

the reflector

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MRU to release suicide prevention framework

Noel Harper
News Editor

In 2012, former Mount Royal University (MRU) President David Docherty created the President's Task Force on Student Mental Health. The task force aimed to de-stigmatize mental health on campus and create a supportive environment for students, but one particular aspect of the conversation was missing.

"[The task force] really looked at mental health, kind of comprehensively. But at that point in time, it didn't necessarily have a focus on suicide prevention, intervention and postvention," says Rachelle McGrath, Director of Wellness Services at MRU.

McGrath is the chair of a steering committee working to develop a strategic framework for suicide prevention at MRU, formed in September 2020. The committee is composed of individuals from across the campus, including students, representatives, faculty and staff.

"It's not necessarily just focused on student mental health, but it's also looking at employees, because we know, whenever there is a sudden death or whenever there is a

death by suicide, the impact that it has on employees as well as students across campus," McGrath says.

Data from Alberta Health Services shows half of the approximate 7,300 emergency department visits for suicide attempts or self-harm in 2019 were made by those aged 24 and under. The data also says that up to 67 per cent of LGBTQ2S+ youth between the ages of 14 and 25 in the province had thoughts of suicide, and the suicide rate is five to six times higher for Indigenous youth than for non-Indigenous youth.

Overall, Alberta's suicide rate in 2019 per 100,000 residents was 12.7, a slight decline from years past, according to the Centre for Suicide Prevention. Alberta is one of only four provinces and territories for which the Centre has 2019 data, along with Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories.

The framework, McGrath says, is in its early stages of development, with campus-wide consultation sessions being held in October and November 2020. The seven sessions were attended by 84 members of the MRU



Members of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's standard technical committee to develop a post-secondary mental health framework, pictured in Whitehorse during Northern Canada and Indigenous consultations. The committee included MRU student Daniel Major. Photo courtesy of Daniel Major

community, and future sessions are planned following the framework's first draft.

"Really strongly, we heard the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion. We also heard the need for clear and consistent communication about available supports and resources, and having information ... in a place that's really easy to find or potentially in one centralized location," says McGrath.

Other key takeaways from the sessions included the availability of suicide prevention training on campus and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health.

Daniel Major, a cellular and molecular biology student at MRU and member of the steering committee, says the sessions were based on a series of specific questions, posed to groups of students, staff or faculty members.

"How can we ensure that this framework has the most impact, that it's used and adopted by the community? What are the best ways we can raise awareness of the resources already available to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention?" says Major, reading off

examples of the questions asked.

Both Major and McGrath stress the importance of a comprehensive look at suicide prevention, encompassed of the three aforementioned aspects. This includes "postvention," which takes place after a suicide and aims to provide support for the loved ones of a suicide victim, as defined by Canada's Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention.

The work being done at MRU on suicide prevention is informed by work at the federal level. Major has the experience of sitting on a technical committee to develop the Mental Health Commission of Canada's national standard for post-secondary mental health policies — the only undergraduate student from Western Canada to do so.

"The work I was doing on the committee was to help institutions design an encompassing framework for a mental health supportive approach to campus life for students," Major says.

"Elements of that framework are going to be essential in informing the work that we're doing on suicide prevention ... we will certainly be using

it as a way to refer and infer, and gain insight on some of the important components we need to make sure are present in our suicide prevention framework."

Major says that the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the issue of suicide prevention, as students continue to be isolated from their campus communities.

"As a university, I think there has to be a heightened awareness ... around the reality that a lot of people are hurting. A lot of people are feeling social isolation on a scale that didn't exist," he says.

"Now more than ever" is, I think, the motto that I would apply to mental health, and more specifically, suicide prevention strategies taken on by post-secondary institutions."

McGrath concurs, saying that the pandemic has impacted the committee's work in terms of isolation and lack of clarity around how to access mental health support remotely.

A draft version of the framework is planned for the end of March, following further consultation sessions focused on postvention and management.



Daniel Major, one of the students on the committee to develop MRU's suicide prevention framework, has helped to inform a federal standard on mental health as an undergrad. Photo courtesy of Daniel Major

Persons Case scholarship returns to Alberta, Women in STEM award introduced

Noel Harper

News Editor

The province has initiated applications for a new scholarship program aimed at Albertans who are helping to work towards gender parity and reduce gender-based discrimination.

The Leaders in Equality Award of Distinction (LEAD) program will distribute \$225,000 in funding to 90 eligible Alberta students pursuing high school or post-secondary education. Each student will receive \$2,500 through one of two scholarship streams being brought together under the program.

The Women in STEM award — which was first announced in September 2020 — makes up 50 of these scholarships. The award is designated for those who identify as women pursuing studies in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, as the acronym suggests.

“More than 100 years ago, women were critical in the building of Alberta — shaping its society and economy. The LEAD Program will assist women and gender-diverse Albertans to pursue fulfilling careers that help promote gender equality and change Alberta for the better,” reads a statement from Leela Aheer,

Alberta’s Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

“It is especially important at this time to support students in pursuing a broad range of careers as we work toward Alberta’s economic recovery.”

The remaining 40 awards will be given out through the second stream — the Persons Case Scholarship. Any Alberta post-secondary student can apply, with the awards given to those who are using their studies to advance gender equality.

“The Leaders in Equality Award of Distinction scholarship supports students and empowers them to build the skills they need to find success in their chosen career,” said Minister of Advanced Education Demetrios Nicolaides.

The Persons Case scholarship is named for the landmark 1929 ruling brought on by the Famous Five activists. The case allowed women to be appointed as senators, reversing a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada the previous year, which declared that women were not “persons” within what is now known as the Constitution Act.

At around the same time



Alberta reinstated the Persons Case scholarship, given to those students working to further gender equality or solve underrepresentation, including it as part of a new financial award program. Photo by Linnea Nordström

the Women in STEM award was announced, the Alberta government initially decided that the Persons Case scholarship would come to an end after more than 40 years.

The allocated funds, which were originally

given to students in any university program under the scholarship, were to be given to the non-profit Women Building Futures, which assists women that pursue building trades in traditionally male-dominated fields. The decision

garnered controversy, with some worrying that academic efforts to benefit gender equality would be focused on some programs and not others, such as arts or public health.

The deadline to apply for the LEAD program is Feb. 21.

International students deferred by pandemic given second chance

Noel Harper

News Editor

Thousands of international students residing in Canada have experienced significant interruptions to their future plans in the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a recent announcement from the federal government will buy these students some valuable time.

Starting Jan. 27, international students can apply for an 18-month post-graduation work permit, which is necessary to gain required work experience in Canada following graduation from a Canadian post-

secondary institution. This is in addition to a work permit held by a student that has expired, or one that is expiring between Jan. 30 and Nov. 27, 2021.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, international students contribute more than \$21 billion to the Canadian economy each year, and in 2019, 58,000 international graduates applied to become permanent residents of Canada.

“Whether as nurses on the pandemic’s front lines, or

as founders of some of the most promising start-ups, international students are giving back to communities across Canada as we continue the fight against the pandemic. Their status may be temporary, but the contributions of international students are lasting,” said Marco Mendicino, Canada’s Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, in a statement.

“This new policy means that young students from abroad who have studied here can stay and find work, while ensuring that Canada meets the urgent

needs of our economy for today and tomorrow.”

Many international students were left without employment by COVID-19, forced to return home in the wake of the pandemic without completing their work experience, or unable to find any at all due to unsavoury job markets. This temporary revision to the work permit policy is being made in effort to help the 52,000 graduates successfully apply to immigrate permanently to Canada.

With the pandemic came a drop in immigration to

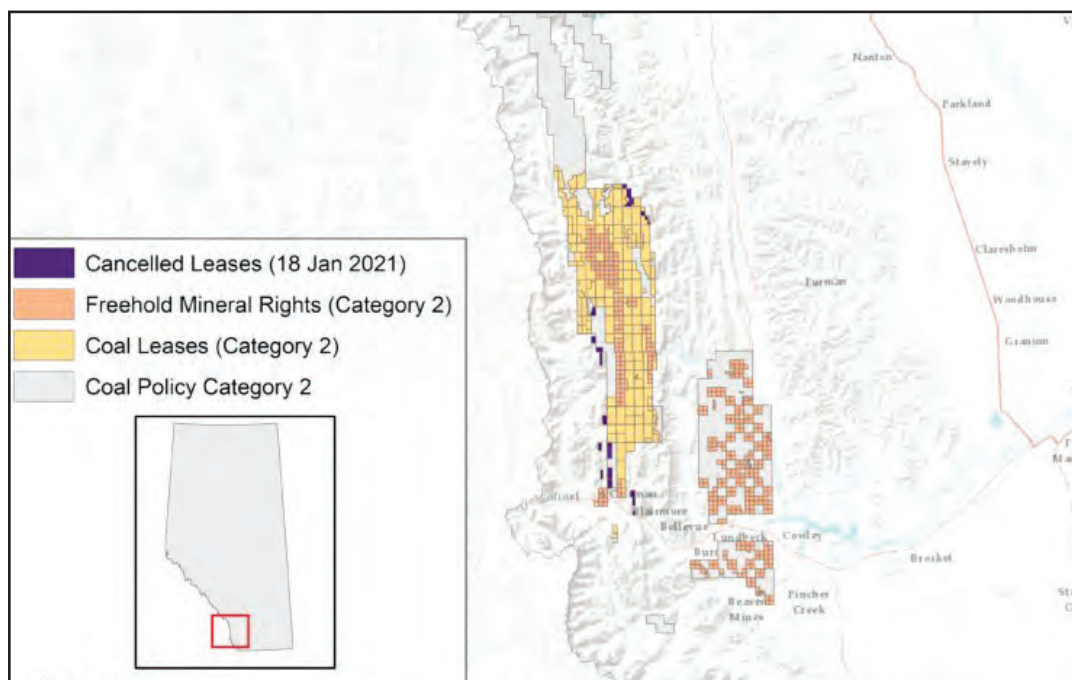
Canada, complicating the process dramatically. As a result, in October 2020, the federal government announced plans to welcome more than 1.2 million new immigrants between 2021 and 2023, which alone would increase the country’s population by 3.2 per cent.

Tuition for international students remains much higher than the cost for domestic students. For example, an academic year at Mount Royal University (MRU) can cost up to \$38,250 CAD for an international student.

Alberta cancels new coal mining projects following public backlash

Noel Harper

News Editor



A map from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), showing Alberta's coal leases and newly mineable areas, as well as some recent leases that were cancelled by the provincial government following public outcry. Photo courtesy of CPAWS

In May 2020, the Alberta government removed an environmental policy aimed at protecting some of the province's natural areas from being used for coal mining operations. The policy, which was in place since 1976, expired the following month in June. However, the government's post-coal policy plans resulted in outcry, thanks to a recent public awareness campaign.

The Coal Policy is described as "obsolete" and predating "modern regulatory processes" on the province's coal guidelines webpage. Crown lands in western Alberta were divided into four categories of coal leasing by their sensitivity to development, location and type of ecosystem.

They ranged from category 1 — which encompasses much of Alberta's western border with B.C. including both Banff and Jasper National Parks, where no coal development could take place — to adjacent category 2 lands where open-pit mines were forbidden, to categories 3 and 4, which had the least amount of restrictions per the

1976 policy.

With the removal of the Coal Policy, the four categories were also removed. Those areas designated as category 1 under the policy would still be protected under new regulations, the government says, but category 2 lands are now subject to further open-pit coal leases.

The province began to demonstrate its new coal mining rules in December by granting 11 new coal leases in former category 2 territory. These projects would focus not on thermal coal — used for coal power — but instead metallurgical coal, which is used in the production of steel.

The leases represented a fraction of the category 2 areas that could be mined under the province's new policy. But, the 11 leases were, in effect, a test of new coal mining abilities in Alberta, coming months after the protections were first removed.

Once public figures in the province began to speak up about how the issue would affect the prairies, Albertans at large began to pay attention.

In a YouTube video posted in early January, country

singer Corb Lund explains how Alberta ranching families brought these changes to his attention.

"From what I understand, there wasn't a whole lot of consultation with the public, or ranchers or farmers, or First Nations people, or municipalities or anything. I don't think that's how you should govern," Lund says in the video.

Lund's calls for a closer look at these changes were soon echoed by his fellow musicians Paul Brandt, Terri Clark and k.d. lang.

On Jan. 18, the province announced that coal leases were being paused in category 2 areas, and the few leases assigned in December were to be cancelled outright.

"Under the current terms, just as it was under the 1976 coal policy, coal leases do not allow for exploration, development or production without a comprehensive regulatory review," reads a statement from Alberta Energy Minister Sonya Savage.

Coal mining projects that began before December continue to be reviewed by the province.

MRU FILES

Noel Harper

MRU named top 10 Canadian "sugar baby" university

Mount Royal University (MRU) is among the top 10 institutions in Canada with the most students who engage in "sugar dating," according to the dating service SeekingArrangement.

SeekingArrangement says it has 104 members from MRU who have signed up to be "sugar babies," in the hopes of finding a wealthy partner to fund their education and otherwise provide them with material goods in a romantic context — known as a "sugar daddy" or "sugar momma."

MRU comes in at number 10 on the list of sugar baby universities. The University of Toronto tops the list with 257 members, followed by the University of Alberta with 231.

SAMRU program aims to protect students in sex work industry

The BE(lieve in) YOU program was recently launched by the Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) to help women within the Mount Royal University community who engage in sex work.

SAMRU has partnered with Sagesse, a Calgary-based non-profit that works to reduce domestic violence through support groups and educational workshops, to deliver the initiative.

The 20-week program will support sex workers, who work in an industry with an increased risk of abuse and violence, and work to destigmatize the notion of sex work within campus.

THE REFLECTOR

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Beauty in the strangest places

Abandoned houses and the art of exploring them

Ed Ghost
Staff Writer



An old vehicle sits abandoned, left in a snapshot of history. Abandoned buildings and vehicles scatter the prairies, and they each tell an unknown story to most observers. If you decide to approach these dilapidated subjects, approach with care. Photo by Ed Ghost

Picture this: it's the weekend, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, you have a full tank of gas, a playlist full of killer tunes just begging to be blasted at full volume and no plans. Where do you go? If you're me, the answer is almost always an enthusiastic "nowhere!" which often leads

me to one of my favourite places—an abandoned home nestled on the side of a random rural highway in "anywhere," Alberta (or beyond!).

When I was growing up, my grandpa had a vast overgrown farm in Rawdon, Quebec. It had various buildings of every

age and state of decay. Each one came with a wild story, and even wilder things inside.

There was one building, the machinery shed. It was like Willy Wonka's candy emporium – except the candy parts were various farm tools, strange pop culture items/housewares from the '50s, and two massive '60s-era fiberglass legs from my great grandfather, who stood 6'4 even into his 70s. It also had a floor and roof that was actively collapsing, and there were bees – so many bees.

Being able to run completely amuck and untamed on that farm had a huge impact on who I am today. I have always been nosy, I have always loved antiques, I have always loved architecture, and I have always loved the unknown.

Urban exploration is nothing new, nor is it a unique hobby. Plenty of people seek these places out for plenty of reasons. Sometimes, it's a destructive purpose. They break and take without consequence. Shame on you, if you're one of these people.

Other folks are just passing by, leaving their graffiti tags and little notes for the others that might find themselves in the same place. Some people chase ghosts and spirits.

Then there are those like me, who only want to take photos without touching or taking anything. We simply immerse ourselves and marvel at a life that once was.

These modest representations of the past might be crumbling now, but they're still here. The passage of time only tests their resiliency.

Abandoned houses, specifically farmhouses, are my happy place. It's hard to explain. But every house is new and exciting and oftentimes a learning experience. Sometimes, it's walking into a time machine and surveying history and sometimes you learn about the people who explored there before you.

If it's a house you've gone to multiple times, sometimes you get to watch how nature slowly and methodically takes

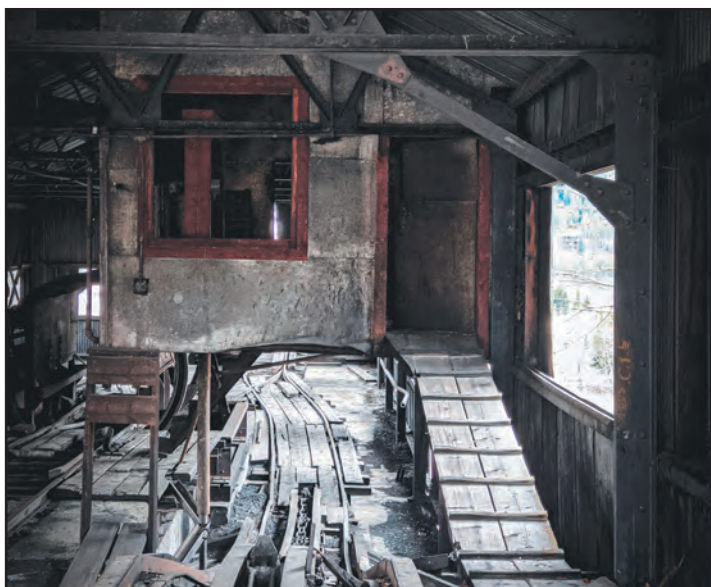
back what's rightfully hers in the form of twisting vines, relentless tree branches or unbothered spiderwebs.

For me, there's a twinge of nostalgia, and there's a hint of danger—but there's always a story, and it's always beautiful.

"But Ed, isn't that trespassing?"

Kinda! I only go to places where there are no – at least to my knowledge – no trespassing signs, and where the property is actively not being taken care of. This can include snow removal, fresh tracks, cleaning of hazards or debris etc.

There are plenty of abandoned houses I've skipped because it was clear that someone was maintaining it, active in it, or there were signs. My goal when visiting these places is to take my photos, find my peace, and not disturb anything. If there isn't an already open area in



If you are going to go exploring, treat that building with respect, and leave it as you found it. Photo by Ed Ghost

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There is a hidden art in the discovery and exploration of old and abandoned houses, but anyone who approaches must approach with caution. Photo by Ed Ghost

which I may enter the house, I stay outside.

During the pandemic, my need for exploring these places has only grown, because what's more socially distant than going to a place in the middle of nowhere, that no one has lived in for decades, where no one is going to bother you?

It's good to get out of the house and it's cool to check out the unknown. I think I'd be hard-pressed to find someone who doesn't get excited every time they pass an abandoned house, but if you do ever find yourself deciding to explore one of these places, and it's not

something you're experienced in, allow me to give you some advice:

Obey all no trespassing signs.

This is true especially on farms and especially in places where you're not a local. Farms tend to cover big surface areas. It's not uncommon for a working farm to have old unused buildings on it, even a few acres down.

Ignoring those signs is a great way to get chased by scary guard dogs who relish in their jobs (trust me) or have the police called on you. And if

you're exploring in a different country, the house might not actually be abandoned at all.

When I was in Florida — a stand your ground state, which means if you trespass, they can legally shoot you — there were plenty of dilapidated houses that got me all excited, only for me to realize upon closer inspection that they were not abandoned at all. People did indeed live in them. It was best for me to mind my business and not go anywhere I wasn't directly invited.

Don't go alone.

Abandoned houses aren't safe. I don't care who built

Continued from Pg.5

them. There's a good chance you don't know why the house was abandoned and it could very well be because of structural issues, a flood, vampires or who knows what. If you go alone, and you fall through a floor and get seriously hurt, there's a chance that no one will find you in time and that's the worst.

Pay attention to your surroundings.

Not all abandoned houses are unoccupied, be it by a very angry wild animal or a squatter. If you see signs of fresh life, or that people may be staying there, leave.

You don't want any trouble. Oftentimes, if you scare someone who also shouldn't be there and they don't know who you are, it could lead to some unsavoury interactions.

Also, abandoned houses tend to have mould or exposed asbestos, depending on the era of the house. If you recognize either and don't have the proper tools to protect yourself, leave. It's not worth getting sick over.

Don't wreck the integrity of the property.

If you're there to loot, break, smash, party, or graffiti,

maybe just don't. Graffiti is a legitimate art form, and it has its place in society. But I don't think that old houses are one of those places.

I must admit that every time I find a beautiful mid-century modern home, my excitement wanes a bit when I see the inevitable spray painted genitalia surrounded by profanity scrawled over everything. If you've seen it once, you've seen it a hundred times and it really takes away from the "picture perfect" setting.

And of course, there are some forms of graffiti out there that are so much more eloquently designed than the aforementioned genitalia, but regardless, there is no place for it on the walls of these places.

Moreover, never forget, someone might buy the property, or decide to fix it up. The more broken it is, the more likely they're going to bulldoze over it and no one will have that piece of history ever again. Modernization is an unforgiving mistress.

Last but not least, have fun with it.

A little bit of "what if" is good for the soul. Abandoned houses aren't for everyone, but adventure sure is. Go out, explore, take photos, and see something new.

Creative Media Contest: Depicting Healthy Relationships through Art

Riley Toma
Contributor

To be blunt, since when do we see realistic, healthy relationships portrayed in the media?

We are constantly bombarded with messages of what relationships should look like through popular song lyrics, dynamics between characters in television shows and movies, and facades of "perfect relationships" painted across social media.

I would like to share my recent experience with this. I have been rewatching the show *Scrubs*. It took my umpteenth watch-through — I admittedly find it hilarious — to take notice of how the characters treated each other in their relationships.

Carla never tells Turk why she is mad at him, forcing

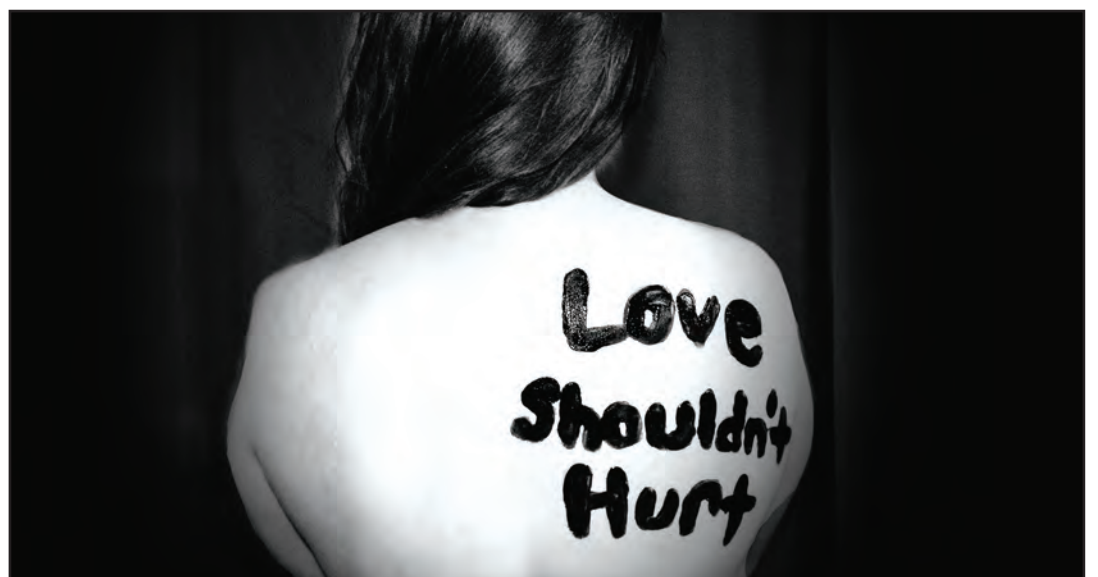
him to "figure out" what he did wrong. What did that teach my younger self about handling conflict in a relationship?

Todd sexually harasses women in each episode and most of the time, gets away with nothing more than a few eye rolls. Did that teach me that those behaviours are tolerable and necessary to make me feel desired in a relationship?

It seems impossible to develop a clear-cut idea of what a healthy, loving, supportive and respectful relationship looks like having grown up watching characters disrespect each other on screens.

Of course, a television

Continues on Pg.7



Have you ever wondered what the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship looks like? Some of us can't see the thorns among the roses, and therefore can't protect ourselves or our peers from dating, domestic, and sexual violence (DDSV). Stepping Up, an MRU-run program, is hoping to bring education to students in February to help give participants the knowledge to take a stand. Photo courtesy of Pexels.

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show is just one example of how the media infiltrates us with messages of what relationships look like. But with the media being so dominant in our lives, how can we combat these narratives in an impactful way? How can we deconstruct years-worth of unhealthy messages and emphasize healthy behaviours for our own relationships?

We deserve to feel safe and respected with the ones we love. An MRU program gives students the opportunity to explore what healthy relationships should actually

look like.

Stepping Up, a dating, domestic, and sexual violence prevention program at the university, wants to hear from students, and challenge these harmful narratives.

“What does a healthy relationship look, feel and/or sound like to you?”

This competition asks you to tap into your creativity and answer this question through an art piece.

Not an artist? You don’t need to be!

The contest is meant to inspire conversations and reflections around healthy

relationships through creativity. All students, mediums, and skill levels are welcome. As long as your piece is meaningful to you, it will be honoured. Paintings, original songs, poems, photography, filmed choreography, filmed skits or any other type of creative media that can be submitted online are acceptable. Just add a description to your interpretation of your piece.

Think about how you could express the sense of safety, trust, support and respect that a healthy relationship possesses. You may draw

inspiration from your own experience in a supportive relationship and depict how much you were cared for. You may even portray a scene of healthy conflict-resolution between partners who respect each other’s differences. Healthy relationships take limitless forms, as can your creative piece.

Also, there are prizes to be won! The first place submission will receive a \$150 gift card, second

place will receive a \$125 gift card, and third place will receive a \$100 gift card.

How do you participate?

Visit the Stepping Up website or contact the program director Michelle Chimenti at mchimenti@mtroyal.ca to sign the model release form, which allows your piece to be showcased. Submissions need to be completed and sent to Chimenti by Mar. 1 and winners will be announced Mar. 5. Submissions will be showcased during prevention week from Mar. 8 to Mar.17.

For more information on the contest, Stepping Up, how to get involved on campus and resources for dating, domestic and sexual violence, visit Stepping Up online.

Stepping Up against DDSV

MRU student-facilitated program educates peers on dating, domestic, and sexual violence

Cassie Weiss

Features Editor

The prevalence rates out there are scary when it comes to dating, domestic and sexual violence (DDSV), and how often it occurs right in front of our very eyes. It becomes one of those things that students always say won’t happen to them, and though we all hope that we will be able to feel safe and respected by our partners, that is not always the case.

The portrayal of unhealthy and abusive behaviours on television and all over our online news feeds remain one of the biggest challenges faced when it comes to the normalization of DDSV. It comes down to the reality that it is the responsibility of the person choosing violence to prevent it. One of the best ways to help with this normalization is by educating students on healthy behaviours.

Recognizing and understanding the signs is the first step in preventing any type of intimate partner violence, which accounts for a quarter of violent crimes reported to police, according to Statistics Canada.

Even though these numbers continue to rise throughout the country, one Mount Royal University (MRU) program called Stepping Up has been fighting since 2010 to educate faculty and students



Healthy relationships are not heavily depicted in the media, but Stepping Up, an MRU-program, is hoping to shed a little light on what a healthy relationship looks like, and they are asking students for their help. Photo courtesy of Pexels.

on the importance of “stepping up” against any and all forms of dating violence.

As a peer-facilitated program, Stepping Up is designed to explore the most current issues and trends relevant to students, such as dating and social media, bystander intervention and what it exactly means to be in a healthy relationship, said

faculty lead Dr. Gaye Warthe.

“MRU is one of the only small number of universities with a focus on the promotion of healthy relationships and the prevention of DDSV,” said Warthe, who, along with Dr. Cathy Carter-Snell, both from the Faculty of Health, Community and Education, has made this project her “brain child”.

“Undergraduate students are in an age group most at risk of experiencing violence or abuse in relationships and of experiencing the most severe types of violence. Students are also more likely to turn to peers when they are in unhealthy or abusive relationships so it is important that any education or prevention focus on students.”

Throughout the course of the school year, the Stepping Up program works with students to create a two-day, four-module workshop that is held every year in February. The workshop is developed to create a discussion around these sensitive topics.

Backed by various

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community partners, the Healthy Campus Team, funded by the Alberta Government, and given effort by a few very passionate people, Stepping Up has created a brave space for students to come together to help contribute to a healthier campus community.

Statistics Canada reports that in the case of intimate partner violence, the most at risk are young women, young people, and those in dating relationships.

A study published in 2019, with the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), also states that “26.8 per cent of student respondents reported they had been in an intimate relationship that was emotionally, physically, or sexually abusive”, said Warthe.

As a health and wellness survey developed out of Harvard, the NCHA operates by contacting students to gain insights on a wide range of health issues. Because students are randomly selected, Warthe explained that there can be “generalizations made about the findings.” Of the

students selected, 16 per cent indicated they had asked for help regarding the abuse that occurred in an intimate relationship.

We all have the ability to step in and support someone who may be experiencing violence, and even one person with the proper knowledge can make a stand against DDSV.

“The normalization of DDSV occurs through our everyday conversations and influences, which is why the program was created around the social-ecological model,” said Michelle Chimenti, Stepping Up program coordinator.

“Challenging derogatory slang, for example, shows that type of behaviour is not okay and that the language folks use can have an influence on the responses and perceptions [other] folks have around DDSV. Trying to change the conversation is one of the first steps folks can take in their own lives.”

The Stepping Up program operates on campus but has shifted its workshop to online this year to help accommodate students



Dating, domestic, and sexual violence (DDSV) numbers have been steadily on the rise in the past few years, but Stepping Up, an MRU-run program, is hoping to bring education to students to aid in the prevention of DDSV. Love shouldn't hurt, and the February workshop will give everyone the tools to take a stand. Photo courtesy of Unsplash.

during the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop will be held on Feb. 2nd and Feb. 9th, from 4:00 p.m. until 6:30 p.m, and students can register for the workshop on the Stepping Up website. Students can also email Chimenti, at mchimenti@mtroyal.ca, and follow @mrulivewell on Instagram

to stay up to date with the many wellness initiatives being offered through the university.

“This workshop offers an opportunity to analyze common scenarios folks may face around healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviours, as well as resources that folks can

access if they need help,” said Chimenti.

“Too often, harmful narratives are perpetuated in common media; however, we hope that those who attend our workshop leave with a new perspective and the skills to examine and challenge what they see around them.”



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Entertainment Needs More Colour

The overt whiteness of LGBTQ+ representation in film and TV

Riggs Zyrille Vergara
Publishing Editor



Simon Spier (Nick Robinson, left) and Ethan (Clark Moore, right) from the hit movie *Love, Simon*. Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

From the crazed holiday lesbian rom-com *Happiest Season* starring Kristen Stewart and Mackenzie Davis to the two new seasons of the world-renowned *Rupaul's Drag Race* airing at the same time, one would say that LGBTQ+ representation in TV and film is finally thriving.

According to the 2020 report of LGBTQ+ media advocacy group GLAAD, of 118 films produced by top movie studios during that

year, 18.6 per cent of them had characters that identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. Disappointingly, there weren't any transgender characters recorded for that year. However, in the report's eight-year history, 2020 featured the highest number of queer characters yet.

On the other hand, for broadcast primetime scripted programming, GLAAD's 2020-21 report saw a slight decrease in queer representation, from

2019's 10.2 per cent to this season's 9.1 per cent. This means that out of the 773 series regular characters, only 71 identify as LGBTQ+. Although it is considered a drop in representation, this much of a decrease was expected due to the halted productions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the surface, this may look like progress. But, in the fine print of every annual GLAAD report, there's been

one call that major studios have not answered yet — the need for more queer people of colour.

A Downward Trend

For the past three years, the racial diversity of LGBTQ+ characters in films has been seeing a decline in numbers, going from 57 per cent in 2017, to 42 per cent in 2018, and finally, only 34 per cent in 2019. Of all the characters analyzed in 2019, 66 per

cent were white. Even when GLAAD examined the 2019 film releases of four smaller "art house" film studios, they still found all the LGBTQ+ characters to be white gay men.

It's Still White

Even with the inclusion of queer people of colour in these films and shows, it seems that their storylines always centre

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OUT'N ABOUT

Tubing at WinSport

Zoom down one of the fastest tube parks in Western Canada with the Tube Park at WinSport. The tube park is on the main hill with eight lanes and a magic carpet to bring you to the top. Tickets have to be purchased online in advance. Have fun!

Play theatre games over Zoom with Downstage

Downstage theatre company is offering a series of weekly "Creative Stretch Zoom Sessions" from Jan. 18 to Mar. 1 on Mondays from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. featuring theatre games, guided meditation, storytelling and more.

Cook with a Chef

With restaurants being closed for dine-in, many Calgarians are turning to make the same boring meals every week. Discover new recipes online this January with Chef Judy Wood of Loughheed House, Chef Paul Rogalski and Chef de Cuisine Dean Fast at Rouge Restaurant.

Pink Door Pizza

Pink Door Pizza just launched in southeast Calgary and offers something for every kind of pizza fan: the classic pepperoni, Margherita and Hawaiian pizzas, with crazy additions like pizzas topped with dill pickles, tandoori chicken or even hot fried chicken.

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around whiteness.

A special mention from GLAAD's report is Poe, a gay Latino character living with a disability in the film *Five Feet Apart*, who dies to further the plot of the central white straight characters. "When there is only one gay character in a project — whose story culminates as a plot device for a straight romance — it does not send a positive message to audiences for that character to then also die," the report says.

In the 2018 hit gay rom-com *Love, Simon*, the central character is once again a white gay man. The film was mostly met with positive critique, but it was not without flaw. The film did not make an effort to create a fully realized identity for its romantic interest, who happens to be Black. Throughout the film, he was put in the background, hidden in the veil of his words through online messages. He became a mere instrument to the emotional journey of another struggling white gay man.

Another point of critique from *Love, Simon* was how it portrayed the only other queer person of colour included in the film. Ethan, played by Clark Moore, is the total opposite of the titular Simon. He is an effeminate student with long hair who always dresses in a flamboyant way. When he comes out, he is ridiculed by everyone else. Even though it's already been a long time since his coming out in the film, he's still considered an outcast. But, when someone like Simon comes out, as the film eventually shows, he was accepted. This is because Simon fits the normative view of the white gay man who is only defined as queer by his romantic attractions and not by the way he looks.

In the realm of TV Shows, there always seems to be a trend where if a person of colour is in a romantic relationship, it has to be with a white person. Rarely do we see two people of colour in a queer relationship. This includes *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*'s Raymond Holt and Kevin Conner, *Never Have I Ever*'s Fabiola and Eve, *Glee*'s Santana and Brittany, *I Am Not Okay With This*' Syd and Dina, *Hollywood*'s Rock Hudson and Archie Coleman, *How to Get Away With Murder*'s Annalise Keating and Eve Rothlow, *Superstore*'s Mateo Fernando Aquino Liwanag and Jeff Sutton, *Shadowhunter*'s Magnus Bane and Alec



Poe (Moisés Arias) sits in his hospital bed in the movie *Five Feet Apart*. Photo courtesy of Lionsgate.

Lightwood, and many more.

Why We Need More

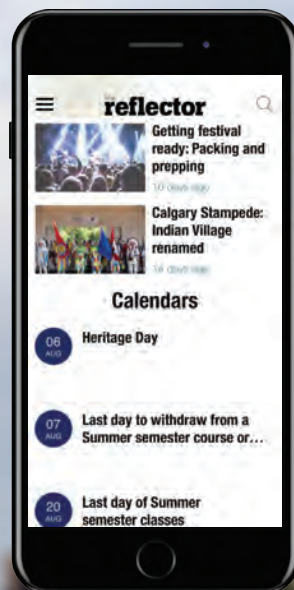
Since GLAAD started its yearly report eight years ago, they have been demanding production companies to increase their LGBTQ+ representation. But the demand for representation of queer people of colour in the media has long been overdue. Time and time again, it's been shown that there's an audience for inclusive queer stories in the mainstream.

But, marketability aside, the impact of highlighting diverse queer stories to younger queer people and their families and friends is monumental. A study on queer women of colour, completed by the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, mentions that queer people of colour are more likely to have less understanding communities and families than their white counterparts.

A participant of the study, who is a queer woman of colour and masculine of centre said, "When I was in high school, being bullied, people were like, 'I don't think Black people should be gay.' That came from another Black person. So, if you only see white people in the media, then people think that it is a white thing."

This just goes to show how much racialized communities need this representation. The more we show people of colour who are queer in the media, the more we realize that this is also our community's thing. It's also our issue, our conversations and our freedom.

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Spice up your space in 2021 – this year's interior design trends on a budget

Mackenzie Mason

Arts Editor



Mixing textures is an intriguing way to create depth and dimension in your spaces. With earth tones trending this year in interior design, using throw blankets, pillows and plants as a pop of colour adds life to any room. Photo courtesy of WallsHeaven.

With the year we've had, it's not surprising that the biggest trends we can expect for interior design in 2021 are multipurpose spaces, lots of plants and arguably the most important of all — zen spaces and calming earth tones.

Here are some student-friendly ways to achieve these trends in your space on a budget.

1. Multipurpose spaces

Being at home as much as we were in 2020, it's given us the time (perhaps even too much time) to rethink and reimagine the areas in our homes and how we could use them better. For example, I recently downsized and I had to figure out how to use one area for multiple uses — and in comes my vanity/desk duo.

I had a large, white desk that I've used throughout the years as a desk, or as a vanity table, but never both. To make it feel like new, I changed out the table legs and separated the two spaces with the ALEX drawers from Ikea to hold my makeup and school supplies. I added some matching chairs that belonged to my parents and voila! In total, I spent only \$20 on the new table legs, and yet I completely transformed the space.

Creating multipurpose spaces in areas of your house that don't get used much can make your home seem bigger, and if your whole family is working from home like mine is, it can be a lifesaver.

2. Plants, plants and more plants

Picture this: you're sitting in

your room doing your online classes. Your space is dull and monotone with no life to it. You are unmotivated by this, and you eventually fail all of your courses. Okay, maybe that's a little dramatic but I strongly believe that the space you're in can directly affect your mood and energy. If there's anything that can immediately bring life to a room, it's plants.

Having a few plants brings colour to any room and they are relatively cheap home decor. Creamy and earthy-hued ceramic pots are currently trending and will look good in any room. Plants like Devil's Ivy, Peace Lilies and Spider Plants actually filter the air in your home and reduce toxins like formaldehyde, benzene and even carbon dioxide. However, some plants like

Peace Lilies can also be dangerous for pets such as cats and dogs. So choose wisely!

If you're looking for plants on a budget, lots of people sell seedlings from their plants on Kijiji and Facebook Marketplace for cheap or for free. So go to the thrift store to find some cool and unique plant pots and get planting!

3. Zen spaces

Meditation, yoga and spirituality have been at the forefront of TikTok and interior design this year for obvious reasons. If you have a quiet space in your home that can be dedicated to relaxing and winding down for some much needed you-time, do it. This space can be a versatile place in your home designed for whatever you want it to be.

Perhaps you have a small waterfall feature that plugs in with an essential oil diffuser. Ensure you focus on earthy tones that exude relaxation and warmth, like wine red, golden yellow and sage green, with lots of natural sunlight contrasted with white walls. Decorate with plants, floor poufs, your yoga mat and you have the perfect zen paradise to escape to when 2021 gets too real.

To achieve this on a budget, secondhand online retailers are going to be your best friend — and as a bonus, you're minimizing your environmental footprint by buying used items and giving them new life!

I hope this list inspires you to revamp your spaces, without breaking the bank. Happy decorating!

Resting between classes – tips to unwind

Emily Marsten
Contributor



Having something to take care of like a small succulent can be a wonderful stress reliever! The plant holder can also be a cute art piece, just grab some acrylic paint and customize away. Photo by Emily Marsten

As the new semester begins, it can be easy to fall into the habit of a work-till-you-drop mentality. The need to do well in your classes, the stress of having new professors and trying to juggle your work schedule — on top of not being able to see your friends — can be overwhelming. Taking time for ourselves to be a little creative can be easily forgotten, but it's essential to figure out ways to relax during the day.

Here are two artistic ways to relax and unwind during a study break.

1. Redecorating your room

For nearly a year, we've been spending an abnormal amount of time at home, enough time to see every chip in the paint and grow tired of the ancient decorations lining the walls. There's a huge blank wall in my room that I've meant to decorate for weeks. You know what I mean — a place in your house that is just begging to be loved. Every time you pass by the empty space, your plan to do something with it

resurfaces. Well, now is that time! Decorating your room or an area of your house and making it something unique is a great way to spend some time unwinding between classes.

Take a critical look around your room — it can be easy to update a space and have it feeling fresh in no time! Shifting some furniture around from one side of the room to another, buying a new bedspread, hanging up your record collection on the wall or creating a cute DIY sign can go a long way into changing the atmosphere of your room. Take your mind off your classes and get creative! Some new pictures and a fresh coat of paint can make a world of difference to take away the monotony of being in the same place all the time.

2. Try out pastels

Exploring new art forms can be a great way to take your mind off the stress of school. Have you ever tried using pastels? Pastels are a great way to add some colour to your life! Growing up, do you remember taking a piece of chalk outside your house and

doodling on your driveway? If you do, then you have some of the basic principles of using pastels!

Pastels are similar to chalk in the sense that they have a very soft chalk-like texture. They can also get all over your hands and are relatively easy to blend. There are a few different types of pastels — oil, soft and ones that are almost like a coloured pencil, but not quite. My favourite kind of pastel is soft pastels. Albeit a little messy, using pastels is a unique way of taking your art skills to a whole new level or an opportunity to try something new.

A perfect way of getting started is by choosing a category you're interested in and then heading over to YouTube to watch a how-to video. Follow along step by step, and you might be amazed as your picture comes to life and your stress begins to fade away.

Among many other ways to artistically de-stress, such as knitting, painting, writing poetry or dancing, you'll be relaxed in no time with a new piece of art to prove it.



Nobody is Listening

ZAYN
RCA Records
Score: B+

Zayn Malik, formerly of One Direction, has released his introspective third album, *Nobody is Listening*. It's as if Zayn had written this album in his bedroom with the door locked as the daylight leaks in from the Sunday afternoon sunshine. The album feels like a glimpse or a whisper into his innermost thoughts but unfortunately, that's all we seem to get — a glimpse.

In "Unfuckwitable", Zayn sings, "I'm unfuckwitable, in a world of my own," and it shows. But it feels like Zayn's describing his world to us while fully aware that we're

watching from outside the proverbial window.

Zayn starts the album with "Calamity" and ends with "River Road", giving his listeners an interesting spectrum between the two. The striking contrast of the apparent rap roots of "Calamity" to the experimental falsetto vocals featured in "River Road". Overall, *Nobody is Listening* is an insider view into Zayn, exploring him both as an artist and as a person.

– Keoputhy Bunny

Spare Ribs

Sleaford Mods
Rough Trade
Records
Score: B-



Punk duo Sleaford Mod's new album *Spare Ribs* is a social commentary that's not only humorous but also grounded in reality. With Andrew Fearn on the beats and Jason Williamson on vocals, this duo sounds like something you would hear at a local pub on a night out with some close friends. This is not diminutive towards Sleaford Mods, however, as they just feel close to home and perhaps obscure in their popularity.

Their music oozes personality. Fearn uses layered synthesized beats as Williamson's voice springs into our ears like a wake-up call. Sleaford Mods come off as two gents trying to navigate a slippery slope of a world while seeing the curtains fall all around them. They inject a healthy dose of cynicism and

humour into their music while unabashedly commenting on the state of society as they see it.

While their topics and lyrics may seem mostly geared at an English audience, the album still has lyrics that ring true no matter where or who you are. In "Out There", Williamson sings, "There's always animals singing on every day. No cars to drown the noise of this. Just queues for the clinic and 6ft conversation". These simple lines serve to illustrate the apparent desolate feeling of limited social contact and for a band to capture this so accurately was a pleasant surprise for the start of 2021.

– Keoputhy Bunny

Community, Comebacks, and the Cougars

How Abbey Gillette Pushes through the pandemic

Gage Smith
Contributor



Abbey Gillette brings the ball up during the Mount Royal Cougars' game against the University of Regina Cougars. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

In November 2019, then-fourth year guard Abbey Gillette and the Mount Royal University (MRU) Cougars women's basketball team were faced with two games in two days against the University of Regina. Gillette says they have a "really strong basketball program," and they were set up for a challenge.

Even as MRU was cheered on by a record-breaking home crowd, Regina was able to take a 67-52 victory. The Cougars were determined to strike back the next day.

"We came out and we had so much chemistry. Everybody really stepped up their game," says Gillette. She dropped a game-high 20 points and led MRU to a 71-68 revenge win.

"I remember playing that game and how it felt to be a part of it," Gillette says. "It was just a really fun game to play."

Whether it's a loss during the regular season or a loss of *her* basketball season, Gillette has learned that the sense of community within the Cougars has been

critical when overcoming her challenges. On the court, their synergy drove them to a win, and off the court, Gillette says the relationships she's developed have been a "saving grace" through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Having people checking in on you and supporting you and holding you accountable during a time where there are so many uncertainties has been really helpful to keep my mental health in check and feel like I'm not alone," she says.

The Cougars Athletics community has also helped Gillette to maintain her physical health through the lockdowns. She says her conditioning coach, Jack Boyle, has been able to adapt the team's workouts to be done separately from each other, and without some equipment they would normally have needed.

Working out at home doesn't have the same appeal as playing your favourite sport in front of a sea of passionate fans, but Gillette has the same answer to that challenge as she did to losing to Regina: "Lean on your friends."

"It sounds weird, but work out with your friends over Zoom," she says. "It honestly makes things so much more enjoyable. It keeps your friends accountable, gives you a routine, and helps you have something to look forward to."

Mixing it up is another good way to stay active in the pandemic. Gillette has picked

up all sorts of new activities, including boxing, yoga, and high-intensity interval training to keep motivated. A healthy dose of variety and community has kept her in peak condition.

"There were definitely days where I didn't feel like working out, but I had my friends and family. I'd shoot them a text or give them a call, and they pushed me," she says.

The pandemic has been hard on everyone, presenting each of us with unique challenges to fight through. Gillette says the transition has been tough, but she still reflects fondly on her time as an MRU Cougar.

"As my time at Mount Royal winds down, I've mostly felt an overwhelming feeling of gratitude," she says. "I was super lucky to experience that."



Abbey Gillette at the free throw line for the Mount Royal Cougars at Kenyon Court, located in Calgary, Alta. Gillette will be graduating in 2021, unfortunately missing her senior season due to the COVID-19 cancellations. Photo courtesy of Abbey Gillette

#S

150, million dollars over six years. The total amount the Toronto Blue Jays signed star center-fielder George Springer to on Jan. 19.

80,358, total passing yards for New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees. The most all-time.

755, career home runs for Hank Aaron. Aaron passed away at the age of 86 on Jan. 22.

2-0-1, the Calgary Flames' record to start the 2019 NHL season as of Jan. 23.

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Two Cougars players invited to Volleyball Canada training centre

George Potter

Staff Writer



Quinn Pelland setting the ball to Dholi Thokbuom at the Mount Royal Cougars' Kenyon Court in Calgary, Alta. Pelland and Thokbuom played a key role in the Cougars' 2020 Canada West bronze medal. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020-21 U SPORTS and Canada West volleyball seasons have been cancelled. The cancellations have caused hardships for athletes, coaches and schools alike. However, for two Mount Royal University Cougars players, the season

is not completely lost. Quinn Pelland and Dholi Thokbuom were given the opportunity to train at Volleyball Canada's Women's Full-time Training Centre (FTC) in Richmond, B.C. in November and December 2020.

The FTC is set up to provide National Team players a place

to safely train and compete during the pandemic. Whether it's between professional contracts or during the university season, top athletes have been able to gather in Richmond and continue improving despite the current restrictions across the country.

In the 2019-20 season, Pelland and Thokbuom had remarkable seasons as key contributors to the Cougars' 21-2 record and Canada West bronze medal win. Thokbuom led the conference with a hitting percentage of 0.386. She also made the Canada West first all-star team along with being named a U SPORTS second-team All-Canadian. Pelland, meanwhile, set a Cougars' season record by putting up the most assists per match with 9.7.

Despite one of the greatest seasons in Cougars Athletics history, COVID-19 caused the season to take a disappointing and devastating turn when the National Championships, set to be held at the University of Calgary, were cancelled before the start of the tournament. With the Cougars qualifying as one of the eight teams to compete at nationals, the team felt this cancellation harder than most.

"I think [the goal] for the team definitely is to qualify for nationals again," says Thokbuom, hoping for another chance once the team

returns.

"It was a little bittersweet to finally qualify for the first time in our history, and then have it taken away so abruptly."

Being away from Calgary during their time at the FTC, both players had to face the challenge of completing online classes while training on the court with other top players in Canada. Luckily, both players said that their coaches and professors were very understanding about the situation.

"I was super fortunate that my profs were really accommodating, and were really willing to help me and appreciated the experience and the opportunity I was given," said Pelland.

As the two Cougars weren't the only university athletes training at the FTC, a handful of other athletes were balancing athletics and academics alongside them.

"[The professors] were really lenient with allowing missed classes and things like that, so that was really helpful



Dholi Thokbuom set to attack the Macewan Griffins in action at Kenyon Court in Calgary, Alta during the 2019-20 volleyball season. Thokbuom and teammate Quinn Pelland were invited to Volleyball Canada's training centre to end 2020. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

Continues on Pg .16

Continued from Pg.15

and I was appreciative of that," said Thokbuom.

"But, my coaches were also super understanding too because we had a bunch of players on the team who were still working and also in school, so it wasn't something that was too stressful to deal with."

Coming back to Mount Royal University after spending time around other top players and national team experience, Thokbuom and Pelland will be able to share some of the lessons they learned at the FTC with their Cougars' teammates.

"Being in this sport, you're going to be coached by a lot

of different people who go by different values, and they teach the game in different ways. I think it's really important to be malleable in that sense," said Thokbuom.

One thing that may help the pair step up as leaders when the Cougars get back on the court is their ability to build relationships with different players.

"Learning how to play with new players is really cool," said Pelland. "It was another good learning experience and something to bring back [to Mount Royal] because we have new players every year. So transferring that in and getting stronger at building those relationships was really beneficial."



Quinn Pelland setting the ball in a match with the University of Alberta Pandas. The Pandas and Mount Royal Cougars faced off in the 2020 Canada West semi-finals. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

Brooklyn Nets shakeup NBA landscape in blockbuster trade for James Harden

Zach Worden

Sports Editor



Kevin Durant (Left) and James Harden (Middle #13) high five during a Brooklyn Nets game in January. Harden and Durant are reuniting in Brooklyn after Harden was traded to the Nets. The duo previously played together on the Oklahoma City Thunder. Photo courtesy of USA Today

Trade rumours had been swirling in Houston even before the 2020-21 NBA season started. Rockets star guard James Harden made headlines by not reporting to training camp on time and requesting to be traded out of clutch city.

Harden, an eight-time all-star, three-time scoring champ, and the 2017-18 NBA MVP, had revolutionized the way basketball is played throughout his eight seasons with the Rockets.

Houston seemed committed to either holding onto their star or getting a massive return for Harden to start the season. But, everything

changed on Jan. 12, when the Rockets lost to the Los Angeles Lakers. Harden seemed like he refused to play hard in the game, scoring only 16 points in the team's loss.

In his post-game press conference, Harden said, "I love this city, I've literally done everything I can. This situation is crazy. I don't think it can be fixed."

Two days later, Harden was shipped to the Brooklyn Nets as part of a four-team trade. The other two teams involved were the Cleveland Cavaliers who picked up Brooklyn's Jarrett Allen and Taurean Prince as a part of the deal, and the Indiana Pacers who

sent their own former all-star Victor Oladipo to the Rockets in exchange for Caris LeVert.

In return for Harden, the Rockets received the aforementioned Oladipo, Rodions Kurucs and Dante Exum, as well as four first-round picks and four first-round pick swaps.

In their second year with superstar duo Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving, the Nets decided to make a huge splash and acquire Harden. With arguably the largest collection of offensive talent assembled on one team in the history of the NBA, the Nets signed to the rest of the league that they intend on winning now.

Despite the acquisition of Harden, results have been mixed for the Nets since making the trade. The team is 2-2 with Harden in the lineup, including a win over co-Eastern Conference favourite, the Milwaukee Bucks, while losing back-to-back games to the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Throughout his first four games as a Net, Harden has averaged 26.5 points, 12.3 assists, and 8.3 rebounds, showing dramatic improvement over his numbers from the start of the season in Houston.

After giving up an average of just under 130 points per game, the Nets should ask

themselves how they will address the defensive end of the floor. Harden, Durant, and Irving profile as mediocre to great defensive players, depending on their effort level. After trading away key depth pieces like Allen and LeVert, the Nets will be forced to give more opportunities to unproven players like Reggie Perry and Bruce Brown to fill out their rotation.

There is no question that the Nets have firmly put themselves in the title conversation. But, if they want to see their star trio hoist the Larry O'Brien trophy at the end of the year, they still have some work to do.