta, the Christmas witch — better



Dressing up your favourite horse skull, visiting friends and neighbours and asking them to grant you entry into their homes is just one of the many creepy holiday traditions that take place around the world. Have you heard of any of them? Photo by Ed Ghost

known as the "belly slitter."

Another character from Austrian Folklore, Frau Perchta (or Bertcha, depending on the source) is supposedly an old haggard woman with a beaked nose made of iron and a love of spinning flax.

Like Santa, she can be benevolent and generous to those she deems deserving — but unlike Santa, she punishes women who haven't finished their weaving in time by trampling and burning their unfinished work, disembowelling them while they sleep and replacing their organs with rocks and straw.

That's not all she's into though — Frau Perchta is a very busy witch. She dabbles in flying through the night sky with the souls of the damned, is easy to bribe with bowls of porridge, likes to leave silver coins for those she favours, tends to trample disobedient children with dirty rooms and is the reason you can sometimes hear the sound of

thunder at night during the holidays.

## Elf on the Shelf

Definitely the most local of traditions, and certainly the scariest, Elf on the Shelf came to be thanks to the Christmas book of the same name. Legend has it that every Christmas, a special elf-scout is sent to your home from Santa himself. During the day, he stays in toy form in a visible spot in your house, watching and waiting until nighttime falls so he can return back to Santa to snitch — I mean, report — as to whether or not you've been good.

There are rules to this arrangement, and if you think this elf looks like a really fun, inviting holiday toy for children, it's not. This is a very important Santa spy. The elf is not to be touched and if it is then you will have quickly doomed the creature to a life of being inanimate. It will never see itself, your friends

or your family ever again.

There is one exception though — if it was an accident, all your child needs to do is write an apology to Santa, and if he's feeling generous or if that scout is particularly valuable to him, he will return life back to it — but only this once.

You are to leave offerings of cinnamon to your elf scout, and that will keep it fed and give it enough strength to get back to the North Pole every night. Maybe it will be lucky and be able to use its hard earned elf miles.

When the elf returns to you, it will be in a different spot than where it was left the day before, just to make sure it has all the ground in your house covered, but also because Barbie has some wicked parties in her dream house and sometimes the elf needs to stumble somewhere to sleep after a long night of travelling from the land of Bumbles and red-nosed reindeer.



# Recipe: DIY bath bombs for the ultimate home self-care

**Cassie Weiss**

Features Editor

As cliché as it sounds, bubble baths have always been my favourite form of self-care. Scalding hot water, bubbles, a fragrance that you love, music and candles — honestly, I can feel myself relaxing as we speak.

So naturally, when the province decided to announce the imminent minor lockdown, I went into a panic. I thought, “How am I supposed to continue to endorse my own self-care when, once again, all the non-essential bath and body stores I frequent are going to quickly close down in order to protect us all?”

Of course I’m being slightly dramatic, as shopping malls are not closing down — but the reality is, I should not leave the house unless absolutely necessary due to my job and the people that I love and want to protect. Yes, I could still order online, but that option has just never been my favourite method of shopping — how am I able to smell the bath bombs through a computer screen?

So, I decided to do a

little research and figure out a recipe for lovely bath products that would give me everything I needed, like relaxing smells and fizzing bath water that would surround me in colour.

Bath bombs have always seemed like a tricky thing to make, what with needing citric acid, molds and all the other weird ingredients that some of the recipes call for. I didn’t want to have to go on a hunt just so I could make something at home. Doesn’t that kind of defeat the purpose of avoiding the crowds?

After an hour of searching, I finally found a recipe that nixed the citric acid, added some cream of tartar and voila — I was blessed with these perfect little homemade bath bombs that I didn’t even have to go shopping for.

*Note: I did buy the bath bomb mold a few years ago from a store in Calgary, but I’m sure you could also order them online for a few extra dollars. I would also recommend having more than one as it takes a lot of*

*patience to make these bombs one at a time.*

Now, if you are anything like me, you might add all these ingredients together and be highly confused at just exactly how they are supposed to create anything that resembles a bath bomb — but trust me, if you follow these few simple steps, you will have your very own bath goodies.

## A couple things to note:

- I usually use my hands as I find it creates the best distribution of materials.

- If the mixture seems weird, don’t freak out like I did the first time. As it dries, it will harden in the molds and turn out perfectly.

- These bath bombs aren’t super fizzy — we can’t all be Lush, as sad as that makes me. But, they leave the water smelling and feeling super nice.

- As you work, the mixture will start to dry up — just keep spritzing it with water to get that perfect hold.

## What you’ll need:

- Bath bomb molds
- 1 cup baking soda
- 1/4 cup cream of tartar
- 1/2 cup of cornstarch
- 1/2 cup of Epsom salt
- 1 tbsp of coconut oil
- 6 - 9 drops of essential oil
- 1 - 2 drops of food colouring

## What you need to do:

Mix all the dry ingredients together in one bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together the coconut oil and essential oil. Pour the oils into the dry ingredients and mix slowly. Add a few drops of food colouring to the mixture and work it in. Press the mixture into the bath bomb molds and leave it overnight for the best results. This recipe makes about five small bath bombs.



DIY bath bombs are surprisingly easy to make, and they will have you fulfilling gift needs and avoiding busy shopping malls. Just grab a couple key ingredients and get to mixing. Food colouring and essential oils are optional. Photo by Cassie Weiss



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# DIY gifts you can give for the holidays

**Mikaela Delos Santos**

Staff Writer



Head to your local thrift store for some unique and interesting ceramic finds to make all sorts of DIYs with. Photo courtesy of NeedPix

Can you believe it? The holidays are coming up, which means it's finally that time of year when we write a list, check it twice and figure out what to give all the special people in our lives. Unfortunately, the joy of crowded night markets and Christmas shopping at malls with Mariah Carey playing in the background won't be the same this year. Online shopping is a feasible option, but where's the fun in that?

With that in mind, what would be better and more meaningful than making your own gifts to give your loved

ones this year?

If you are on a budget, below are five crafts under \$5 to \$10 you can make as gifts this holiday season.

## Marbled mugs

If you have nail polish bottles lying around in your vanity somewhere, you can use them for more than just dazzling up your nails — you can create beautiful, marbled mugs for the holidays. All you need is nail polish, toothpicks, mugs and a container.

Depending on the look you're going for, I recommend getting solid-coloured mugs

with no designs on them. You can find such mugs at your local dollar store, or if you have time (and luck) to find the perfect mug, you can give your nearest thrift store a try.

First, fill your container with some hot water, and make sure it's one you're willing to part with, as it's about to get messy. The hot water will help your nail polish spread out and set nicely. Take your nail polish and put a drop or two into the hot water. You can also try several different colours in one go. When you are satisfied with the colour

combinations you have, swirl it around with a toothpick to create the "marbled" effect. Dip your mug into the water with the nail polish and let it dry overnight.

Keep in mind that your mugs will not be microwave-safe or dishwasher-safe after doing so.

## Homemade candles

Are you looking for something cozy and comfortable to give to your friends or family?

What's fun about making

homemade candles is that you can get creative with the container, scent and colours! All you will need is candle wax, candle wicks, a container, fragrance oils (optional), colouring (optional) and some skewers or popsicle sticks. You can find all of these at your local craft store.

Personally for a container, I like using empty glass jars I save from pasta sauces because it's cute, unique and sustainable. In fact, I like using them for a lot of other

**Continues on Pg. 10**

## OUT'N ABOUT

### Winterized patios

COVID-19 has made outdoor patios an opportunity — if not a necessity — for local bars and pubs in Calgary to stay afloat. Grab your winter coat and check out the outdoor patios at Craft Beer Market on 10th, Lulu Bar on 17th and others for a fun and safe time.

### Drive-thru Christmas display

Drive-thru Christmas light displays are new this year, providing a safe way to enjoy the holiday season from the comfort of your car. Legacy Christmas light display, Spruce Meadows' Christmas Lights Drive-Thru and The Lions Festival of Lights all run until January.

### Skating at the Olympic Plaza

It isn't winter in Calgary without going skating at the Olympic Plaza, and if you've been looking for a COVID-19 safe activity to do with friends and family, this is for you. Skating is free unless you need to rent skates or a helmet, so grab your toque and mask and we'll see you later, skater!

### Christmas Markets

Supporting local this year is more important than ever. Thankfully, there's an abundance of Christmas markets. Visit the Saskatoon Farm Christmas Market from Dec. 4 to Dec. 13, the Inglewood Market on Dec. 5, 12 and 19 and Holiday Haven at Crossiron Mall Dec. 3 to Dec. 20.



### Continued from Pg. 9

things. Other options are cute mugs or teacups you might find from thrift stores — you can even use your marbled mugs if you'd like!

To make these, start with putting your wick in your container. To keep it in place, tie the wick around your skewer or popsicle stick. Heat up your wax as per the instructions and add your colouring and fragrance of choice. Pour your wax into the cups and let it cool overnight.

### Photo tile coasters

Want to give your sentimental loved one the gift of some cute memories?

This gift is perfect for grandparents or your parents — and just under \$10! All you need are 4in x 4in tiles, 4in x 4in photos, scissors, Mod Podge, a foam brush, foam sheets, a hot glue gun and a clear sealant spray. Most of

these you will find at your local craft store and you can find the tiles at your local hardware store.

Print out some photos using regular printer paper and cut them out. Coat your tiles with some Mod Podge and press your photo on the tile and let dry. Add another coat, brushing both vertically and horizontally with your foam brush. Let it dry — add more coats if you feel it is necessary.

When it is fully dry, cut out 4in x 4in foam squares to place at the back of your coasters. This is to prevent scraping on tables when you use it. Use your glue gun to stick it to the tile so it stays in place. As the last step, spray your tile coasters with a clear sealant to make sure they last. Let it dry and your gift is ready to be wrapped!

### Recipe-in-a-jar

Are you the baker of the friend group or family, but don't have the time to make

it all?

This one is pretty easy and, most importantly, not time-consuming — perfect for those who are looking to manage their time with all the holiday fuss. All you need is a big enough jar for your recipe and the other ingredients can likely be found in your kitchen.

The recipe you would want to share with your loved ones is up to you if you're willing to part with your secrets! Preferably, give them your specialty. Other ideas also include brownies, cakes and cookies.

Gather all your dry ingredients and pour them into the jar as a mix — if your recipe needs perishable

ingredients added, don't fret! Your giftee should be able to get these on their own. Create some tags that include instructions and what additional ingredients they need to add, attach it to a ribbon and tie it around your jar for an easy and thoughtful gift!

### Build-a-fort kit

Looking for something fun to give the kids?

If I were still a kid, I would definitely want this for the holidays. In fact, I still want it now in my adulthood. Gone are the days when we'd scavenge through mom's closet of sheets and blankets. Here's what you need: a large flat sheet, a flashlight, some

clamps, rope and a bag to hold your kit.

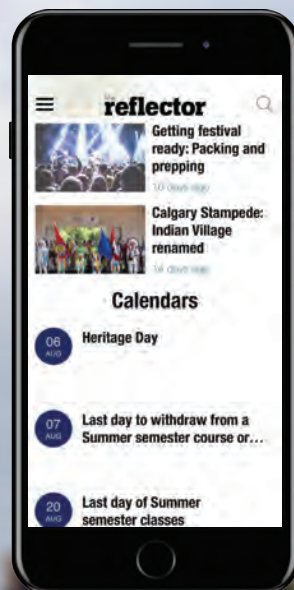
Put everything in the bag and make a cute label that tells them what it is. You can even add some snacks or board games. This is something your kid, nephew, niece or younger sibling would definitely adore and remember. And you can easily find all of this at your local craft and hardware stores.

The holidays can be daunting, but they don't have to be. Hopefully, these ideas will help you with the demand and stress of finding the perfect gift for your loved ones. Whatever it may be, just always remember it's the thought that counts.



Making something and getting creative is a cheap and easy way for any student to give their loved ones a meaningful and thoughtful gift this holiday season. Photo courtesy of Pexels

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# Opinion: The best Christmas movies of all time

**Mackenzie Mason**

Arts Editor



Whether you're watching your favourites from home or at safe and socially distanced movie theatres, popcorn is a necessity while watching any classic Christmas movie! Photo courtesy of PickPik

This year has been a long and tough one. From cancelled plans to mourning those we've lost due to the pandemic, we're all looking for a way to escape from our realities.

Thankfully, movies are the perfect way to relax, unwind and immerse yourself into new characters and their realities. Christmas is getting closer by the day and watching a Christmas movie is the escapism everyone is looking for this year.

Here are my four favourite Christmas movies of all time — in no particular order.

## How the Grinch Stole Christmas

The ultimate classic Christmas movie, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, was filmed in 2000 and has literally been a crucial part of every Christmas I've celebrated. I'm 20 years old now, and this movie never fails to fill me with holiday cheer(meister).

Watching the Grinch and Cindy Lou Who find the meaning of Christmas puts a smile on anyone's face — young and old, big and small. While almost everyone knows the movie *How the Grinch*

*Stole Christmas*, whether they love Christmas like the Whos or hate it like the Grinch, there's a lot about the movie's production that many people don't know about.

It's hard to imagine Christmas without watching Jim Carrey in his iconic role as the Grinch, but the movie almost didn't happen. When Chuck Jones, the movie's director, got permission from Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) to make the film, he struggled to find any businesses to support it.

Thankfully, the Foundation for Commercial Banks made the movie a reality, endorsing it by providing a \$123 million USD budget. This endorsement paid off, with the movie grossing \$260 million USD domestically and \$85.1 million USD in other territories for a worldwide gross of \$345.1 million USD, making *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* the sixth highest-grossing film of 2000.

It's also hard to picture the Grinch without the character's distinct green colour, but that almost didn't happen as well. In the original story, the Grinch was actually black and white and had pink eyes. When

Jones became director of the animated movie, he made the genius decision that the main character was going to be entirely green.

Carrey's costume was created mostly out of yak hair that was dyed green and individually sewn into the suit. Carrey spent a total of 92 days wearing the costume, and it took him three hours before each filming session to put it on. Talk about dedication.

## Home Alone

Another iconic Christmas movie that makes it into my Christmas movie marathon every year is the 1990 film *Home Alone*, directed by Chris Columbus. The movie follows Kevin McCallister (Macaulay Culkin) as he fights off two burglars after accidentally being forgotten at home while his family spends Christmas in Paris.

This movie is so iconic, you can't help but mouth the words as they are said on screen. It's a movie that puts you through a rollercoaster of emotions, bringing you along the journey of Kevin's mother trying everything to get back home to her son while her son goes from living the

dream, to missing his family, to defending himself and his family's house from the Wet Bandits.

While most Christmas movies are stereotypically about love, *Home Alone* is an action-packed comedy that makes you appreciate being with family during the holidays — something many people will be missing this year.

When I think of this movie, I can't help but think of the famous line, "Keep the change, you filthy animal." If you've ever thought of watching the movie Kevin uses to keep Marv, one of the burglars, from entering the house, or against the poor pizza delivery guy as a prank, you'll be disappointed to find out that Angels with Filthy Souls is actually a fictional gangster film made solely for *Home Alone*.

And who doesn't love a conspiracy theory? In the case of *Home Alone*, people believe that the King of Pop, Elvis Presley, didn't actually die in 1977 — instead, he's been making a living under the radar by working as a Hollywood extra. The King himself (or just his doppelgänger) can be seen

when Kevin's mom is at the airport trying to get back home.

## The Santa Clause

Tim Allen's *The Santa Clause* series makes the rounds as another staple in my yearly Christmas movie binges, but this is one of the trilogies where I prefer the second more than the first. So while the entire series is a classic for the most wonderful time of the year, I'll be talking about *The Santa Clause 2* filmed in 2006 and directed by Michael Lembeck.

After Scott Calvin accidentally kills Santa Claus and consequently becomes Santa in the first movie, Calvin is living the dream. But his plans are disrupted when he is told he must find a Mrs. Claus or give up being Santa. Now, maybe this is my favourite movie in the series because it follows a love story, but this film makes me laugh and smile every time.

The role of Scott Calvin/Santa Claus was actually written for Bill Murray. Chevy Chase was also offered the lead role, but scheduling conflicts urged producers to

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consider Tim Allen and I, for one, am glad they did.

The *Santa Clause 2* was actually the most expensive in the franchise. With a budget of \$65 million USD, the sequel cost almost three times what the first film did. After the big hit, the filmmakers really scaled

back their budget with the third film, using “only” \$12 million USD, making it the least expensive film in the trilogy.

**Love Actually**

Okay, so I know I said that this list was in no particular order... But I have to say that this is my favourite Christmas movie of all time. What can I

say? I’m a sucker for love and romantic comedies.

*Love Actually*, filmed in 2003 and directed by Richard Curtis, is an intertwining story of love and loss in London during the Christmas season. Perfecting an on-screen love story is hard enough, but fitting 10 love stories seamlessly into one movie while connecting all

the characters to each other? It’s a work of art.

What’s even crazier is that there were originally supposed to be 14 love stories in the film. Unfortunately, two were clipped in the scripting phase and two were shot and cut in post. The scripted cuts involved storylines about a girl with a wheelchair and another which is quite similar to Sam and Joanna’s story where a boy records a love song for a classmate who ultimately hooks up with his drummer.

Once the film was shot and put together, a story about an African couple supporting each other during a famine, and another storyline that followed a school’s headmistress and her secret commitment to her lesbian partner were cut to make the film shorter.

While this is one of my favourite Christmas movies, it’s unfortunate they cut the storylines providing representation for LGBTQ+, Black and disabled communities that could have greatly impacted the early 2000s.

But the moments in the film I enjoy the most are the raw and real reunions of loved ones at Heathrow Airport at the beginning and end of the film. This footage was actually shot with hidden cameras on location for a week and when a perfect reunion was caught on camera, a crew member would run to have its subjects sign a waiver so they could be included in *Love Actually*.

Unlike Bing Crosby or Michael Bublé, many people won’t be home for Christmas this year due to the pandemic and we’re yearning for nothing more than to be as close to those we love as seen in the opening and closing Heathrow scenes of *Love Actually*.

But COVID-19 has given Calgarians the opportunity they wouldn’t have had otherwise to see some of their favourite Christmas movies on the big screen in a socially-distanced movie theatre. So, grab your mask and support your community while getting in the Christmas spirit!



Don't be a Grinch this holiday season. If you shop local and give back to your community this season, your heart might grow three sizes bigger as well! Photo courtesy of Pixy.org



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# Donate to the FUNDRACE FLURRY

Campus teams are racing to raise donations for struggling students this holiday season. Help your chosen team cross the finish line first!

To donate now, or for more info, head to [samru.ca/fundraze](https://samru.ca/fundraze)





# New book highlights 111 of Calgary's unique and hidden locations to visit

**Mackenzie Mason**

Arts Editor

2020 has been an interesting year, to say the least. If you're anything like me, a lot of your travel plans were cancelled, and while I'm itching to get back on a plane to see all four corners of the world, COVID-19 has allowed me to see the beauty of Calgary and deeply appreciate the city we all live in.

Since March, I've been able to explore Calgary and embrace and support many local businesses trying to stay afloat during the pandemic. There are so many cool places and hidden gems that I wouldn't have known about if we were able to travel. As the restrictions and health guidelines get tighter and tighter this holiday season, our only option as Calgarians is to tour the exciting, historic and diverse city of Calgary.

If you're overwhelmed by the sheer size of Calgary and don't know where to begin, don't worry. Thankfully, you don't have to explore the city alone, as Jennifer Bain, an award-winning Canadian journalist, provides you with

*111 Places in Calgary That You Must Not Miss.*

## 111 Places in Calgary That You Must Not Miss

Bain gives you "Calgary's quirkiest places and hidden secrets revealed" in her easy and engaging addition to the "111 Places" guidebook series. The series presents cities like Toronto and Vancouver from a personal perspective, encouraging locals to "go off the beaten path to find the hidden places, stories, shops, and neighbourhoods that unlock a destination's true character, history, and flavour."

"The more people I met and places I discovered, the more I was reminded of how unique, historic, and even quirky Calgary truly is," says Bain.

"The book is a tribute to the big heart and great spirit of the city."

Filled with fascinating, unusual and little-known places, Bain hopes the guidebook will surprise

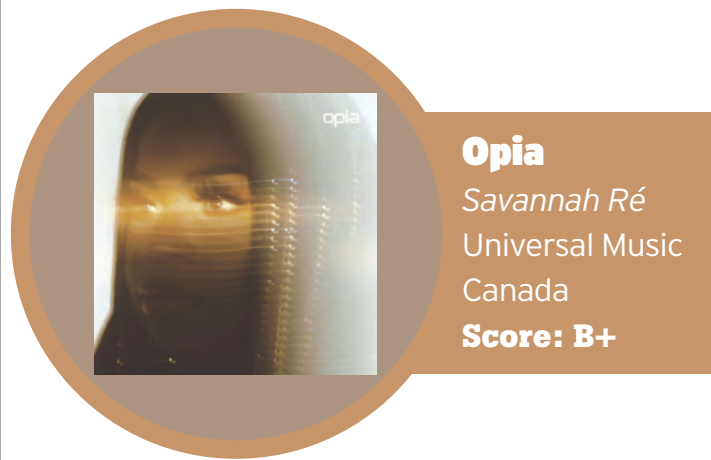
and delight every Calgarian — even those who have lived in Calgary their whole lives. From tracing the origins of Canada's beloved Caesar cocktail, to riding on a vintage carousel, to visiting bookstores filled with content about Canada's western expansion and polar exploration, there is something for everyone to explore.

Along with the book's detailed descriptions and unique insights, *111 Places in Calgary That You Must Not Miss* gives readers useful tips and information with full-colour maps to make it even easier. And to make things more interesting, the guide is carefully and enticingly illustrated with colour images by local photographer Christina Ryan.

"Right now, while we all have to stay closer to home, I hope this book will encourage everyone to take staycations and go on treasure hunts across the city to find some — or even all — of the 111 places," says Bain.



What better time than now to explore a city that is full of locations, businesses, artifacts and objects that you wouldn't even know of unless you dive in deep — Calgary! Photo courtesy of Pixabay



**Opia**

Savannah Ré  
Universal Music  
Canada

**Score: B+**

Debuting her first album, Toronto's Savannah Ré presents a sultry, seductive sensitivity with *Opia*. Consisting of only 24 minutes of passionate R&B, Ré's honey-like vocals will leave you craving the sweetness after.

At first listen, *Opia* will arouse you and tease you — elements that embody the essence of this album. Along with its power of seduction, Ré has the element of subtle strength in her music; an admirable trait as an artist. From "Highly Favoured" to "Best is Yet to Come," the story of this album is like a lens into an intimate story between two people. If anything, *Opia* is

like a diary.

Despite being a good album, Ré's style and artistry is very reminiscent of H.E.R or Mahalia. At the moment, Ré's artistry lacks the specific individuality that is fundamental for any artist, but this can be forgiven since this is her first album. For a debut, Ré shows to be a promising Canadian contender in the genre of R&B.

Beautiful and tranquil, there is more to watch out for with Ré — an exciting and upcoming new artist everyone should watch out for.

- Mikaela Delos Santos



**Vindicator**

Yukon Blonde  
Dine Alone Music  
**Score: A-**

B.C. based indie-rock band, Yukon Blonde, has come out with their psychedelic fifth album, *Vindicator*. Consisting of 11 songs and 43 minutes of what feels like a chromatic journey, *Vindicator* is an album that will guide you to a peaceful state-of-mind.

As a first impression, *Vindicator* seems like any other indie-rock album out there. But upon hearing the first verse of the first track, "It's What You Are," the band will have captured your senses and left you entranced with their music. The band balances a mix of jazz, blues, funk and some experimental beats with their gentle vocals, leaving you mesmerized in the

juxtaposing mix of calming yet erratic music.

While there is no denying their artistry and talent, Yukon Blonde still possesses a similarity with more mainstream indie-rock bands such as Tame Impala. Having been around since 2010, this similarity is a representation of growth and adaptability to today's style of indie-rock.

Yukon Blonde possesses a quality that will put them on a pedestal by indie enthusiasts. Although already a known band to some Canadians, it wouldn't be surprising if they gain mainstream popularity across North America.

- Mikaela Delos Santos



## Wrapping up the Cougars' 2020

**Zach Worden**  
 Sports Editor



The Cougars took down the Thompson Rivers University WolfPack on March 6, winning the bronze medal and earning a trip to the U SPORTS national championships. Photo by Dan Khavkin

It feels like it has been so long since we last saw the Mount Royal University (MRU) Cougars take the court, field and ice that it's easy to forget how special 2020 was for the athletic program at MRU.

With some teams winning their first-ever Canada West medals and others having their most successful regular seasons as members of U SPORTS, 2020 saw the Cougars establish themselves as a program to watch in the future.

With no 2020-21 competitions due to COVID-19, we are forced to wait and see what MRU's top athletes can achieve once university sport returns. But, as 2020 comes to an end, let's take a look back at the great year it was for the Cougars.

### Soccer

Unfortunately, the MRU

soccer season takes place during the fall semester, so we didn't get a chance to see either of the Cougars' clubs take the pitch in 2020.

### Volleyball

As for women's volleyball, the team not only secured their first-ever berth to the U SPORTS National Championships, but they came away with the program's first Canada West medal.

The team was led by second-year middle Nyadholi Thokbuom. Thokbuom made the jump to superstardom in 2019-20, becoming one of the top players in the country. She led the Canada West in hitting percentage, along with finishing fifth in blocks per set with a .386 percentage and 1.14 blocks respectively. For her efforts this year, she was named both a first-team all-star in the Canada West and a second-team All-Canadian.

Joining Thokbuom on the Canada West all-star teams were third-year setter Quinn Pelland and fifth-year outsider hitter Chantel Park. The pair were named to the Canada West second team for their contributions to the best women's volleyball team in Cougars history.

A 21-3 regular-season record saw the Cougars finish with the second seed come playoff time. Their regular season positioning meant the team would host each round of the playoffs until the finals (should they make it there). Matched up with the seventh-seeded University of British Columbia (UBC) Thunderbirds, the Cougars hosted UBC at Kenyon Court and won the series two matches to one.

Advancing to the conference semifinals, the Cougars welcomed the third seed, University of Alberta (UofA) Pandas to Calgary. After

splitting their regular-season series 1-1, the two teams split the first two games of their playoff matchup as well, forcing a winner-take-all game three with a berth to the national championships on the line. Despite the two teams' even play throughout the year, the Pandas knocked off the Cougars to advance to the Canada West finals.

After losing to the UofA, the Cougars had to turn their attention to the bronze medal match, which was a one-game series, with the winner earning a trip to nationals. They faced the Thompson Rivers University WolfPack, a team the Cougars also split with during the regular season. But in the bronze medal match, the WolfPack was no match for MRU, as the Cougars swept the match three sets to none.

Unfortunately for the Cougars, their first trip to the national tournament was

cancelled due to COVID-19.

The men's volleyball team's season looked a little different this year. They entered the year coming off their first trip to the national championships, where they were led by a veteran corps of players that mostly moved on following their appearance on the national stage.

With a new group leading the way, the Cougars struggled to find their top form but still remained competitive in the Canada West.

Fifth-year outside hitter Trent Mounter and rookie Chris Byam led the Cougars to the eighth and final playoff spot in the conference. Mounter was a second-team all-star in the Canada West, while Byam was a member of the all-rookie team.

As the eighth seed, the Cougars had to make the trip to Langley to face off

**Continues on Pg. 15**

# #S

**85**, million dollars. The total Toronto Raptors point guard Fred VanVleet will receive over his new four-year contract

**81**, the point differential in the South Carolina women's basketball 119-38 win over the College of Charleston

**9.7**, assists per set for Cougars' setter Quinn Pelland in 2019-20, an all-time Mount Royal University record

**122**, rushing yards for Canadian Chase Brown in the University of Illinois' win over Nebraska



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with perennial powerhouse and national championship favourite, the Trinity Western University Spartans (TWU). TWU lived up to the hype and swept the Cougars in straight sets, advancing to the conference semifinals.

For a young MRU team, the experience gained against the Spartans will be important to understand what it takes to compete against the best in the country.

**Basketball**

For MRU's best hoopers, 2020 was a year of development for both programs. Once the calendar flipped, the men's and women's teams were only able to take one win. Both teams had solid starts to the season but were unable to carry that success over to the new year.

The women's program won its most games in a season since the 2014-15 campaign. Under new head coach Robyn Fleckenstein, the Cougars were able to finish two games short of a playoff spot, while seeing improvement across the board as a team.

Both the men's and women's teams had players named to

the Canada West all-rookie team as Jenika Martens and Nate Petrone made big impacts in their first year wearing MRU blue.

Martens scored her season-high 27 points on Jan. 3 against the Thompson Rivers WolfPack, while she also grabbed 11 rebounds. Martens looks to be a presence in the paint for the Cougars for years to come.

For the men's squad, 2020 saw multiple key players go down with injury, forcing young players like Petrone into the spotlight. The first-year guard proved to be one of the best shooters in the conference, knocking down nearly 47 per cent of his shots from behind the arc. Petrone scored double-digit points in every game but one after the calendar turned, showing his growth throughout the year as he adjusted to his newfound role on the team.

Both teams look to be on the upswing when they return to play and both will push for a spot in the Canada West playoffs.

**Hockey**

Both Cougars' hockey teams had a record-breaking year. The women's team had the best playoff run MRU has seen,

while the men's team had their most successful regular season since joining U SPORTS.

The women's team finished as the fourth seed in the regular season, meaning they would get to host the first round of the playoffs. In the opening round, they swept their namesake, the University of Regina Cougars, without allowing a goal.

They advanced to the conference semifinals where they were matched up with the University of Calgary Dinos. The three-game series was tight throughout and game three ended up going to overtime scoreless. The Cougars' Breanne Trotter scored the game-winner, sending MRU to not only the Canada West championship but also the national championships in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

The Cougars eventually lost in the championships series to the University of Alberta, but the silver medal spot is the best finish any team at Mount Royal has ever achieved.

MRU's magical run didn't stop there. Going into nationals, the team was ranked seventh out of eight teams and was set to face the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) champion University



**Mount Royal University Cougars' forward Anna Purschke was one of the top players in the Canada West during the 2019-20 season. The second team all-star was a huge part of the Cougars magical run to the national championships in 2020. Photo courtesy of Cougars Athletics**

of Toronto Varsity Blues. Coming in as an underdog, the Cougars were able to shock the world and knock off the Varsity Blues in a 2-1 overtime.

The next day, the championships were cancelled due to COVID-19. It's too bad that we didn't get to see the Cougars' run come to an end one way or another, but the 2020 season will still be special for the best team in Mount Royal history.

The men's squad also finished as the fourth seed in the Canada West. After finishing 18-10-1 in the

regular season, the Cougars faced off with the UBC Thunderbirds. UBC ended up being the men's version of MRU's women's team — they went on a huge run in the playoffs all the way to the national championships. Unfortunately for the Cougars, that run began on their home ice.

Despite losing a win-or-go-home game three on their home ice, MRU is set for success for years to come, as they only graduated one player and look to return even stronger in 2021.

# Toronto Raptors gear up for 2020-21 NBA season

**Zach Worden**

Sports Editor

After a 2020 title defence that went on much longer than many expected, the 2019 NBA champions, the Toronto Raptors, are set to return to action in a year that will look different than any before.

**2019-20 recap**

After losing finals MVP Kawhi Leonard and starting shooting guard Danny Green, the 2019-20 edition of the Raptors featured the remaining pieces from the team's championship run in 2018-19.

After a strong regular season followed by the COVID-19 shutdown, the Raptors, along with the other top 22 NBA teams, made their way to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida to play in the bubble. In the bubble,

the Raptors continued their winning ways before the playoffs started.

In the playoffs, the Raptors swept the Brooklyn Nets in the opening round of the playoffs. The series was the first time in franchise history the Raptors swept their opponent.

In the conference semifinals, the Raptors lost in seven games to the Boston Celtics, ending their reign as defending champions.

**2020-21 season**

Coming into the new season, the Raptors will be forced to play in Tampa Bay due to the Canadian government declining the Raptors' application to play in Toronto.

After the postponed 2019-20 season, the NBA moved

back the start of the 2020-21 season until December. The season will be 72 games instead of the usual 82, which will help the league schedule more time between games and prioritize player health.

**Roster**

The Raptors had a busy offseason as three members of their playoff rotation were unrestricted free agents. Fred VanVleet, Serge Ibaka and Marc Gasol all played key roles in the team's championship run and a big part in the record-setting 2019-20 season. Team President Masai Ujiri said that re-signing the three players was the team's top priority entering the

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**Pascal Siakam (left) and Kyle Lowry (right) suiting up for the Toronto Raptors in the 2019-20 regular season. The 2020 all-stars will look to lead the Raptors back to the finals in 2020-21. Photo courtesy of TSN.ca**



**Continued from Pg. 15**

offseason.

The most important player for the team was VanVleet and the Raptors rewarded him for his play the last few seasons. He signed a four-year \$85 million dollar contract to return to Toronto. The contract is the largest an undrafted player has ever signed.

After getting VanVleet to re-up with the team, their attention turned to their two big men, Ibaka and Gasol. The Raptors have been operating with all eyes on free agency 2021, where some of the top players in the league will hit the open market.

This led to the team making good but modest offers to both Gasol and Ibaka, who ultimately decided to head west to join the title favourite teams in Los Angeles. Ibaka signed with the Clippers, joining former Raptor Leonard, where he will play a big part in giving the team a rim protector and floor-

spacing.

Gasol will look to provide the same things to the defending champion Lakers, who moved on from centers Javale McGee and Dwight Howard in favour of Gasol and Montrezl Harrell.

Once the two announced they were signing elsewhere, the Raptors moved to replace them in a matter of minutes. Aron Baynes and Alex Len were both signed to come in and take over the minutes left by Gasol and Ibaka, while Canadian and fringe rotation player Chris Boucher was brought back on a bigger contract.

Despite the center position looking completely different, everything else should look the same for Toronto.

**Backcourt**

Kyle Lowry, VanVleet and first-round draft pick Malachi Flynn should eat up the majority of the guard minutes for the team.

Lowry, the six-time all-

star will continue to be one of the winningest players in the NBA. While not having the gaudy stats of some of the top stars in the league, Lowry impacts winning like no other. He will be the leader of the Raptors yet again as they try to remain among the best in the east.

**Wings**

Norman Powell and OG Anunoby are the two main options on the wing for the Raptors. There will be some minutes up for grabs for players such as Oshae Brissett and Stanley Johnson.

Anunoby enters the biggest year of his three-year career. After proving himself as one of the top defenders in the league in 2019-20, and showing some ability to create off the dribble in the bubble, he will have the opportunity to prove what he can do with a larger offensive role. With his rookie deal set to expire at year's end, his offensive production will determine how much money

he gets next offseason.

**Bigs**

Inside, the Raptors will look a lot different in 2020-21. Between Baynes, Len and Boucher, the Raptors will have to figure out who fills the team's mandate for defense and outside shooting. Pascal Siakam will be a mainstay in the Raptors rotation for years to come after his performance in the last two seasons.

The All-NBA second team

member won the Most Improved Player award in 2018-19 and only continued to improve last year. He was also named an Eastern Conference all-star starter for his performance in that season. Despite struggling in the playoffs, Siakam has proved himself to be an extremely hard-worker who has improved each year over the course of his career. He should be back and even better in 2020-21.



**Marc Gasol (left) and Serge Ibaka (right) ate up most of the minutes at center for the Raptors in 2019-20. Both signed free-agent deals in Los Angeles, leaving the Raptors to rely on new faces to fill the pairs shoes. Photo courtesy of Raptors Rapture**

# Western Canadian Hockey takes major hit due to COVID-19

**George Potter**

Staff Writer

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hockey leagues across Western Canada have postponed or cancelled their scheduled games for players' health and safety. From junior hockey to the world juniors, here's how teams are being forced to deal with the increase in cases across the country.

## Alberta Junior Hockey League (AJHL)

Early in the pandemic, many instances of positive COVID-19 results between teams caused a plethora of cancellations across the league. As a safety precaution, games in the AJHL were supposed to be cancelled until early December. However, on Nov. 24, the Government of Alberta declared strict gathering restrictions, prohibiting indoor group physical activity with few exceptions. The AJHL Board of Governors will update their return-to-play protocol by Dec. 19.

## Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League (SJHL)

In mid-November, most teams in the SJHL postponed games due to health and safety. The La Ronge Ice Wolves and Battleford North Stars plan to reschedule their games between January and February of 2021. The only team in the league based in Manitoba, the Flin Flon Bombers, had to put their season on hold due to the province's influx of COVID-19 cases, placing them in the critical "red zone" of their pandemic response system. On Nov. 25, it was announced that the league will pause its play and resume closer to the holidays due to the recent announcement made by the Saskatchewan government.

## British Columbia Hockey League (BCHL)

The BCHL cancelled exhibition games from Nov.

13 to Nov. 21 due to rising cases of COVID-19 in the area. However, the league's COVID-19 safety plan indicates that there will be no games between Nov. 23 and Dec. 7. Unfortunately, the Wenatchee Wild will not participate in the 2020-21 season due to the closed borders between Canada and the U.S., in addition to the State of Washington's current restrictions.

## World Junior Hockey

Team Canada's World Junior selection camp was scheduled to include exhibition games with the University of Alberta Golden Bears and Mount Royal University (MRU) Cougars mens' hockey teams. However, due to two positive COVID-19 tests within the camp, the team is trying to cut a 46-man roster to a final roster of 25. Camp has been temporarily suspended, as the entire team undergoes a 14-day quarantine.

After the cancellation of



**The Calgary Canucks vs. the Canmore Eagles in an exhibition game on Nov. 7. The Canucks only got to play two regular season games before the new restrictions from the Government of Alberta postponed the AJHL season. Photo by George Potter**

the exhibition games against the two Canada West squads, the Cougars had an outbreak of their own. On Nov. 30, MRU sent out a campus-wide update, stating that 18 members of the hockey team tested positive for COVID-19. The men's hockey team, along with all other Cougars teams, were training under multiple safety protocols before the outbreak. But, with new restrictions from

the Government of Alberta, no varsity programs will be training until 2021.

## Western Hockey League (WHL)

The WHL will not start play until Jan. 8, 2021. The U16 tournament — also called the WHL Cup — typically features Western Canada's top talent. However, this year, it has been cancelled due to COVID-19 safety precautions.