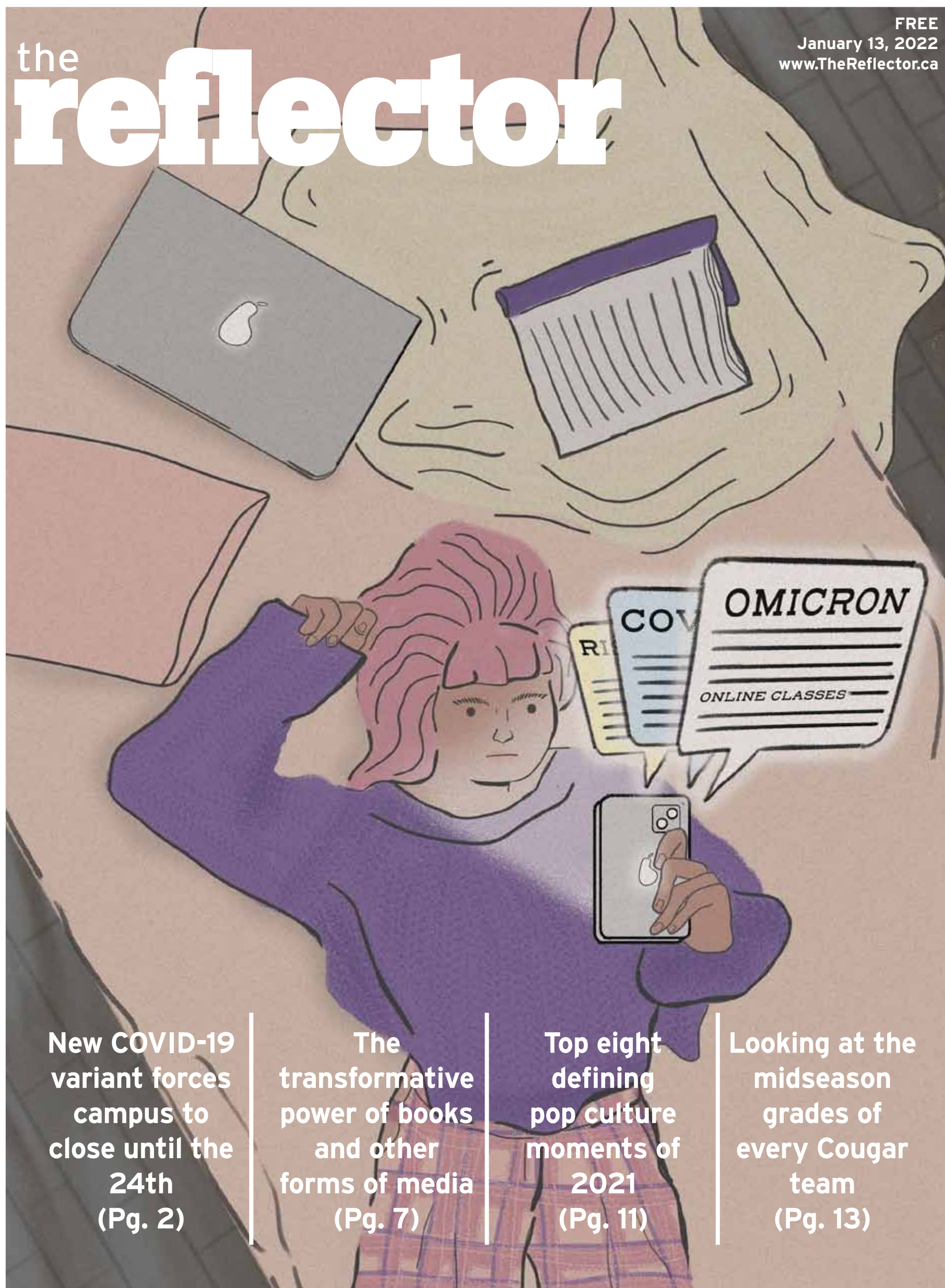


# the reflector

FREE  
January 13, 2022  
[www.TheReflector.ca](http://www.TheReflector.ca)



**New COVID-19  
variant forces  
campus to  
close until the  
24th  
(Pg. 2)**

**The  
transformative  
power of books  
and other  
forms of media  
(Pg. 7)**

**Top eight  
defining  
pop culture  
moments of  
2021  
(Pg. 11)**

**Looking at the  
midseason  
grades of  
every Cougar  
team  
(Pg. 13)**

## New COVID-19 wave crashes into Calgary; campus moves online until Jan. 24

**Keopthy Bunny**

News Editor

Healthcare systems are overwhelmed, new COVID-19 measures are in place and schools are closing. The fifth wave is here.

At the time of writing, the World Health Organization (WHO) cites a 71 per cent increase in new cases globally and a 100 per cent increase in new cases in the Americas.

“Omicron is hospitalizing people and it is killing people,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. He stated that while the COVID-19 variant may appear less severe compared to the Delta variant, “it does not mean it should be categorized as mild.”

Ghebreyesus isn’t the only one who is worried about the effects of the latest variant. Calgary’s department head of emergency medicine, Dr. Eddy Lang is also concerned about the upcoming strain on the healthcare system.

“The Omicron variant is rampant at this point in time,” Lang told *CBC*.

Lang also stressed that people coming into the emergency centres to test for COVID-19 are taking precious time and resources from people who really need it.

Cases are surging in Canada but the lack of rapid antigen

test kits and long waits for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests means people are heading to urgent care centres to get tested.

In fact, the Alberta government website states that PCR testing is only available for people at high risk of severe outcomes or work in high-risk settings and only if they get a positive result on a rapid antigen test.

But at the time of writing, a quick check for the rapid antigen tests on their interactive map comes up with no results; there are none available. Even if they were available, there’s no current system to even log positive results.

As for Mount Royal University (MRU), the administration seems to be following the “wait and see” principle of other post-secondary institutions like the University of Calgary, University of Alberta and University of Lethbridge.

On the afternoon of Dec. 22, an email was sent out by President and Vice-Chancellor Tim Rahilly letting MRU students know that the start of the winter semester was to be held online for a majority of the classes. The classes will be online until Jan. 22 at the



The fifth wave has hit Calgary, Dr. Eddy Lang, department head of emergency medicine in the Calgary zone says to stay home if you have any symptoms. Photo by Keopthy Bunny

earliest.

Students should expect an update from the university on Jan. 22 as more information becomes available.

“Starting the semester online will allow us the time we need to assess the new variant’s impact, particularly after the holiday season. By reducing the number of people on our campus, we can allow the learning activities that must be in person to continue,” the email read.

An email sent out later on Jan. 3 stated that despite the fact that in-person classes would resume on Jan. 24, services such as the Riddell

Library & Learning Centre and the MRU Recreation are open starting Jan. 4.

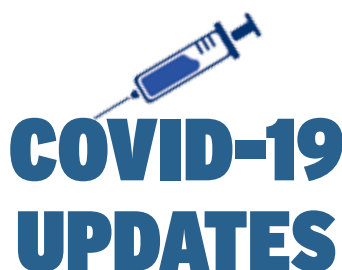
Aside from the restrictions announced in late December, there have been no new restrictions from the government of Alberta.

However, other provinces have released new restrictions to combat the fifth wave. Quebec’s indoor dining, concert halls and gyms are closed and a curfew is enforced from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. In Ontario, restaurants, concerts and gyms are closed.

Federal Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos mentioned that the only way out of

the pandemic is through vaccination. “That’s why I’m signalling this is a conversation which I believe provinces and territories, in support with the federal government, will want to have over the next weeks and months,” he said to reporters during a federal COVID-19 briefing.

Premier Jason Kenney responded to the comment promptly, stating: “Alberta’s Legislature removed the power of mandatory vaccination from the Public Health Act last year and will not revisit that decision, period.”



### COVID Self-care site

Have COVID-19 or know someone who has COVID-19? Alberta has published a self-care guide website for anyone who is positive.

### High Positivity Rate for AB

At the time of writing, Alberta’s positivity rate is 38 per cent, higher than the previous COVID-19 waves where most didn’t hit 20 per cent.

### More hospitalizations

Alberta Health Services’ Early Warning System projects this wave will send more people to hospitals than previous waves.

### CBE says online learning not ruled out

The Calgary Board of Education stated that staffing may become challenging because of the Omicron variant and schools may revert back to at-home learning.

# Tensions rise in Kazakhstan amid protests and power struggles

**Matthew Hillier**

Staff Writer

After months of steadily increasing tension in Kazakhstan, last week has seen a rapid explosion of both political and social unrest as the Central Asian nation unravels into massive protests.

Kazakhstan shares a border with Russia and China and is a valuable addition to the region due to the large oil and gas resources in the country. Georank, a website that compares the economic indicators of countries, ranks Kazakhstan at number 55 for gross domestic product (GDP) production in the world which can be credited to its vast energy industry. Despite being wedged between two global superpowers, these vast resources have kept Kazakhstan politically and economically relevant.

Kazakhstan's recent rise in political unrest is also credited to the reliance on the energy industry running the country's economy. According to *BBC News*, protests began when the government removed the price cap on petroleum gas, effectively doubling the price overnight. This was unacceptable to many as the country's annual income per citizen of \$3 269.48 USD has made petroleum an expense many couldn't afford even before the price increase.

This drove many citizens to organize mass protests in Kazakhstan's capital city, Almaty. *BBC News* reports that protests were motivated both by the aforementioned rise in petroleum prices and the already-lingering resentment towards Kazakhstan's government. In particular, its former president Nursultan Nazarbayev who, despite resigning in 2019, continued to hold a position as the leader of the country's security council.

Journalists from *BBC News* noted that the demonstrations began on Jan. 2 and were quickly met with a swift government crackdown.

Security forces were ordered to fire on demonstrators without warning after the crowds attempted to gain control of local police stations following a surge in support in the capital city.

Following this, more protests across the country sprung up due to the crackdown in Almaty.

After days of crackdowns on demonstrators by Nazarbayev and the security forces under his orders, the protests and riots across Kazakhstan reached a fever pitch. Demonstrators occupied and burned down several government buildings in Almaty.

Following the destruction of these government buildings, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced that 2, 500 soldiers, sourced from six allied countries and led by Russian soldiers, would be aiding local forces in helping put an end to the violent demonstrations.

After these soldiers arrived, a sharp increase in attacks on security forces present in the cities was noticed. Both the security forces and the new soldiers responded with deadly force and mass arrests, further fueling the demonstrators' anger. At the time of writing, 160 people have been killed with thousands more injured and a total of 5,000 people arrested according to sources from *The Associated Press* and *CBC News*.

These numbers are hard to verify however, as internet and communications blackouts across the country are still in effect. The government of Kazakhstan remains tight-lipped about the severity of the violence happening during the demonstrations and is likely suppressing the true scope of these massive demonstrations and the actions of the security forces responsible for stopping them.

On Jan. 8, Karim Massimov,



**Stirring civil unrest in Kazakhstan have now erupted into full blown riots. Photo courtesy of Pexels**

a prominent member of the country's intelligence agency and staunch supporter of Nazarbayev, was arrested for treason by President Tokayev. Nazarbayev was then ousted from his position following Massimov's arrest, with the role of security chief being taken by Tokayev and Massimov's position being taken by the head of Tokayev's own personal security detail.

Nazarbayev was a favourite target of demonstrators who shouted "Old man, go away!" while tearing down recently erected statues of the former president. This transition of political power is tied to a long struggle between former President Nazarbayev's family and pro-Russian politicians looking to reestablish Russia's waning influence in the Kazakhstan government. The Nazarbayev family has had control over a majority of the energy industry in Kazakhstan. This wealth and influence

have put several members of the family in high-ranking government positions even before Kazakhstan's independence from the Soviet Union.

The Nazarbayev family has used their resources and influence to expand trade to China and several western nations, putting them at odds with several pro-Russian politicians looking to secure Kazakhstan's energy industry in Russia and its allies. This can be seen in Massimov's arrest as he was an expert in the Nazarbayev family's trade with China and his charges of "treason" have yet to be clarified by President Tokayev.

Naturally, this crisis has turned the heads of the global community. As a country with massive contributions to the oil and gas industry that shares a border with the superpowers of China and Russia, Kazakhstan is the last place many wish to see a level of unrest not seen since the

country's independence from the Soviet Union.

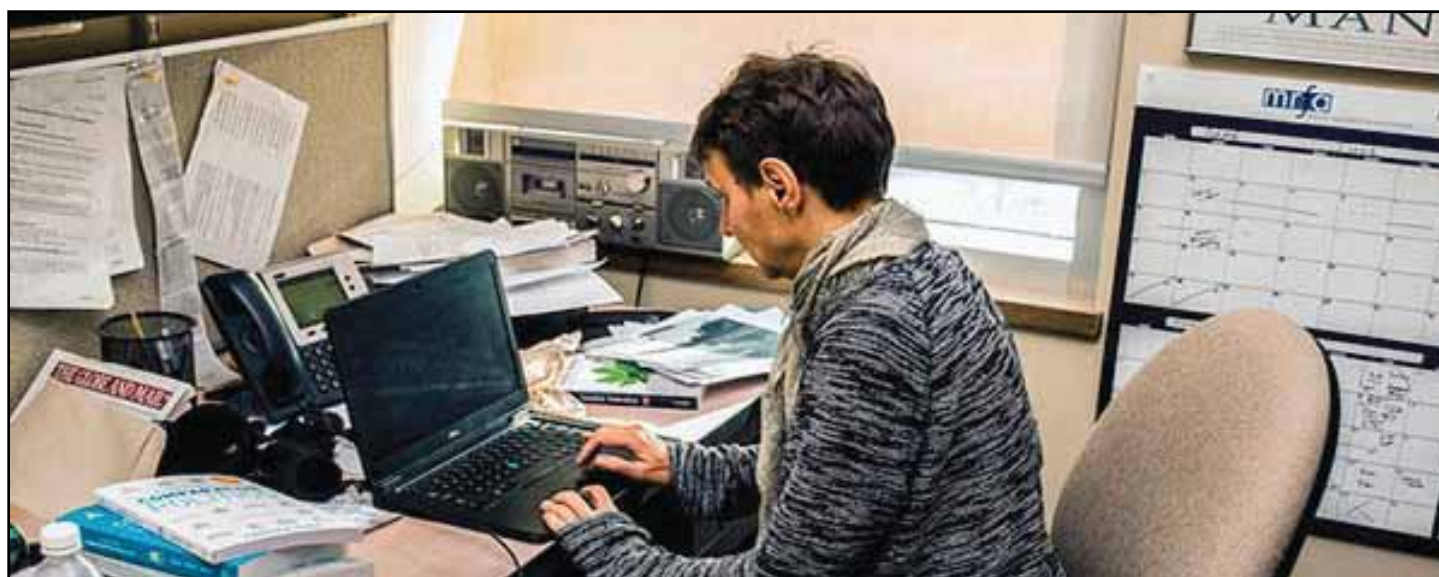
Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly called for restraint and de-escalation earlier this week in a statement while Russian-led troops began to enter the country. "We urge that the situation in Kazakhstan be resolved quickly and through peaceful dialogue," she said.

Joly also stated the importance of human rights amid the intense crackdown on demonstrators by Kazakhstan's security forces. She said, "We emphasize the importance of upholding democratic values, respecting human rights, and refraining from violence and destruction."

Canada also has a large stake in the outcome of this political crisis, as Canada's biggest trade partner in Central Asia is Kazakhstan. Canada had four hundred million dollars worth of products from Kazakhstan imported last year.

# MRU lets go of politically divisive professor

**Keoputhy Bunny**  
News Editor



**Former professor Frances Widdowson has worked for Mount Royal University since 2008 before she was let go.**  
Photo courtesy of Stephanie Hagenaars, Calgary Journal

Frances Widdowson has been let go from her tenured position as an associate professor at Mount Royal University (MRU). Widdowson made waves in 2020 by criticizing the growing Black Lives Matter movement as well as asserting that there were also educational benefits to residential schools.

MRU has yet to issue a statement to the public about firing Widdowson but according to a tweet from Duane Bratt, a political science professor at MRU, an internal email was sent out to confirm Widdowson's dismissal.

"There was an internal announcement from the Dean. There is lots that I can say, but I will leave that to MRU," Bratt said on Twitter.

A statement from MRU confirms that she is no longer part of the faculty. The statement stressed that while the university supports academic debate and is committed to fostering expression and free speech, "academic freedom does not justify harassment or discrimination."

Widdowson has been a professor at MRU since 2008.

Before being fired, she was tenured. Tenure usually guarantees a professor's job at an institution except for extraordinary circumstances.

Widdowson told the *Calgary Herald* that her case would be going into arbitration. Going to arbitration means handling a dispute privately instead of in a courtroom. The entire process may take up to a year, she added.

In 2019, she wrote a response to MRU's agenda of academic Indigenization, questioning the logic as to why the process was implemented.

"These reasons are political in nature, and are a distraction from examining the academic implications of the initiative," Widdowson wrote in her response.

The response cited three reasons as to why the Indigenization process would have negative consequences. Problems for academic standards, open inquiry and academic freedom.

The policy studies professor's perspectives divided the views of some. On one side, she had some faculty and the student body outraged. On the other, she was being hailed as a free

speech advocate.

She was the subject of a lot of controversy, being called out in interviews by several members of the MRU teaching community.

There was also a petition started by students back in 2020 to get her fired from her position. Kenna Fraser, who started the petition, also called out President and Vice-chancellor Tim Rahilly in one of her petition updates, saying, "President Rahilly, if you truly believe in an inclusive and safe institution then we are excited to hear what you have planned in order to create change at Mount Royal University."

She also encouraged Rahilly to look at the comments under the petition to understand the full scope of Widdowson's effects on students.

One of the comments stated: "I feel disgusted to say I'm an MRU student. [Widdowson] is not promoting her freedom of speech, she is promoting hate speech."

Widdowson has implied that she worries that 'woke culture' will stifle independent academic inquiry, homogenizing the

way the university thinks. She believes that educational institutions like MRU should have the academic freedom to challenge different ways of thinking, she told the *C2C Journal*.

She also added that MRU and the academic world has changed dramatically since the start of her career. She started teaching at MRU in 2008.

"After I returned to campus following a sabbatical in 2014, I noticed the institution just wasn't the same."

After 2019, she said it was no longer possible for her to sit down and have a constructive conversation about sensitive topics.

"I don't even recognize the campus anymore. It's been taken over by wokeism," she said in the same interview.

She explains wokeism as "an irrational, anti-science philosophy obsessed with what it believes to be social justice."

So far, the university and Widdowson have been keeping quiet about the specific details of her being fired because of the arbitration process but details are expected to drop sooner or later.

## THE REFLECTOR

Issue 8, Volume 60

### EDITORIAL STAFF:

**Publishing Editor:** Riggs Zyrille Vergara

**Managing Editor:** Ivar Bergs

**News Editor:** Keoputhy Bunny

**Features Editor:** Emily Marsten

**Arts Editor:** Astrid Cunanan

**Sports Editor:** Gage Smith

**Layout Editor:** Christian

Kindrachuk

**Web Editor:** Mikaela Delos Santos

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Zach Poole, Emme Larkins, Spencer Yu

**STAFF WRITERS:** Josh Werle, George Potter, Matthew Hillier, Jed Mabazza, Taylor Charlebois, Abbie Riglin

**COVER:** Graphic by Riggs Zyrille Vergara

The Reflector, with an on- and off-campus circulation of 5,000, is the independent voice of the students of Mount Royal University. It is published fortnightly during the academic year (Sept. to April).

The Reflector is editorially autonomous and financially independent from all other governing bodies at Mount Royal University.

The Reflector welcomes newsworthy submissions from all students and community members. While the right of editorial comment is reserved for editors of The Reflector, opinion pieces may be submitted as letters to the editor, and may be published on the editorial page as such. The Reflector reserves the right not to publish submissions deemed by the Publishing Editor to be offensive.

Complaints arising from the content of the paper should be directed to the Ombudsboard. This board has been established as a mediator between the Reflector Publications Society staff and its readership.

All decisions of the Ombudsboard are final and binding on both parties. Letters to the Ombudsboard must be sent in confidence, care of the Reflector Publications Society, to the Reflector Publications Society office.

Submissions and letters to the editor should be a maximum of 500 words, typed, double-spaced, and contain the writer's name and phone number. No unsigned letters will be published. Only in exceptional cases, at the discretion of the Publishing Editor, will writers' names be withheld. The Reflector reserves the right to edit submissions for brevity.

Contents are copyright © 2022. No material may be reproduced without express written consent.

All opinions contained within this paper are those of the individual authors, and not necessarily those of the Reflector Publications Society. For more information, contact The Reflector office at:

### the reflector

Wyckham House  
Mount Royal University  
4825 Mount Royal Gate SW  
Calgary, AB T3E 6K6

All depts.: 403.440.6268

Fax: 403.440.6762

TheReflector@TheReflector.ca

## Coping with the “winter blues” in Alberta

**Zach Poole**

Contributor

Every year as the seasons change and the weather gets colder, it seems that our emotions change with them. Some of us get lazy and some get sad. But it is undeniable that this change is present. To many, it's known as the “winter blues.”

Growing up across the country in Newfoundland, I never really experienced extreme weather fluctuations in the way I have since moving to Alberta. Thanks to the marine climate in Newfoundland, the winters never really dipped below -15C or so, and certainly the single day 30C weather fluctuations never happen, which are commonplace here in Calgary. These fluctuations seem to be primarily caused by the weather phenomenon known as “chinooks,” where dry, warm wind blows in off the Rocky Mountains and mixes with the frigid prairie winter.

Growing up on the east coast, the “winter blues” were undoubtedly present,

albeit for different reasons. You would still see moods diminish as the days became shorter, but thanks to the less dramatic winters, 15 under was still temperate enough to allow people a chance to get outside when they needed it. However, the issue arises with the overcast, dreary days that are well known on the island. Yes, people can still get outside, but the overall lack of sunshine still takes a toll.

Here in Alberta, that isn't the case. The days seem sunnier, but a nearly unbearable 35 below isn't uncommon for days or even weeks at a time. This pushes people to stay inside at all costs and makes any time spent outdoors particularly unenjoyable, if not unsafe. From that description alone, it isn't hard to see why the winter can get some people down in the dumps. Throw in a few days of chinook-fueled hope that the weather is turning around then straight back to a deep freeze and



**Calgary's weather is always changing, from frostbite warnings to shorts weather, the temperature is always shifting. Photo courtesy of Unsplash**

suddenly, the “winter blues” becomes more severe. It is interesting to see that the “winter blues” exists all across the country for a wide array of reasons.

As an Alberta transplant, I had to learn to cope with these drawbacks. Typically during these nasty cold snaps, I try to stay inside as

much as I am able to and bury myself in a new book, video game, or TV series while I wait out the weather.

Another method I've learned is to set plans for something to look forward to when it's warmer. I find that if I can count down the days to something fun, it becomes a little more bearable to be stuck indoors.

Other people seek out different solutions to boost their moods and battle the blues, such as supplements, increased workout routines and specially designed lamps that mimic sunlight. Naturally, these aren't catch-all solutions, and they certainly won't work for everyone, but they do seem to make the cold snaps a little more manageable.

The proper terminology behind the “winter blues” is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), more commonly known simply as seasonal depression. SAD is a condition that typically causes people to feel down as the weather grows colder and the days shorter. SAD

can be brought on by lower serotonin and melatonin levels in the body, often caused by the changing weather and less sunlight, something heightened greatly by being stuck indoors. Interestingly in some cases, SAD can be instead brought on by weather changing in the opposite direction where the warmer weather creates issues. Certainly, being stuck inside for long periods of time and having gatherings cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic can also heighten the impacts of this disorder.

Regardless of what sparks a bout of the “winter blues”, it is crucial to remember the importance of sunlight and vitamin D during these winter months; it is called the “sunshine vitamin” for an excellent reason.

It is also essential to recognize that in some cases, simply getting outside may not be enough. In those situations, it is a good idea to seek out help and guidance from friends, family and professionals.



**With a warm chinook Wind sweeping the prairies, it can make for a speedy temperature change. Photo courtesy of Unsplash**

# New Year, New Habits

*Four easy goal categories that can make 2022 your best year yet*

**Abbie Riglin**

Staff Writer

It's that time of year again! Everything feels new, the holiday stress is over, and you might get a chance to rest up before regular life starts up again.

But there happens to be one task left to deal with — New Year's resolutions.

With each new year that comes and goes, so does the saying "new year, new me." But what if a new year doesn't mean a new you, just new habits?

This is where those resolutions come in. Instead of trying to completely change yourself, these goals should be targeted at specific areas of your life where you want to see change.

For me, it has come down to making resolutions in four categories each year. These aren't meant to be extreme long-term goals, but rather small ones that are attainable and can create an improved environment for me to create better habits.

## A goal for yourself

This one should be fun! You've worked hard over the past year so now it's time to do something for yourself. This goal doesn't necessarily have a timeline so it can be ongoing and something you do for casual pleasure. Maybe you've always wanted to learn guitar, start playing video games, or take a pottery class.

This could even mean picking up an old hobby you had to put aside awhile back to make time for new responsibilities. Whatever it is, it should be catered to you and bring you a sense of joy, not a rush of fear that you must meet an end result.

## A goal for your lifestyle

A lifestyle change is probably what most people

think of when they are asked about their New Year's resolutions. The most common one is the goal of making it to the gym in order to get back into shape. But I'm here to remind you that your level of fitness isn't the only lifestyle change you can make. Sometimes with the stress of everyday life, we forget that the biggest part of making lifestyle changes comes from a healthy sleep schedule and regular meals too.

But a lifestyle goal can also just mean spending more time outdoors and less time in front of screens. Remember that these goals should be attainable, it doesn't take much to make a big change!

## A goal for your social life

This goal might just be the most important for people as we head into 2022. With COVID-19 and the fear of another lockdown hanging over us, it can be easy to head back into the shells we found ourselves in during the beginning of the pandemic. I'll admit the few months of 'normalcy' I got to experience at the start of the school year have made me realize that people need socialization more than ever.

Making goals for our social lives shouldn't be hard. As humans, we're social beings but it's easy to forget how often we need it. Because of this, I recommend making this goal with a friend or two, so you have a way to hold yourself accountable. You and your cohort can then figure out your comfort levels. Are you going out or staying in with a zoom hangout? Either way, you should be setting a goal to socialize at least once a week.

## A goal for your professional life

Professional goals can be the most daunting to make, as they often feel like direct indicators of our success. However, if we're learning new habits, we might as well learn a new mindset! Success isn't necessarily measured by how much you make or how good your grades are, but whether you're happy with what you're doing.

If your goal this year is to get better grades, start small and develop a study schedule that's easy to stick to. Or better yet, look into campus resources that can help maximize your learning experience.

Whatever your goals might be this year, it's important to remember that these past two years have been extremely hard. You're allowed to have some cushion room to make mistakes. Allow yourself to set reasonable goals, get specific with what you want and make sure there's room for rewards too—you deserve it, you made it to 2022!



The start of the new year is a perfect time to make plans on things that you want to accomplish during the year. Photo courtesy of Unsplash



The new year is a perfect time to think about the previous year and look forward to the future. Photo courtesy of Unsplash

# How stories shape us

*The profound connections we make through books and other media*

**Taylor Charlebois**

Staff Writer

A world without books is inconceivable. That's something I've felt my entire life. More than twenty years later, my feelings have yet to change. But I, and my life, have changed greatly.

There are never enough hours in the day to get everything done, being a student, working, interpersonal relationships, the list goes on and on. Even then, there is always one part of my daily routine that I shudder to neglect: going to a bookstore, in-person or virtually.

Preferably, I go to an in-person bookstore — since the pandemic began it has become more difficult to do so. But when I do, I select a couple of books, pick them up, read the backs, smell them (the smell of fresh books has always been a thing for me) and buy the ones that call out to me. Picking out books has always been a part of my life; it's a part of who I am.

As a child I was a bit of a troublemaker and was sent to my room on more than one occasion. Reading slowly became a part of my routine, as I wasted my youth away in the confines of my prison cell. Books kept the feelings of loneliness, sadness and honestly, any sort of reflection on my actions from destroying my fragile eight-year-old mind.

Fast forward a decade later, my mother's early death contributed to a lack of maternal role models in my life. But besides drinking my feelings away, as any eighteen-year-old would — I'd find strong women and teachers inside books to guide me along.

This goes beyond more than just books though. Movies, television, video games, music — all forms of experiences I had with media were valuable to me. These

experiences would provide me with opportunities to see the world through a different lens. Of course, traveling to another country or planet would be superior. Scuba-diving in real life would most definitely provide a higher-quality experience than reading/listening to someone describe it. However, as I've aged, I've learned that someone can only do so much and therefore, there is value in sharing experiences through media.

Stories allow the opportunity to go to places you could never otherwise go. You can become a different person, a different ethnicity, or even a different gender. Even when you're reading a story alone, you're experiencing something unfold before you just as the author had intended it. Even though you've read this in solitude, countless others have also read the same pages as you and that is something that connects you to them.

Media connects us. We are alone in this world, but connected through the stories we experience.

The world is filled to the brim with books, films, music — so much that it would take many lifetimes to experience it all; which sucks, because I have placed an incredible amount of value on the media I consume within my free time.

Those stories that stick with you, that television show that hooked you, or that book that inspired you to change — they can sometimes feel like fate. We have no clue which stories will click for us, or what sort of feelings they will inspire. With that being said, and as something I've felt for a long time, I no longer wait for these things to happen. I desire to seek out these experiences,



**Everytime new hands open an old book, no matter how old the book may be, it brings a brand new world to the reader. Photo courtesy of Unsplash**

and cherish these encounters. As a side note, I often feel the same way about people and relationships.

I've come across all sorts of books; fiction, non-fiction, short stories, memoirs, informational, health and wellness — I've read them all. Through the process of recognizing what works for me, I have become better at

finding what sort of stories appeal to me the most.

It's important to know that more often than not, a story doesn't always connect with me. That is true for books, movies, you name it. To be completely transparent, nine out of ten things I consume is usually a miss. However, among that other ten per cent are incredible works. As a

writer, I always think to myself that whenever I produce something, I want it to be included in that ten per cent.

With all that being said, that is why I like going to bookstores. I keep going and looking because I might create a new encounter that might whisk me away to another place and for just a brief moment, I can be free.

# YOUR STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Want to represent your fellow students and advocate on their behalf?



## Apply for the REPRESENTATION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (REC)

### Interested in being part of REC?

Apply now for one of these full-time roles:

- President
- Vice-President Academic
- Vice-President External
- Vice-President Student Affairs

Deadline to apply is **February 22nd at 4:30 pm.**

For more information, and to apply, visit [samru.ca/elections](https://samru.ca/elections).



SAMRU gives out over \$40,000 in scholarships each year!



## APPLY FOR THE SAMRU AWARDS BY FEBRUARY 28

To download the awards booklet and application form, visit [samru.ca/awards](https://samru.ca/awards).



## Let's Get Social

There's always something happening at West Gate Social!



### Trivia Tuesdays

Every other Tuesday, win prizes by battling your fellow students in quick and easy themed trivia games!

Featuring local and student artists between 5-6 pm every Thursday!  
Interested in performing?  
Contact Brent at [brossall@samru.ca](mailto:brossall@samru.ca)

### Live Music Thursdays



### Freebie Fridays

At the end of a busy school week, sometimes you need a treat! Drop by for a treat every other Friday!

View the full schedule at [samru.ca/westgatesocial](https://samru.ca/westgatesocial)!

[/westgatesocial](https://www.facebook.com/westgatesocial) [@wgsocial](https://www.instagram.com/wgsocial)



@samrubuzz

[samru.ca](https://samru.ca)

# How Netflix can learn from the mistakes of Shyamalan's *The Last Airbender*

**Spencer Yu**  
Contributor

*Avatar: The Last Airbender* is considered one of the highest rated animated series in the six to 11-year-old target demographic and is widely regarded as one of the best animated series of all time, according to *Animation Insider*. It was not only praised for its storytelling and breathtaking action, but also for addressing more adult topics such as genocide, totalitarianism and marginalization. At the time of writing, the series has received near-perfect ratings on the review aggregate site Rotten Tomatoes. Many critics cite it as an instant classic.

While the animated show is very highly regarded, the live action adaptation is not. In 2010, director M. Night Shyamalan sought to adapt the animated series into a more traditional movie format. Needless to say, it was not well received. It only earned five per cent on Rotten Tomatoes. With Netflix starting production on yet another live-action adaptation of *The Last Airbender* in 2022, I thought it would be worth looking at how the new series could succeed where the film failed.

## Characters

The biggest problem with the 2010 adaptation was how the characters were

portrayed. A lot of the humor from the original series is absent, which I believe was because the director wanted to create a darker, more serious tone for the live action counterpart. That tone shift could potentially work because the original series touched on darker subject matter, but I don't think it's worth going for it at the expense of everything else from a character perspective.

This shift in character tone would have been worth it if they were willing to further explore the darker elements and really dive into the nuances of the war happening in the world of *The Last Airbender*. But what ended up happening was the characters changing for no real apparent reason. If Netflix is able to balance having the original spirit of the characters while further exploring the darker elements presented in the original show, that would go a long way towards creating a more complex rendition of the series.

## Pacing

Something that I've always found very appealing about the animated series was how it was structured and how well-paced it was. Throughout the entire run of the show, the heroes had the overarching goal of defeating



Netflix is beginning production of the beloved animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* in 2022. Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon

The Fire Lord. They were also able to show all the smaller issues our group of heroes had to solve along the way, such as the Avatar mastering all four elements and gathering more people for his cause. Each one of those incremental steps towards their end goal felt meaningful and rarely did the show ever feel like it was bogged down.

However, in the 2010 live action adaptation, Shyamalan attempted to squeeze the entire first season down

into just 90 minutes. For comparison, that's about four-and-a-half episodes of the animated series. If you were to compare the runtime of the movie to the animated series, by the time the movie is ending, our cast of characters would have just begun to set out on their great adventure.

In a series where many of the episodes not only contain important character moments but also things that set up future events, pacing

is incredibly important. I think if Netflix doesn't want to do a complete one-to-one recreation of the series, I think it would be important to at least recreate the more impactful events so that things still feel significant.

Netflix's adaptation is set to release towards the end of 2022 or in early 2023. With incredible source material for them to reference, expectations are high for the next iteration of *The Last Airbender*.

## OUT'N ABOUT

### Candlelight Concerts

Light up your world with an orchestra candlelight concert in Calgary's downtown inspired by artists such as Bach, The Beatles and even Taylor Swift. Hurry, they're only here until March ends!

### Ice Bikes

Not the best ice skater? No worries! The new rentable ice bicycles are an alternative way to have fun on the Bowness Park ice rink.

### Cross-country Skiing

The new Nordic Loop located in East Village is now open. This one-kilometre trail loops around the historic Fort Calgary and even has its own waxing station!

### Nightrise at Banff

Enjoy the view of Banff from their famous gondola ride at Sulphur Mountain. This year, the summit is also showcasing multiple immersive multimedia projects.

# Canadian Icon: The story behind the career of Anne Murray

**Emme Larkins**

Contributor

As 2021 came to a close, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) dropped a poignant story of a Canadian music icon. A woman who broke ground for those perhaps better remembered – Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, Shania Twain, k.d. lang and the hundreds of Canadians who found fame in recent decades.

As many have missed this remarkable story in their consumption of music history, I'm beyond grateful for CBC's tale of the original Canadian 'snowbird' – Anne Murray.

A musician celebrated with the likes of Johnny Cash and Glen Campbell, Murray paved the way for not only female but all Canadian musicians as she made history in the 1960s and '70s.

In the CBC's recent special *Anne Murray: Full Circle*, we're given an insider's look at the life and career of Canada's legendary songstress. And we hear from many of Murray's celebrity fans – legends like k.d. lang, Gordon Lightfoot and Shania Twain to name a few.

Murray, a Maritime native, was originally catapulted to

stardom with her hit song "Snowbird." What many fail to realize about the star's decorated career, especially in the modern context, is just how many hardships she faced along the way. *Anne Murray: Full Circle* weaves through her illustrious career, including the good, the bad and the ugly.

The special opens with host, Tom Power, asking Murray what life has been like post-retirement. Murray sighs and her signature voice runs through us as she shares that it's been separate and quite different from her past one. Her life since retirement has been about "getting to know my kids and my grandchildren" while playing a lot of golf, she quips.

Murray says in this "afterlife" she often forgets that she is the "Anne Murray."

"That's lovely though, I mean in some ways, that is what you're looking for," Power responds, saying there is something quite beautiful about the sentiment. Later in the program, we understand the focus on family foreshadows Murray's challenges balancing family



**Anne Murray: Full Circle is free to watch on CBC Gem Photo courtesy of CBC**

and career.

Once "Snowbird" was released, it quickly ascended the charts. k.d. lang shares that this song made Murray the epitome of Canadian culture and set a new high standard for Canadian music.

As Murray rose to royalty in Canada, her stardom across the border was also rising. She quickly became the first Canadian solo female artist to get a gold record in the United States.

Chaos ensued as the young

female artist struggled to find solid footing in a world run by men who chose not to listen to her wants, despite the fact she was paying the bills.

Then her career stalled. Murray and her team released record after record, all of which failed to chart in the United States. She admits there was a period where she resigned herself to the fact that she would forever be a one-hit wonder.

American musician and "Footloose" singer Kenny Loggins shares in *Anne Murray: Full Circle* that he believes this lull happened because what Murray brought to the table was before its time. Loggins, a critically acclaimed artist himself, would, at age 18, become the writer of Murray's next hit, "Danny's Song." This put her back on Billboard Hot 100.

"I think 'Snowbird' was really ahead of the curve, so it took those couple of years for the curve to catch up," says Loggins.

Shortly after, other hits like "A Love Song" and "You Needed Me" did more than put her on the charts. In 1978, two years after the birth of her son, she won her first Grammy award.

Murray's career was exploding. Her team and label wanted nothing more than to keep the momentum rolling. But she wanted nothing more than to spend time in the Maritimes with her family.

Like so many female artists today that struggle to stay current but also raise a family, Murray headed to Las Vegas to start a residency. Members of her band say this residency taught Murray she was not merely a singer, but an entertainer.

Through this captivating TV special, we learn of Murray's loves, her struggles and her deep enduring friendships. The star-studded list of interviewees in this special marvel at Murray's resilience through the hardships.

"She was always as strong as she was beautiful," says Pat Riccio, one of Murray's producers.

The story of Murray's career is one to learn from and is brilliantly illustrated through this documentary. Hopefully it will invite new listeners and fans from a younger generation. *Anne Murray: Full Circle* is a must-watch as much as the star's discography is a must-listen.



**Anne Murray playing on CBC-TV's music program: Singalong Jubilee in 1968. Photo courtesy of CBC**

# Eight over-the-top pop culture moments of 2021

**Emme Larkins**

Contributor



After not attending the 2021 MET gala due to the vaccine mandate, Nicki Minaj shared a series of tweets linking what the COVID-19 vaccine did to her cousin in Trinidad. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

It has been a long year. The COVID-19 chaos from 2020 only seemed to have heightened in 2021 as bad news continued to flood our screens. With the transition to online classes or remote work and disconnection from friends and family affecting so many of us, it was easy for everything to feel bleak. But pop culture is always there to distract us! Sometimes the thing that best sparks joy? Some trashy celebrity gossip. So, let's get into it.

## 1. A chipper check-in from Steve when we all needed it most

Steve from *Blues Clues* re-entered the hearts of Gen Z and millennials after too many years apart. He reminds us of our days with Blue, talking to Mr. Salt and finding clues as he apologises for leaving us so abruptly to attend college. Like a warm hug, Steve reminds all of us how much we've changed and accomplished since he left us. I'm not crying, you're crying.

## 2. We all found out that Armie Hammer might be a cannibal

It feels like this news broke

years ago, but nope. Just the news we all needed in the height of a pandemic – this acclaimed actor did indeed have cannibalistic tendencies. Hammer headed to rehab after multiple women accused him of sexual violence and cannibalism. This took the #MeToo and Time's Up movements to another level.

## 3. Olivia Rodrigo was the moment

This not-yet 19-year-old smashed records in 2021, comforting bitter hearts and singing what we've all been feeling through our pandemic depression. According to *Billboard*, Rodrigo broke the record previously held by idol Taylor Swift for most songs in their Top 10 charts. The artist's debut album, *Sour*, took over radio stations.

## 4. Nicki Minaj gets the title for "Most Ridiculous Excuse for Not Being Vaccinated"

Minaj's snit over her cousin's friend's inflated balls had eyes rolling. Yep, she made international headlines when she tweeted that vaccines led to impotence, swollen testicles

and broken engagements. Yikes!

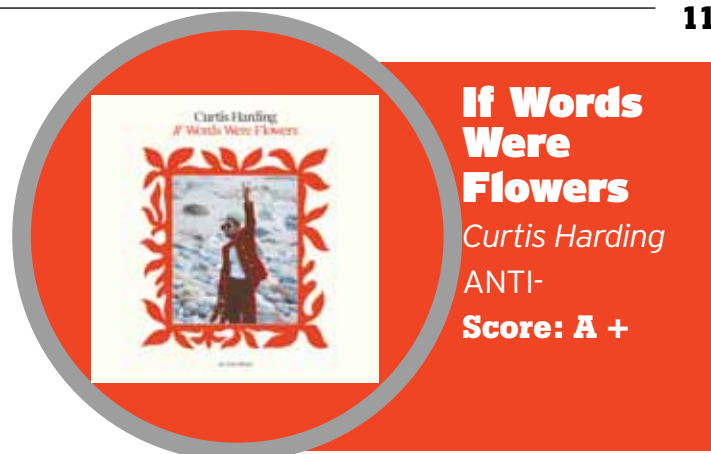
## 5. Meghan and Harry wave buh-bye to the British Royal Fam while granting favour to Queen Oprah

Boomers across the land were horrified while their younger counterparts rejoiced at the decision of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, to bash the norms of the Royal Family. More pearl-clutching ensued when they chose to air the family's dirty laundry during an interview with Oprah Winfrey in her talk show. Harry says he took a stand, making sure history wouldn't repeat itself, referring to his mother whose life was littered with problems caused by the Royal Family.

## 6. Even though we've been on a break, we're still in love with *Friends*

Nostalgia was a tonic for many when the beloved *Friends* cast reunited. We joyfully

*Continues on Pg. 12*



From old school soul to psychedelic rock, *If Words Were Flowers* contains everything you could possibly think of. This is Curtis Harding's third album, his most experimental album to date. Personally, I think experimenting with his sound was for the better. While his first two albums contained many gems, he played it on the safe side.

*If Words Were Flowers* kept me entertained all throughout. Never did I want to skip a single second. In an interview with *UNCUT*, Harding revealed the album was named after his mother's request to get her flowers

while she is still here. In the record's titular song, the words "If words were flowers/ I'd give them all to you" starts off the album. The strategic placements of songs such as the upbeat love tune "Can't Hide It" and the mellow guitar strings from "With You" made each one distinct. Certainly one of the greatest projects to arise from the last two years is Harding's third album, *If Words Were Flowers*, which explores the importance of love in today's chaotic world.

- Astrid Cunanan



The Killers are a band that have been playing in the rock scene for close to two decades now and have released seven consecutive chart-topping studio albums, most recently *Pressure Machine*.

But even I have to admit that the tracks on *Pressure Machine* make me reminiscent of Sam's Town, an album that always manages to tug on my heartstrings.

The album starts off slow with ballads like "West Hills" and "Terrible Thing" but picks up halfway through with "Sleepwalker" and "In The Car Outside." Each track starts off with voice-overs from people who live in Nephi, Utah, a town where lead singer Brandon Flowers spent time as a child. The voiceovers start each track off with a story that then seems to give even more meaning to the lyrics, which feels so personal to the album.

The thing with bands like The Killers who have been in

the limelight for so long is that fans, myself included, often forget that sound can grow and change. But it can be hard to stay interested if the idea doesn't bring something captivating to the table. *Pressure Machine* started out in this situation, but with time the incredible storytelling shines through and gives the album a new edge as listeners grow more connected with the real life people that get a chance to tell their own stories.

Overall, although the sound is different than what I expected, the album has given me a new appreciation for storytelling through lyricism and has me ready to go back to something like this from The Killers.

- Abbie Riglin

**Continued from Pg. 11**

screamed “Pivot!” yelled “seven” countless times along with Monica, and wondered what they had been feeding the smelly cat. The visit to the set and intimate journey through the show’s history brought the feels. Many of us found such comfort in knowing our friends were still there.

## 7. Bernie Sanders wins best-dressed at President Joe Biden’s 2021 Inauguration.

It was classic Bernie at the chilly outdoor event. Sanders showed up looking like the Vermont grandpa he is, sporting lawn chair, legs crossed, brown puffer jacket and hand-knit mittens. Images of him quickly littered the internet. This viral moment became the meme to beat in 2021.

## 8. Lastly, 2021 was the year of the unexpected, chaotic and adored couplings

• Kim Kardashian & Pete Davidson

Whether a publicity stunt or not, this couple took over headlines from the time they first kissed as Aladdin and Jasmine on Saturday Night Live through the beginning of the new year.

• Kourtney Kardashian & Travis Barker

Speaking of Kardashians getting with edgy, tattooed, alternative boys, Kim’s big sis Kourtney started the trend with now fiancé Barker.

• Jennifer Lopez & Ben Affleck

Long-time pop culture enthusiasts rejoiced when photos of Bennifer broke, but the internet sided with the other Jennifer when Ben got too mouthy on Howard Stern.

• Harry Styles & Olivia Wilde

Jason Sudeikis and Harry Styles fans must’ve taken this one pretty hard. I guess we’ll see if this couple makes it in a post-Love-On-Tour world.

• John Mulaney & Olivia Munn

Two Olivias in one list? Crazy! This one was a doozy.

We enter 2021 learning that Mulaney is in rehab. This was news enough, let alone what followed. He splits from our beloved Anna Marie Tandler and is then linked with Munn. They announce a pregnancy, followed by a breakup, which is then followed by the birth of their son.

Well, with all of this behind us, let’s hope the entertainment scene stays busy through 2022 to distract us yet again from the drudgery of our world. This isn’t to say I’d like to see more celebrities emerge as anti-vaxxers or cannibals, let’s leave that in the past. But, a little bit of relationship drama never hurt anyone. Cheers to the new year!



Harry Styles and Olivia Wilde first met on the set of *Don’t Worry Darling* which is set to release later in 2022. Photo courtesy of Lovclyhes



A whopping five million people tuned in to watch the *Friends: The Reunion*. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



@samrubuzz

samru.ca

Are you interested in governance and leadership opportunities at your Students’ Association?



## Nominate yourself for the STUDENT GOVERNING BOARD (SGB)!

Develop valuable leadership skills and gain real-world governance experience as you help make decisions on the strategic direction for SAMRU and its members.

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN  
JANUARY 4-19

## Mid-season report cards for all MRU Cougars teams

**George Potter**  
 Staff Writer

The Mount Royal University (MRU) Cougars have achieved some great things so far in the recent season. From winning bronze in men's soccer to the women's hockey and volleyball teams being ranked in Canada's top ten and having some high-achieving individual athletes, it's been a year to remember. Let's take a look at how the Cougars have done so far.

### Men's Soccer (8-2-3)

The Cougars men's soccer team has seen lots of success throughout the regular season and impressive playoff performance. They stomped the Grant MacEwan Griffins in a regular season matchup to the tune of a 12-3 final score.

They also broke a record for most goals scored in a Canada West game since the University of Victoria Vikes beat the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Huskies 9-0 in 2004. They were also ranked within the top 10 in U SPORTS for men's soccer.

The Cougars would make a deep playoff run, beating the Thompson River Wolfpack. Despite losing to the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds in the semifinals, the Cougars were able to win the bronze medal by beating the University of Fraser Valley Cascades.

The team saw great individual success amongst their athletes with Moe El Gandour and Justin Anderson-Louch receiving spots on the Canada West first all-star



**Nolan Yarmenko is a big part of the men's hockey team's star power. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard**

team. The second all-star team featured MRU's Dane Domic and Caden Rogozinski, while Ethan Keen and Caden Rogozinski made the rookie all-star team.

Nothing short of a championship could've improved on this season.

Grade: A+

### Women's Volleyball (6-2)

After the pandemic shut down last season, this squad's new roster and head coach, Shane Smith, have had a strong season so far. They're currently ranked in the top five in U SPORTS. The season is far from over, but this team has shown some excellent effort so far.

Some notable individual performers have led the

way. First-year Cougars outside hitter Faye Murray has been killing it, including a performance with 10 kills, two service aces, four digs and player of the game honours. Veteran players such as team captain Quinn Pelland, Hayley Roe, Jessica Osczevski and Madison Marshall have also stepped up throughout the season.

The team is on a four-game winning streak by beating the Grant MacEwan Griffins and the University of Calgary (U of C) Dinos. Who knows how long it'll continue into the new year?

Grade: A+

### Women's Hockey (9-3)

The women's hockey team is ranked by U SPORTS at

fourth place in the country. After making it all the way to nationals in the 2019-20 season just for it to be cancelled due to COVID-19, they're performing like they're hungry for a second chance to win what they should have won that year.

There has been a big contribution from the veterans and the new players on this team regardless of position. Goaltender Zoe De Beauville has given us a lot to talk about. Her playstyle is like a brick wall, with three shutouts so far this season. Second-year goaltender Kaitlyn Ross had also seen success as she was able to earn her first shutout, making 19 saves against the U of S Huskies.

**Continues on Pg. 14**



**Faye Murray has started her Cougars career with a bang. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard**

# #S

**4,** The MRU Cougars women's volleyball and men's basketball teams are both on four-game winning streaks

**10,** Ten Calgary Flames games have been postponed this season

**8,** Canadian Conor Bedard was the eighth 16-year-old to ever compete in the World Junior Ice Hockey Championships

**941,** Golden State Warriors star Klay Thompson returns to NBA action after being sidelined for 941 days

**Continued from Pg. 13**

Tianna Ko and Courtney Kollman have been standouts, racking up enough points to lead the team and rank high on the Canada West leaderboards. Ko has scored 12 points (fourth place in Canada West) while Kollman has scored 11 (seventh place in Canada West).

For the next half of the season, this team will be very exciting to watch; especially since the annual Crowchild Classic against the Dinos will be coming around the corner very soon.

Grade: A+

**Men's Basketball (4-2)**

The Cougars men's basketball team has been undefeated so far on their home court. Second-year player Nate Petrone has shown great leadership and scoring ability with a points-per-game average of 17.3. His best performance came against the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns, earning him athlete of the week for Nov. 25 - Dec. 1. Holt Tomie, Dylan Lutes and Nick Held have also been leaders for the Cougars.

This team has a great record and has improved greatly from their last season. Giving them a high grade is an easy choice.

Grade: A

**Men's Hockey (6-6)**

The Cougars had some good performances earlier in the season, but have struggled recently, including in their last two games against the U of S Huskies. Hopefully, they're able to rest up over the winter break and build some momentum back up.

However, former Stockton Heat player Nolan Yarmenko has been a bright spot for the Cougars. He was awarded Canada West player of the week for scoring 6 points while on the road. In addition, Yaremko, Riley Sawchuk, Kyle Walker, Tyson Helgesen and Ryley Lindgren, were selected to compete in the U SPORTS Men's All-Star series. This also included head coach Bert Gilling and two other members of the Cougars coaching staff. With this much star power on the roster, it's

only a matter of time before the team turns things around.

Grade: B-

**Women's Basketball (2-4)**

The women's basketball team has had a rough start to the year but has managed to hold a higher spot in the Canada West standings compared to their 2019-20 season so far. Hopefully, this team will continue its upward trajectory in the next half of the season.

Jenika Martens has stood out as she leads the team in points per game at 12.8. There also has been some success for rookie Bella Gaulden, averaging 9.8 points per game. However, it is yet to be determined what will happen for Gaulden in the winter semester due to injury concerns.

Overall, the sting of a losing record is balanced out by the team's year-over-year improvement.

Grade: C

**Women's Soccer (3-7-2)**

This team upset a powerhouse in the U of C Dinos on their home field thanks to Cougars goalkeeper Katrina Greenley, who saved 11 out of 12 shots. Greenley would receive U SPORTS athlete of the week for her heroics.

With a strong performance in that upset and a two-goal outing against the U of A Pandas, rookie Sydney Danielewicz has turned heads all around the country. She led the Cougars in goals this season with six under her belt and was named to the Canada West All-Rookie team.

This squad has shown a lot of potential for the future and had some big wins this season. However, their losing record means I can't give a positive grade for this year.

Grade: C

**Men's Volleyball (2-6)**

The Cougars men's volleyball team has struggled the most on this list. This season is far from over and there's plenty of time for redemption for the second half of the year.

Despite the struggling record, the team has shown promise. They're still able to keep the home crowd

energized, and Chris Byam has been a standout, which earned him player of the week for Dec. 2-8. These

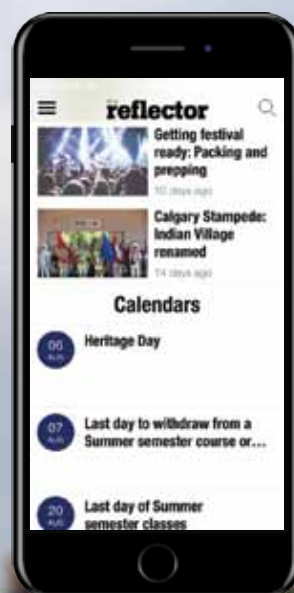
bright spots might be enough to help this squad turn it around.

Grade: D+



Sydney Danielewicz (right) leads MRU in goals, despite being a rookie. Photo by George Potter

## The Reflector Newspaper app available now in your favourite app store



**Get The Reflector Newspaper app available in the App Store and in Google Play. It has all of the up-to-date news and information to enhance your Mount Royal University experience**



Download on the  
**App Store**

View QR code  
in photo app



GET IT ON  
**Google Play**

Phone graphic by Rafael Fernandez - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=51218006

# How the Omicron variant is impacting major sports leagues

**Jed Mabazza**

Staff Writer

The onset of the Omicron COVID-19 variant has ravaged the world of sports over the past month. This has forced leagues to quickly modify their health and safety protocols. Here's where things stand in three of the four major sports leagues.

## NBA

The NBA has enhanced its COVID-19 measures in response to the league's large uptick in positive cases. As reported by NBA.com, between Dec. 26, 2020 and Jan. 8, 2021, an increase in daily testing will take place. Masks are mandatory for all players and staff in all settings including travelling for an away game, on the bench during games, in meetings and in locker rooms and weight rooms. Players who test positive for COVID-19 are eligible to return to play after five days under the conditions that they are asymptomatic and that their cycle threshold levels (a measurement of how infectious a person is) are above 30.

While these protocols are strict, they don't seem as

strict when compared to two years ago in the 2020 NBA bubble. During that season, COVID-19 protocols were far more stringent as testing was ramped up and the isolation period for COVID-19 positive players was 14 days. To mitigate the loss of players in isolation, games have either been postponed or teams have signed free agents and G-league players to 10-day hardship contracts.

## NHL

Recent team shutdowns due to rapidly increasing numbers in positive COVID-19 cases have forced the NHL to strengthen its COVID-19 measures until at least Jan. 7. According to the memo sent out by the league, testing will now occur daily instead of every third day. On a case-by-case basis, pre-game testing may occur as needed. Masking is required at all times inside club facilities. Team personnel are strongly encouraged to use the following masks: N95, KN95, or a surgical mask as cloth masks are not acceptable. Any meetings will take place virtually. On the road, teams



**NBA Commissioner Adam Silver (right) has had to make some tough decisions thanks to the pandemic. Photo courtesy of Paul Kagame**

are prohibited from dining at any indoor restaurants and related establishments that are open to the public. Team personnel are also encouraged to limit community interactions in their home markets as well. Consistent with the original protocols, players who test positive will be required to isolate until three consecutive negative tests results are provided.

These measures contrast the relaxed ones used during the 2021 playoffs. According to NHL.com, the measures included "relaxing restrictions regarding mask-wearing, testing, quarantining, team meetings, social gatherings and team travelling parties." The NHL announced on Dec. 21 that the league will not be sending players to compete in the 2022 winter Olympics due to COVID-19 concerns and will instead be using those three weeks to reschedule postponed games.

## NFL

The National Football League also had to modify

its COVID-19 measures in response to the surge in positive cases which led to the first game postponement of the 2021 season on Dec. 18. In a memo sent out by the league, masking will be mandatory in all indoor team facilities "regardless of vaccination status." Previously, this protocol only applied to unvaccinated players. As well, all meetings will be held remotely or outdoors. The memo further outlines that in-person meals are strictly off-limits between players and staff regardless of vaccination status.

Regarding protocols on the road, players are not allowed to dine in any restaurant or attend any entertainment venue in the away city, nor will visitation be allowed in the team hotel. However, the modified protocols allow the NFL to take a different approach from the NBA and NHL regarding the criteria for a player to return to play after testing positive for COVID-19. Under the new protocols, players who

have been asymptomatic for at least 24 hours after their initial positive test may be able to return to play sooner assuming they stay symptomatic and return a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or Mesa test.

Weekly testing for asymptomatic players has been removed and instead targeted spot testing will take place in which NFL.com describes as "A sample selection based on position group and staff cohorts... if COVID-19 infections are identified, the NFL and NFLPA medical experts will determine additional mitigation efforts."

In a recent interview with ESPN's Malika Andrews, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver says "this virus will not be eradicated, and we're going to have to learn to live with it." This suggests that major league sports will have to continually plan out innovative strategies to mitigate the pandemic's challenges for the foreseeable future.



**Vaccination has become the expectation for both players and spectators of North American professional sports. Photo courtesy of NIAID**

# Tell me I'm wrong: Influencers are tarnishing the legacy of boxing

**Josh Werle**

Staff Writer



**Canelo Álvarez (right) against Julio César Chávez Jr. (left) was a fight that didn't start on Twitter. Photo from Wikimedia Commons**

Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Floyd Mayweather and... Jake Paul. One of these names doesn't belong in that list, and yet, many fans who have recently been introduced to the sport of boxing may believe that it does.

Boxing has been around for many generations, and has long been one of the most well-recognized forms of combat sports today. It has given birth to many influential figures of our time, with some of these athletes seemingly transcending the sport itself. Today, there are many boxers who have dedicated their entire lives to this craft, and

who deserve to receive the attention of the sports world. Canelo Álvarez, Vasiliy Lomachenko, Gervonta Davis and Tyson Fury are a small fraction of the top boxing names that come to mind.

The problem is, many sports fans have recently decided that "boxing" is now synonymous with "Jake Paul" or "Logan Paul." I have the utmost respect for the Paul brothers, or anyone who decides to enter the ring and compete in the sport of boxing, social media star or otherwise. That being said, these social media boxing events that pit YouTube

and TikTok stars against other influencers, or worse, athletes from other sports, have tarnished the legacy of boxing.

## Money talks

People have been so encapsulated by the flashy lights, celebrity attendees and elaborate press conferences that come with every social media boxing event that it is almost impossible to not pay attention. Coupled with the massive followings these influencers have already garnered on social media, any sort of event involving them is almost bound to be a success.

Canelo Álvarez and Tyson Fury are two of boxing's biggest stars, and their Instagram follower count is currently 12.4 million and 5.4 million, respectively. Compared with Jake and Logan Paul's 18.4 million and 21.9 million followers respectively, it is already evident that this generation's best boxers are not getting the respect that they deserve.

Boxing has been on the decline in popularity, and on Nov. 2, 2019, this decline hit an all-time low. UFC 244 was an event that pitted Jorge Masvidal and Nate Diaz against each other, and was a massive fight under the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) banner.

On that same night, boxing's top star Canelo Álvarez was also competing in a match against Sergey Kovalev.

As these two events were taking place at the same time, the organisers of the boxing match made the decision to wait until the UFC event was done before they started their main event. In theory, this would maximize pay-per-view buys, but in reality, it just made them look silly.

Footage of Canelo sleeping in the back with his gloves on while the entire arena was forced to wait for the conclusion of the UFC event was a horrible look for boxing. At the end of the day, the business side of boxing has always played an instrumental role in the sport.

Today, many of the top boxers are all signed to different promoters, making it difficult to have the best face off against the best. This ultimately leads to less intriguing matchups and leaves boxing fans wanting more.

## Revitalization

In order for true boxing matchups to become popular once again, there are a few things that need to be done. The promoters need to come together and allow the best to box with the best, and try to put their egos aside. We have

seen the popularity that social media stars have, and that's just with one member of the fight carrying notoriety.

If people are willing to tune in to Jake Paul and are actually entertained with the level of boxing that is displayed, then people can easily be entertained with fights like Tyson Fury vs Anthony Joshua. All it takes is some cooperation from the promoters, fighters and marketing teams.

You would tune in to watch Mike Tyson box because you know there is going to be a knockout. You would tune in to watch Floyd Mayweather box because you know he is going to go 12 rounds without taking any serious damage. But why would you tune in to watch Jake Paul? People have seemingly transitioned from wanting to watch the boxers display their skill and having more interest in watching the personality perform.

In order for the real boxers to undo the damage that social media boxing events are causing, everyone involved needs to step their promotional games up and garner more interest in the fights. All it takes is one spectacular fight to turn someone into a fan. All the boxing world needs to do is command more respect and make sure that people tune in.



**Influencer Jake Paul has unfortunately become one of boxing's biggest names. Photo courtesy of Eric Drost**