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# SAMRU elections sees another low voter turnout

**Noel Ormita**  
Contributor

A new Student Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) Representative Executive Council (REC) was elected on March 17. Students went to the polls, in-person and online from March 14-17, but results revealed a majority of students didn't cast a vote.

Joseph Nguyen, the incoming SAMRU president for the 2022-23 school year begins his second term on REC in the fall, previously serving as vice president of Student Affairs.

"This year, our turnout was only close to five per cent," Nguyen said.

## COVID-19 stress and burnout

This year had a fall semester of a 'new normal' with in-person learning, followed by a winter semester of more online learning and a phased return to classes with the threat of a faculty strike that would've caused more disruption for students. It was a year of stress, anxiety and uncertainty for many.

Rio Valencerina, a manager of governance and advocacy at Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Student Association (SAITSA), has seen that lack of student participation is not

just an Mount Royal University (MRU) issue.

"I've talked about this with our Elections Officer as well, a lot of it seems to be that online burnout," Valencerina said.

The online learning also meant students aren't interacting on campus with peers, through clubs and through their student associations.

"At SAIT, a lot of students are two year diploma students. Some of them have never been on campus, and they're graduating this year," Valencerina said.

## Low turnout is nothing new

Though the pandemic may have caused a significant impact on the ability for students to vote, past SAMRU election results reveal past years saw low turnouts as well.

Duane Bratt, political science professor at MRU thinks the low voter turnout is caused by the lack of interest from students themselves.

"Pre-COVID, during COVID, it doesn't matter, the turnout rate is very, very low. This is not a new phenomenon," Bratt said. "Do students see the value in student elections? Do

they see the value in what the student government does? Do they understand the money that's at play and the fees that students pay and the way that that is spent by the student government? I don't think they do."

The most recent March election saw the lowest voter turnout at 4.8 per cent, ultimately less than 600 students determined the next leaders of MRU's student government.

## Candidates and lack of options

When factoring in the number of candidates that run in student elections into the data, the result leads to another reason why students aren't voting—it's the lack of choices.

"This past election for us, voter turnout and even ... candidates we had running actually decreased a lot," Valencerina said.

SAITSA's governing body follows a policy governance structure, where the president and vice president are not elected directly by students but instead by a board of directors who chooses the roles amongst themselves.

"We ended up not running an election because we're supposed to have at least nine or at least 10 people running for nine positions on the board. And this year, we only had seven," Valencerina said.

University of Calgary's Student Union elections that took place in March saw for the first time the re-election of their president, Nicole Schmidt, unopposed. Nguyen also ran unopposed for the SAMRU elections and was both relieved and disappointed as he looked forward to the competition.



The amount of candidates and voter turnout seem to be at a record low this year. Chart by Noel Ormita

"A bunch of my campaign ideas I came up with, went off the ball," Nguyen said. "It's good for me, because I get to focus on actual advocacy work."

## The power of a vote

Student governments have various roles in and out of the community.

"They have large budgets, because of the student fees that are put out. So they make a lot of spending decisions, and they play a role in the overall governance of the university," Bratt said. "They'll sit on university committees with administration and faculty."

"It was awareness of an issue that was brought to the government's attention, and then responded to because there was that conversation between the students and the government," Valencerina said.

One of the policies SAMRU advocated for was a ban on online proctoring, giving students more freedom with already difficult online learning. Not voting and not having a say on who represents students can have major consequences.

"It means that a very small

minority speaks on behalf of the large majority," Bratt said. "If you've got turnout that is so low, that means the winning candidates have even a smaller percentage, but they get 100 per cent of the authority after an election."

With these voting turnout rates on campuses, it doesn't take much to win a position that holds a lot of power.

"It's not hard to hijack an election on student grounds. Because all you [have] to do is mobilize a couple hundred students either through a student club or a certain degree program, or residence or what have you," Bratt said.

In his term as president, Nguyen aims to create opportunities for student government and students to have clear and open communication channels to tackle issues that matter to students.

"It's your way to put your voice out and it's your way to make sure that who sits at the table represents you."

Election Year	Number of Students who voted	Voter turnout percentage	Number of Candidates
2012	1,514 out of 11,476	13.2%	6
2013	1,748 out of 11,252	15.5%	9
2014	2,503 out of 10,793	23.2%	11
2015	1,012 out of 10,173	10%	5
2016	1,842 out of 10,359	17.8%	8
2017	1,702 out of 10,689	15.9%	9
2018	658 out of 10,992	6%	4
2019	781 out of 11,421	6.8%	6

This year's vote had a record low turnout, with just 4.8 per cent of students voting. Photo by Noel Ormita

# Ukrainian ice cream shop owner raises money for home country

**Emma Duke**

Contributor



Tetiana Friley is the co-founder of Village Ice Cream and has raised \$100,000 to support Ukraine. Photo by Emma Duke

Tetiana Friley, a Ukrainian woman who moved to Calgary several years ago, raised over \$100,000 CAD through her business to help support her home country.

Friley is the co-founder of the popular local ice cream chain Village Ice Cream.

Friley moved to Calgary from Ukraine in 2013, a year after her husband Billy started the business. She says her family is still in Ukraine amid the ongoing war.

"My parents live in

Mariupol, it's a big city in the middle of the country. One of my brothers is in the military, so he's fighting somewhere on the frontlines," she said. "Another brother of mine and the rest of the family lives in Iviv."

When the war between Ukraine and Russia started, Friley felt inspired to help her home country.

She says when she told her husband they needed to do something for Ukraine, her husband suggested they get

their business involved in a fundraiser.

All five Village Ice Cream locations in Calgary participated in this fundraiser, where the business donated 100 per cent of proceeds from ice cream sales on March 6 to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation.

Friley says Village Ice Cream frequently participates in charity work but the result of the fundraiser shocked her and her husband.

"We thought we would raise

\$15,000, maximum \$20,000, but we raised more than \$100,000."

We didn't even know we could serve so many customers, it was a very unexpected outcome. It was a really amazing feeling, feeling like one big team and Calgarians doing something together to help other people," Friley added.

The money that Friley and her husband raised for the Canada-Ukraine Foundation could be used for anything, Friley assures.

She says her and her husband receive weekly letters from Ukrainian volunteers that include updated lists of items that people in the country need. The lists include everything from underwear to high tech military gear.

Although she doesn't know whether the donation will go towards clothing or gear for the military, she is confident that the money will directly benefit Ukrainians.

"I hope that it will be enough money to keep people safe. I don't know how the money is going to get distributed but it's for sure going to go to Ukraine and the people who are in Ukraine right now."

Friley says that people in Ukraine don't want to be

refugees and they don't want to leave their countries or homes, a point she realized for herself when she picked up a Ukrainian family at the Calgary International Airport. Friley's friend, who is from Calgary, met friends at the border of Poland and brought them to Calgary. When Friley met her friend and the Ukrainian family at the airport, Friley says the family was in a state of despair.

"They were so scared and in such huge distress. We couldn't calm the kids down and when we brought them home they just couldn't stop shaking. I was scared, I didn't know what to do with them... It's very sad to see millions of people leaving their home country, leaving everything behind."

This experience was just one of many that demonstrates how Ukrainians are reacting to the war. People in Ukraine feel uncertain about their future, Friley says.

"They feel very scared and hopeless at this point."

Friley says she hopes the war between the two countries soon comes to an end and people can return home.

"All my hope goes toward this, sooner than later, to end this war."



All five Village Ice Cream locations participated in this fundraiser. Photo by Emma Duke



# Justin Trudeau called out by European politicians

**Alex Luong**

Staff Writer

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has come under fire for enacting the Emergencies Act against the Freedom Convoy protest in Ottawa. Several European politicians called out the Canadian Prime Minister after his address at the European Union Parliament in Belgium. One Croatian Member of European Parliament (MEP) even went so far as to say that Trudeau's use of the Emergencies Act is a symbol of human rights violations.

Trudeau's speech to the European Parliament received condemnation from some of their MEPs for using emergency powers to help police forces disperse Freedom Convoy protesters from Ottawa.

In response to Trudeau, Croatian MEP Mislav Kolakusic says, "To you, these may be liberal methods. For many citizens of the world, it is a dictatorship of the worst kind."

Kolakusic has also been vocal about Trudeau's decisions on Twitter as well.

"The entire civilized world should condemn this unacceptable violence by the police and authorities in Canada," Kolakusic tweeted. "This is not what democracy looks like, this is completely unacceptable and shocking."

Kolakusic wasn't the only one who had words for Trudeau. German MEP Christine Anderson called Trudeau "a disgrace for any democracy."

"A prime minister who openly admires the Chinese basic

dictatorship, who tramples on fundamental rights by persecuting and criminalizing his own citizens as terrorists just because they dared to stand up to his perverted concept of democracy, should not be allowed to speak in this at all," Anderson said. "Please spare us your presence."

Romanian MEP Cristian Terhes chose to not show up at all. Instead, he states on social media that he refuses to "validate the imposition" of Trudeau. Terhes has been outspoken about the Canadian government's treatment of the Freedom Convoy protesters.

"... the way he's behaving right now - he's exactly like a tyrant, like a dictator. He's like Ceausescu in Romania," he said in February of 2022.

With that being said, it seems like all three of these European politicians are situated somewhere in the far-right wing of politics.

Kolakusic has been reported calling the COVID-19 pandemic as a possible cold. In January of 2022, he had also addressed French President Emmanuel Macron directly.

"Today you said that you are proud there is no death penalty in Europe. Tens of thousands of citizens have died due to vaccine side effects." He said, "Mandatory vaccinations represent death penalty and its execution for many citizens. That has to remain a choice for every citizen. Murder is murder."



**Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was called out by several members of European Parliament for his use of the Emergencies Act on the Freedom Convoy. Photo courtesy of WikiMedia Commons**

MEP Anderson has gotten in trouble in the European Parliament for not wearing a mask and has refused to be vaccinated.

All three MEPs were also part of a small handful to protest the European COVID-19 pass back in late 2021. Six MEPs including Kolakusic, Anderson and Terhes were sanctioned for not adopting the EU Digital COVID Certificate (DCC) to enter the European Parliament building. Kolakusic and Anderson had two days' subsistence allowance loss and Terhes had seven.

The Freedom Convoy protest was started in response to a nation-wide mandate for all truckers to be fully vaccinated. The convoy, made up of unvaccinated truckers and civilians, traveled across Canada to congregate in Ottawa and it took a three-

day police operation for the majority of the protesters to disperse. The incident cost Ottawa over \$36 million CAD for food, vehicle expenses, accommodations and operation supplies.

The leaders of the convoy, Tamara Lich, Chris Barber and Pat King, are also having new charges be put against them.

Lich and Barber have a slew of charges against them. They are being jointly charged with obstructing police, counselling obstruction of police, mischief, counselling mischief, intimidation and counselling intimidation.

King now has 10 charges against him: two counts of intimidation, two counts of obstructing police, one count of disobeying a court order and one count of counselling intimidation.

## THE REFLECTOR

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## UKRAINE UPDATES

### "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power"

US president Joe Biden blasted Russian President Vladimir Putin during a speech in Warsaw, Poland. The Kremlin responded by saying, "That's not for Biden to decide."

### Over 6 million people displaced from Ukraine

According to the International Organization of Migration, 53 per cent of the migrants displaced due to the war are women and that this level of forced displacement is something no one has seen before.

### Zelenskyy urges NATO for more armaments

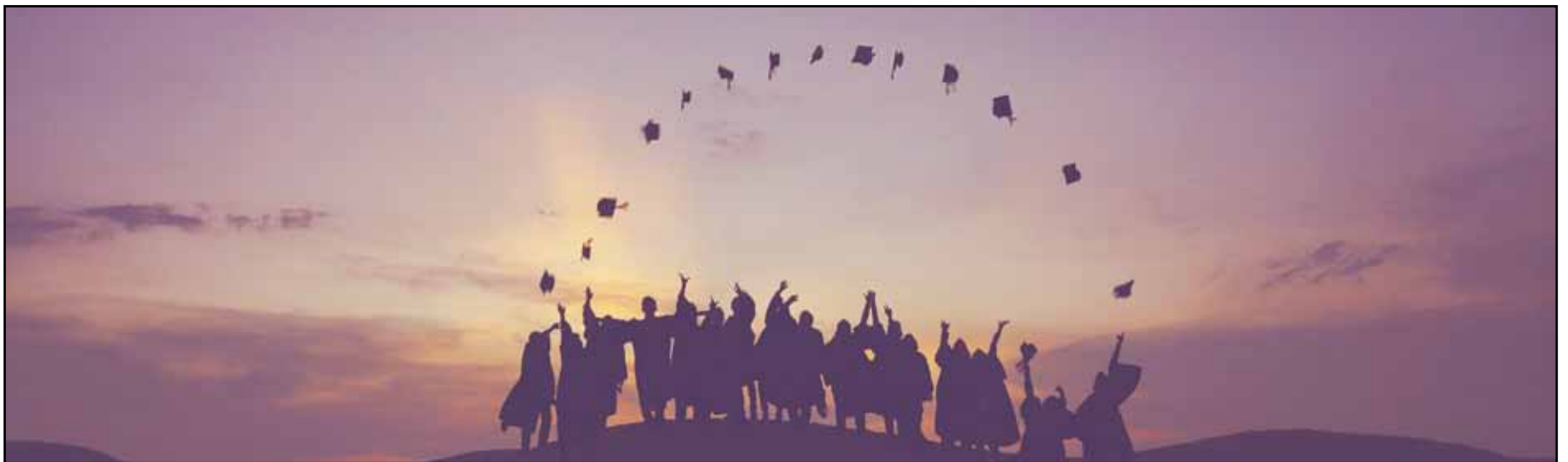
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is asking for more support. "One per cent of all your planes, one per cent of all your tanks," Zelenskyy said. "When we will have all this, it will give us, just like you, 100 per cent security."

## Taylor Talk: How I see the world

# The final chapter: graduation

*My reflections on the last four years of my degree leading up to graduation*

**Taylor Charlebois**  
Staff Writer



With the semester coming to an end across universities, many are graduating and for them, a bittersweet new chapter begins. Photo courtesy of Unsplash

It's hard to believe that four years have come and gone. It's hard to believe the peaks and valleys that I've been through in this time. It's hard to believe that four years ago, I was a fresh faced journalism student — with seemingly no talent and just a dream.

I went into the program with no friends and a weird sense of not wanting any. I started my bachelors degree of communication in journalism and digital media at the tender age of 26. With most of my peers anywhere from 18 to 23, I was embarrassed to be the “old-man” of the group.

Much to my dismay, this plan did not work out. I was immediately making friends and creating connections that would continue to be an intimate part of my life — an entire degree later. These friendships I made along the way are testaments to what my university experience was.

It was full of laughs, victories and losses — we took all of these together.

What made this particular university experience interesting, was that just by the end of our second year — the pandemic happened.

Transferring to online schooling was not anything any of us would ever have guessed. When was the last time a pandemic shut down the world? This was unprecedented.

It didn't matter to me, honestly, it was welcome. As an introvert, I relished at the opportunity to stay home and work away at my mountains of assignments. I even started to exercise as a result of all the newfound time I had on my hands (if you're interested in that, I wrote a story about working out, you can find it on [The Reflector](#) website.)

What I didn't expect, and rather what I don't think

anyone expected, is how long online school would last. What was a welcome reprieve from social responsibilities slowly became a prison cell where I, like so many others, craved any opportunity to get out.

This would last an entire year.

By our fourth year, the restrictions would lay off, and we would return to partial on-campus learning and then complete on-campus learning, which was exciting for everyone. Many of the friends we had made during our first and second year were relegated to pictures on your computer screen. It was exciting to see these people in the flesh again, albeit, I was nervous to see everyone.

During quarantine, I had only ever hung out with some of my core friends, so being in public places and especially surrounded by so many people was a strange experience for

me. But I think I needed to get out of the house. Getting back into the world felt good.

The pandemic didn't stop the journalism degree though. What would have been incredibly difficult assignments, and having to interview a myriad of people for classes was diminished to phone calls and virtual meetings.

I find it funny how I'm probably more comfortable interviewing someone over the insincere computer screen rather than in-person.

I did learn a lot though. I went into the degree with a very average writing style, I'm not going to say I'm leaps and bounds better, but I think I've improved. I've written for *The Reflector* for two semesters now and for that I'm proud.

I was given the opportunity to write about anything and everything that my little heart desired. I got to write about

my love of books and reading, about how a video game has made me cry and about how and why I think people get so tired throughout the day.

I'd just like to thank the readership for picking up this little paper throughout campus and elsewhere. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't get to write these sweet little nothings, that perhaps don't appear to be much — but meant the world to me. A reprieve from my week, a therapeutic practice in turning my brain off from the daunting deadlines, the assignments, heck — even from my personal life — and just write.

I'm not entirely sure what the future holds for me. I don't think anyone does. I'm optimistic I'll land on my feet, as I hope every one of my peers does, and every one of you readers do too.

Thank you for reading, and with that, I declare the end of Taylor Talk. Thanks for coming.



# Getting a summer job: dos & don'ts

**Abbie Riglin**

Staff Writer

The end of the school year is fast approaching, which means it's that time of the year again where us students get to turn in our titles as 'students' and replace it with 'summer intern.' It's simultaneously the best and the worst time of the year, where you get approximately two weeks of rest time after exams and then start work. Immediately after your contract is up, it's right back to classes. It's exhausting, but necessary, both for experience and oftentimes, graduating.

It can all seem daunting. Industry jobs are often hard to come by if you're unsure of where to look, not to mention the application process can get extremely competitive and tedious. But rest assured, finding a placement is possible and not as scary as it seems.

I've got a list of tips and tricks for finding a well-suited job, building your resume and standing out in the best way possible with your cover

letter. These steps are designed to cater to every job and can act as a template for a fast turn-around with application deadlines.

## Step one: finding a job

Despite the need for experience (and money), you probably shouldn't just pick a potential job on a whim. Make sure you do your research on the company and the work you'll be doing. The more interested in the work you are the more beneficial the whole experience will be. The last thing you want is to feel like you've wasted your summer.

This is where networking comes in handy, but understandably, if you're just starting your career you don't know many industry professionals you can be asking favours from. This is where job boards come in handy! Mount Royal University

has program-specific job boards that also count towards graduation requirements, but if you would like to avoid the competitiveness, this is a great place to just start looking for ideas, from there you can search for companies that do similar work.

## Step two: building your resume

Resumes often seem like the easiest part but truthfully it might be the hardest. It can be tricky mastering the art of showing the best, most relevant pieces of yourself on paper. I even find myself blanking when I'm told to write about my interests. But there are definitely dos and don'ts of resume writing.

### Dos

Do highlight your most recent and relevant experience – employers aren't looking to see every job you've ever

had. Only jobs that you've achieved something in should be included, ie. jobs you had for multiple years, industry related jobs, etc.

Do talk about skills that could be beneficial to the job, even if they don't relate to the work – this can be anything from language skills to projects you've worked on for school.

### Don'ts

Don't include your references – this seems like an odd one but references take up space that could be used to showcase skills. If they are needed, employers will request them, which also gives you a second chance to think about who your best chance for an amazing reference could be.

Don't spend time making it flashy – your resume isn't a showcase of colours. Try and keep it simple with the design but still pleasing to the eye.

## Step three: the cover letter

Writing a cover letter might just be the easiest part. Once you have a good template down, you're set for life (just remember to change the names and address the right company). Your cover letter should feel personal and express excitement for the position. This is the area where you showcase personal connection and why you'd be a great addition to the team. Your resume might have your skills but a cover letter showcases personality.

The most important thing when following these steps is to make sure that what you are showing potential employers reflects you, not a carbon copy of everyone else applying. Talking yourself up doesn't mean lying but rather catering applicable skills and interests to each job.

# Editor's Pic

*This issue's best photo winner*

**Emily Marsten**

Features Editor



Calgarians comfort each other during a speech at a Ukrainian protest in Olympic plaza on March 5, 2022. Photo by Jazmine Canfield



# Finding the right key: the method behind custom keyboards

**Spencer Yu**

Photo Editor

Nowadays, if there is something out there it will be customised. Custom cars, bikes, guitars and pianos are some of these examples. However, a more recent trend that has been taking social media by storm is the appearance of customisable computer keyboards. A trend that appeared a few years ago has everyone wanting a custom keyboard and it has become so popular that it's inspired a few Calgarians to start an official Calgary Keyboard meet and an official keyboard vendor.

So why custom keyboards? There are a variety of reasons people get into this hobby. But for the most part, people get into it for three reasons: the sound, the aesthetics and the typing feel. The sound is the reason I see most prominent in the keyboard scene as many people are chasing the typing sound that most resonates with them. As silly as that may be, there is a huge market with different types of switches and keyboards that

can create all types of sounds from a more high frequency "click" or "clack" or a deeper one most often described as a "thock."

Aesthetics is another key factor as well, with a variety of artisan keycap sets and keyboard cases that appeal to all tastes. Typing feel is also very important to keyboard enthusiasts as some prefer a more smooth and linear typing experience whereas some prefer a typing experience with more tactile feedback.

A paramount key aspect of the keyboard building hobby is the community itself. Matthew Lau has been hosting keyboard meets in Calgary over the last year and he believes that the people that are participating in this hobby are what truly drive it forward.

"Community is what really drives me to keep going in this. If I had a \$1,000 keyboard I wouldn't be able to enjoy it without being able to talk with others about it,"



**From loud clicky switches to silent linears, there is a switch that suits every typist and their preference. Photo by Spencer Yu**

said Lau.

The initial meet-ups happened throughout various parks in the city, Lau describes the early keyboard meetups as a space where enthusiasts were able to talk with others about this hobby that they are so passionate about.

"I feel like a lot of people after our first couple of meets saw that there are other

people in this community that also share the same kind of interests. I think they all thought it was a comfortable zone where they can actually come out and talk about what they like," said Lau.

The latest meet was the community's largest so far with over 50 people in attendance and hosted at the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Calgary. With many newcomers to the hobby Lau shares some advice to get the most out of this hobby.

"Don't fall into the trap of, 'my keyboard is more expensive therefore it's better.' Just find what you enjoy and what you are comfortable buying and just make your own keyboard," said Lau.

The massive increase in popularity for custom mechanical keyboards has also inspired some Calgarians to sell their own keyboard related products. Andrew Dokdor, an engineer, takes time away from his job to run his keyboard store called RNDKBD, where he offers customized 3D printed keyboards and other keyboard related products.

"I would go to work for eight hours and then I'd come home and work another eight hours doing orders. It was getting to the point where I

had to pick one and I really liked doing keyboards so it was a really easy step to take," said Dokdor.

Most notable of Dokdor's products is a line of pre-broken-in switches that offer the smoothest typing sensation right out of the gate.

"I've been doing those switches in a couple thousand switches in a batch, so it's pretty serious stuff," said Dokdor.

Dokdor also collaborates with other members of the keyboard community to offer some quality benefits that are often missing when buying custom keyboard parts via traditional means.

"Sometimes when you're buying from overseas they don't have the rigorous quality control that keyboard people desire. So having someone produce it within the keyboard community allowed for my high standard of quality," said Dokdor.

With the massive increase in popularity in the keyboard scene in Alberta, as a whole, the hobby is becoming more and more accessible for all. Within the next few years the hobby might grow exponentially, putting Alberta on the map in the custom keyboard scene.



**A variety of keyboards to cater to those with different preferences in both size and aesthetics. Photo by Spencer Yu**

# YOUR STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION



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You could win \$500!



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

## Community Garden



The MRU community garden runs from May to late September and is an opportunity for student volunteers to help with seedlings, planting, clean-up, weeding, harvesting, community garden workshops and celebrations.

To get involved,  
visit [samru.ca/garden](https://samru.ca/garden) or  
email [volunteer@samru.ca](mailto:volunteer@samru.ca)



### Check out the Free Workshops!

**Sustainable Food Gardening in Calgary Pt. 1**  
May 4 | 11am-1pm

**The Soil is Alive & Compost Feeds It**  
May 12 | 12pm-2pm

**Sustainable Food Gardening in Calgary Pt. 2**  
May 18 | 12pm-2pm

**Edible Landscapes & Design - AKA: Food Forests**  
May 27 | 12pm-2pm

**Water Security in Uncertain Times**  
Jun 8 | 1pm-3pm



@samrubuzz

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



## “Ye-ikes”: What’s the music industry coming to?

**Emme Larkins**  
Staff Writer

The world’s most famous music festival returns this summer after two years of pandemic-related cancellations. Flower crowns, macrame and high-out-of-their-mind influencers will once again flood our feeds. That’s right, Coachella is back and – probably – worse than ever.

It’s ruled by pop music’s king Harry Styles, joined by headliners Billie Eilish and Ye – who many are currently trying to petition out of the festival. The return of this event is controversial enough without bringing Kim Kardashian’s ex into the picture.

In case my thoughts have not yet become clear, I think Coachella is a waste of time and money, that is if you can even get your hands on the ridiculously overpriced tickets. This festival is representative of everything wrong with the music industry today.

To understand what is wrong with the industry, we have to take a few steps back. Let’s start in the ‘90s, a time of reckoning in the music world. Twenty or 30 years ago, Generation X was led by true models like Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder who challenged the capitalist agenda within the music industry. They showed a passion for music aside from the money involved that we haven’t seen before or during their time.

Gen. X did this, they managed to almost remove materialism and money from the music industry. Then, millennials came along and like anything else in their time, they materialized it. They reduced the charts and the scene to who could shake the best butt in music videos that took hundreds of thousands of dollars to make. But, come on, they’re (mostly) the children of Boomers, what else could we have expected?

With Generation Z becoming older, primarily the children of Gen. X, we have seen a resurgence of caring about what pop stars think, do and say, just as much as we care about the music. But somewhere we went wrong. If Styles holds up a Pride flag at a concert and shows up to a Black Lives Matter protest, that’s enough for us. That is enough for us to overlook the fact that he is pimping himself out, selling overpriced nail polish and performing at festivals like Coachella alongside Ye.

My thoughts? It’s not right. So many Gen Z’ers claim to hate capitalism and whine about their disdain for the system. Yet, they’ve allowed it to infiltrate their music.

The lead singer of The 1975, Matty Healy, has famously said he believes Coachella is a massively superficial environment. This isn’t hard



This year there are 178 artists performing at Coachella. Photo Courtesy of Unsplash

to see when the audience generally appears to be filled with influencers who have been paid to be there and are only viewing the live performances through their phone.

Coachella is no longer about the music but rather the money. As a fan of music, I can’t be upset by musicians who play at the festival. I’m not naive. I understand we can’t expect all pop artists to be anti-capitalists. Sometimes we have to let Styles and Eilish get their coin and leave.

With the first weekend of Coachella 2022 quickly approaching, it’s a reminder

to not get sucked into the continuous cycle of influencer promotion. It’s so not worth it. And hey, I can enjoy pop music with the best of them, but we can do more to make sure artists are motivated to create music that brings us all together and packs meaning.

Now, I know what you’re thinking to yourself right now: ‘How can I support local music here in Calgary this summer?’ I was hoping you’d ask!

With any remaining Alberta COVID-19 restrictions hopefully being a thing of the past, there should be more live music to listen to here in Calgary than ever before.

Always start by checking out your local live music venues like the Blues Can, King Eddy and Dickens Pub to see if any fun, fresh talent is performing. Don’t be afraid to do your research, or just show up!

Aside from local shows, check out some of Calgary’s biggest music festivals like Sled Island this June 22-26, The Calgary Folk Music Festival from July 21-24 or Country Thunder from Aug. 21-23.

If these still aren’t enough, the Calgary Stampede always brings some sick acts to town!

Support your local talent... and suck it, Coachella.

# OUT’N ABOUT

### Spring shopping

Saskatoon Farm is hosting its fifth annual spring market on April 23-24. For just \$5 a person, enjoy access to over 90 local businesses.

### Mother Mother Live

“Hayloft” singers are coming to Calgary on May 4 at Jack Singer Concert Hall. Grab tickets while you still can!

### Roller Skate Festival

Find your skates because Calgary’s first-ever roller skate festival is happening at Village Square Leisure Center during June 11 - 14!

### A feisty summer festival

Have fun under the sun at Inglewood’s Sunfest. July 30 will be a day filled with free family-friendly fun.



# Leah's summer reads: Top five books to get after school ends

**Leah Hart**

Contributor

If you're anything like me, you already have your summer reads lined up. For me, gearing up for the summer typically means having a different book ready for every road trip, plane, or train ride or to lay in the park under the sun. So I thought I would prepare you all a list of some of the books I plan to read this summer and the ones I revisit every summer. From mysteries, romance to memoirs; here's Leah's list of anticipatingly best books to read this summer.

## #5. *They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera

A novel by Adam Silvera draws you in right from the beginning. With a book having a title like this and a storyline so gripping, how could you not

pick this novel up? Silvera does a wonderful job reminding us that there is no life without death, there is no love without loss and there is no hope without hopelessness.

In this heart-wrenching yet uplifting story about two people whose lives change forever over the course of one unforgettable night, you can't help but appreciate life, love and friendship. This has been on my list for quite some time and based on the reviews, it is one of my anticipated best reads this summer, let me know what you think!

## #4. *Seven Days in June* by Tia Williams

This book has probably one of the best prologues and first chapter I have read in a long

time! This smart, sexy, joyful book about intimacy, healing and loss makes you think about giving second chances and following your heart. The plot will have you begging for more. This drama-filled book will make it impossible for you to put it down.

It's a novel about a woman running into a past lover 15 years later who hasn't been able to forget the experience and needs questions answered by someone she used to love. Tia Williams does an immaculate job relaying Black love and strength to her readers. This modern love story will be the best way to start your summer if you're looking for love and romance or looking for encouragement to give someone a second chance.

## #3. *A Piece of Cake* by Cupcake Brown

Cupcake Brown survived an incredible number of gut-wrenching and soul-shaking events before her teens were over. Brown recalls her memoir, titled *A Piece of Cake*, as shelves of memories about overcoming the death of a parent, childhood abuse, rape, drug addiction, infertility, alcoholism, near-death experiences and homelessness.

This exhilarating memoir tells a tale of a woman who fought for survival with the help of fellow people dealing with a substance use disorder. This story is that of friends and strangers who came to her aid at pivotal moments which allowed her to transform her life from what could have been to what is now a beautiful and fulfilling life. Not only is this at the top of my re-reads every year but it should be at the top of yours too!

The passion, rawness and authenticity that comes out of Cupcake Brown's experience in life will make you look for ways to support your friends, family and community in more impactful and inspiring ways.

## #2. *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens

After catching the trailer for the production of *Where the Crawdads Sing* written by Delia Owens, I knew I had to read this coming-of-age piece about nature and love before the movie released this summer.

A love story quickly turns into a murder mystery when a local outcast referred to as the "Marsh Girl" haunts Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the coast of North Carolina. Abandoned in the marshlands, friends and foe are scarce. Kya Clark, the

Marsh Girl, is hunted by police when a promising young man, who turned out to be her lover, is found dead. This haunting novel is my number one anticipated best read of the summer and the year!

## #1. *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey

This book is hands down one of the most "tear your heart out" books I have ever read. It tells the story of a 23-year-old who has a substance use disorder. Being an alcoholic and drug addict, he spent most of his life not paying the consequences of a single terrible thing that he did.

Frey, who is forced into a rehabilitation treatment center to learn how to cope with substance use disorder, meets Lily, who reminds him of his first love. He slowly learns to find the strength within himself to sober up and fix all of the mess he left behind for friends and family.

*A Million Little Pieces* shares experiences of friendship, love, family and support. The book will manage to break your heart, make you laugh and cry all on the same page. It will make you wonder where everyone involved could have been and should have been today. I recommend this to anyone who is struggling because of a friend, a family member or someone they love is battling substance use disorder. This novel will give you some insight from the very honest and very raw, real perspective of someone who's been there, done that and lived to share their experience.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it: Finish all of these books this summer, come find me on campus in September and tell me about some of your favourite or least favourite parts!



Summer is a perfect time to catch up on your reading, Calgary has a handful of charming bookstores around the city, support your local businesses! Photo courtesy of Unsplash



# The counterculture movement according to Indie punk-rocker Negative XP

**Matthew Hillier**  
Staff Writer



The cover of Negative XP's fourth album, *Gamer*. Photo Courtesy of Negative XP

When you think of “counterculture,” what comes to mind? Is it a movement, an idea or a simple concept to describe something that’s not mainstream?

You may have an answer but yours and mine will likely differ. This illustrates that the simple concept of counterculture has been muddled by culture itself. Nowadays “culture” isn’t an agreed upon concept but rather an ever-changing interpretation of norms and morals that often differ from person to person. ‘Countering’

this new form of culture is as personal as the interpretation of culture itself. One artist has taken a stab at bringing his brand of counterculture to the world in the form of personal and introspective punk-rock.

Negative XP is an artist who besides his music and his face, very few know about. I would say that this is a benefit, as listeners looking for more insight into his personality will have to pay closer attention to his music itself rather than interviews or social media.

His music is completely

divorced from any concept of modern punk that you may be familiar with. His tracks range from slow melodies accompanied by understated lyrics to tracks that are full of in-your-face distorted guitars accompanied by angry drums and everything in between. His musical style is reminiscent of the early ‘80s and ‘70s punk-rock scene but even saying that is a stretch. Negative XP’s music almost occupies a genre entirely

**Continues on Pg. 12**



The highly anticipated third studio album of Alex O’Connor, or more popularly known as Rex Orange County, has finally been released. *Who Cares?* explores themes of self-doubt, personal growth and falling out of love with someone.

Following his break up with his long term girlfriend, many fans were preparing themselves for a heart-wrenching album filled with songs like “Untitled” and “Waiting Room” from *Apricot Princess*. However, many fans on TikTok were surprised by the album’s upbeat tunes like “Keep it Up” and “Amazing.” Regardless of what fans think, this album encapsulates his trademark work with the bedroom pop genre. *Who Cares?* stayed with

what he does best, which is create songs you can scream at the top of your lungs with friends on a summer night.

My personal favourites include mellow tracks “Worth it” and “One in a Million” which feature lyrics such as “I’ve fallen for you/ I’m dazed and confused/ It’s crazy what you mean to me.” While *Pony* and *Apricot Princess* are still my favourite albums from O’Connor, you will have to listen to the 11 tracks and see them for yourself.

- Astrid Cunanan

**The ReVe Festival 2022 - Feel My Rhythm**  
Red Velvet  
Avex Trax/SM Japan  
**Score: A +**



One K-pop girl group, Red Velvet, has recently dropped their new album on March 21 called, *The ReVe Festival 2022 - Feel My Rhythm*. The release has once again proven the versatility and talent the group possesses.

The opening track, “Feel My Rhythm” begins with a Bach sample that eventually mixes with the depth of K-pop music. It showcases a mix of classical music and pop.

The album has six tracks which all exhibit the groups’ vocal ranges and have a variety of genres blended together. The second track, “Rainbow Halo” uses synths and R&B inspired melodies, along with the third track, “Beg for me” that utilizes the same melodies while showing off the members’ ranges. “BAMBOLEO” consists of retro instrumentals and is definitely a song perfect for spring. “Good, Bad, Ugly” showcases a slower tempo with

the vocals shining wonderfully in it. The finale of the album, “In my Dreams,” is a perfect ending with soft vocals and powerful instrumentation, and has each of the members sing the mainline, “In my dreams, you love me back,” which sounds hauntingly beautiful.

In an interview about the new album, Red Velvet’s leader, Bae Joo-hyun, more popularly known as Irene, mentioned that the group wanted to branch out a different part of them by dropping an album in spring. The groups’ main focus was to create a spring album this time around and they have done exactly that. The six tracks work well to put a cohesive album together that has fun rhythms and the perfect vibe for spring.

- Peehu Rana



**Continued from Pg. 11**

on its own. For better or worse, this makes trying to compare his music to an era or even a specific artist a hard task.

Some tracks are full of purposeful lyrics, with instrumentals that could compete with other highly produced tracks from other punk-rock artists, other songs contain lyrics filled with emotions of sadness and anger. It seemed like instrumentals were an afterthought. While this may be a negative quality for any other artist to have, in the case of Negative XP regardless of the quality he presents, his tracks leave you with the sense that every note and lyric was written specifically for him.

His lyrics, combined with the anger in his music, often paint sad pictures of adolescents lost in waves of apathy and loneliness. Some of these songs are outside observations and criticisms of an angry and lonely high-schooler, while other songs make use of his personal experiences of feeling vexed with the world. A good example of the latter are the lyrics in the

song “The Angels in Heaven Sigh My Name” which are, “I’m walking around with my head hung down/ I’m looking all around/ For something or somebody to see/ that something’s wrong with me.”

Regardless if he is an observer or a participant of a life experience, there is always a direct connection between Negative XP’s music and the feeling of someone who has been “othered” by everything from classmates to society as a whole.

This is amplified when Negative XP writes criticisms on culture as a whole. He is fond of doing this by harkening imagery from the CIA experiment MK-Ultra.

This imagery started being used in his first collaborative album *MK-Ultra Support Group* and the name stuck. All subsequent collaborative albums under Negative XP’s belt use the same name. In addition, he has three songs on these albums that are directly named after the experiment, these are titled “MKULTRA VICTIM,” “MKULTRA SUPPORT GROUP” and “mkultrasupportgroup.

com.” This imagery in both his solo albums and his collaborative ones where the phrase “Mk-ultra victim” is used heavily as an insult directed towards everything from burnt out e-girls to internet music critic Anthony Fantano.

His lyrics view the failed mind control experiment as having succeeded. His critical imagery on modern consumer culture emphasises how it traps a person in mediocrity and stability, until the only thing that makes you happy anymore are self-destructive creature comforts that are happily provided by society. In his mind the CIA isn’t forcing you to take LSD anymore, it has tricked you into taking it with a smile on your face.

This personal and unapologetic approach to music creation and cultural criticism landed him in hot water straight out of the gate. His breakout track “Scott Pilgrim vs The World Ruined an Entire Generation of Women,” garnered millions of listens on streaming platforms and brought him recognition and controversy in equal measure.

This controversy stems from the song’s lyrics which aim to demean and poke fun at the “alt.”

His lyrics veer harshly from light-hearted jabs at a constructed charcuterie to jarring and intense insults that aim to hurt anyone who shares something in common with it. Many obviously took issue with the misogynistic lyrics. Regardless of the artist’s intention, people viewed the lyrics as a shameful step back for the progress in gender equality made in punk music. Others still tried to emphasise that his lyrics might be satirical in nature and thus are comparable in intention and tone to the misogyny of both older punk and other genres like hip-hop that purposefully aim to offend and mischaracterize, and therefore shouldn’t be taken as seriously.

However, Negative XP has made no attempt to steer the narrative either way. He has not commented on his intentions with the lyrics since its release in 2019. Regardless of his intention the song is oddly personal. Despite the

obvious problems with the lyrics, they help the listener grasp Negative XP’s approach to cultural observation and his own brand of counterculture with its uncomfortable lyrics.

Negative XP envisions culture as an ever-changing yet stagnant oppressive force that is obsessed with assimilating any dissenters into the fold of mediocrity. According to him, you can be a force for counterculture. Eventually, all you will end up doing is incorporating your brand of “rebellion” into a mediocre, all-encompassing and sterile status quo.

His own “rebellion” is personal, abrasive and uncaring of who it reaches or what comes from it. The only intention that is consistent in his music and lyrics is the intention to show the perspective of someone ignored and othered by the unfathomable and ever-changing monster that is culture. A culture that, from his perspective, treats the ones outside of it with disdain and suspicion; simply for the crime of not being willing or able to become a part of it.



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## The five biggest deals of the NHL trade deadline

**Josh Werle**  
Staff Writer

The NHL trade deadline is historically one of the busiest weekends in hockey. The trade deadline represents the last day that general managers can trade their players before the summer, and more importantly, before the playoffs. This year's trade deadline weekend has come and gone and it was no different than previous years. There were a number of big moves that are sure to shake up the entirety of the NHL. Let's take a look at the five biggest deals of this year's NHL trade deadline.

### **Calle Järnkrok to the Calgary Flames**

Formerly a member of the Nashville Predators who was taken by the Seattle Kraken in their expansion draft this summer, Järnkrok has been dealt to the Calgary Flames. Oddly enough, this deal made all the sense in the world given his ties to some of the other members in the locker room. Järnkrok was born in Sweden and now joins two other Swedish players on

the Calgary Flames lineup: Jacob Markström and Elias Lindholm.

The relationships between these three players goes beyond hockey, as Lindholm and Järnkrok are cousins and Markström is a childhood friend. The odds of these three Swedish pals playing together on the same NHL team were slim to none but the Calgary Flames managed to get the deal done. Although Lindholm and Markström surely advocated to make it happen, Järnkrok's stellar play has earned him a chance to go to the Stanley Cup playoffs. Järnkrok currently sits at 27 points in 52 games this season and has already picked up a point with the Flames. Järnkrok is sure to be a good fit in the Flames' lineup as the chemistry is already there with some of his best teammates.

### **Rickard Rakell to the Pittsburgh Penguins**

A career-long member of the Anaheim Ducks, Rickard Rakell was traded to the Pittsburgh Penguins at the trade deadline. Rakell has been a staple of the Ducks since 2012 and has been a core contributor during their many playoff appearances over the years. Rakell's veteran presence will only bolster the already strong Pittsburgh team and his strong play this year will help the Penguins during



**The acquisition of Calle Järnkrok made the already-elite Flames an even stronger contender for the Stanley Cup. Photo courtesy of Michael Miller**

their inevitable playoff appearance.

Rakell has 28 points in 52 games this season, and will look to keep up this pace alongside Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. Pittsburgh is opting to run with Tristan Jarry as their number-one goaltender, and although it's surprising that they didn't try to upgrade at that position, improving the team's offence is never a bad idea.

### **Mark Giordano to the Toronto Maple Leafs**

The former longtime Calgary Flames captain,

and now former captain of the Seattle Kraken, has been traded to the Toronto Maple Leafs. Toronto's star defenseman Jake Muzzin has been on the long-term injury reserve since late February, leaving a massive hole to fill on the Leafs' defensive unit. Giordano will certainly fill that void, and will heavily improve the Leafs' defence heading into the playoffs. Once Muzzin is back the Leafs will have Morgan Rielly, T.J. Brodie and Giordano to work with.

Brodie and Giordano are longtime friends, and former

**Continues on Pg. 14**



**The Claude Giroux trade was likely the deadline's biggest splash. Photo courtesy of All-Pro Reels**

# #S

**9,** The Calgary Flames dropped nine goals on the Edmonton Oilers on March 26

**1,** The Boston Celtics are the number one seed in the Eastern Conference after a slow start

**33,** trades were made at the NHL trade deadline

**1986,** Canada qualifies for the FIFA world cup for the first time since 1986



**Continued from Pg. 13**

teammates and they should have great chemistry if they play on the same line. Giordano has 23 points in 55 games this season and is still one of the better defenseman in the league. The former Norris Trophy winner will look to aid the Maple Leafs in the playoffs as they attempt to make a deep run.

### Marc-André Fleury to the Minnesota Wild

The NHL's reigning Vezina champion is on the move to Minnesota. The Minnesota Wild are currently situated in a playoff spot in the Central Division. With a stellar offensive and defensive line, the Wild

decided to upgrade the one area of their team that needed it. Cam Talbot was an all-star representative this year and Marc-André Fleury joining the fray gives Minnesota one of the best goalie tandems in the entire league. With Fleury and Talbot at the helm, Minnesota traded their young goalie Kaapo Kähkönen to the San Jose Sharks.

Fleury started this season with the Chicago Blackhawks, and although the team had a lot of promise on paper, Fleury really struggled early on in the season. He finished his tenure with the Blackhawks with a 19-21-5 record with a .908 save percentage. Expect these numbers to go up with the Minnesota

Wild as Fleury will now have star defensemen Jared Spurgeon, Matt Dumba and Jonas Brodin to protect him. On top of that, the Wild have a lot of offensive firepower with the reigning Calder Trophy winner Kirill Kaprizov, Kevin Fiala and Joel Eriksson Ek on the offensive line. This is a brilliant move for Minnesota in the short term and should make them true cup contenders with two very experienced goaltenders guarding the crease.

### Claude Giroux to the Florida Panthers

By far the most impactful trade of this year's deadline was Claude Giroux to the

Florida Panthers.

Claude Giroux has been the longtime captain of the Philadelphia Flyers and has been an integral part of the organisation since 2007. Giroux has consistently been one of the best players in the NHL since his draft year, and if it weren't for players like Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin, Giroux would have been a household name.

Giroux currently has 42 points in 57 games played this season. Although that number is already impressive, look for the numbers to shoot up if Giroux gets to play alongside Aleksander Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau on Florida's top line.

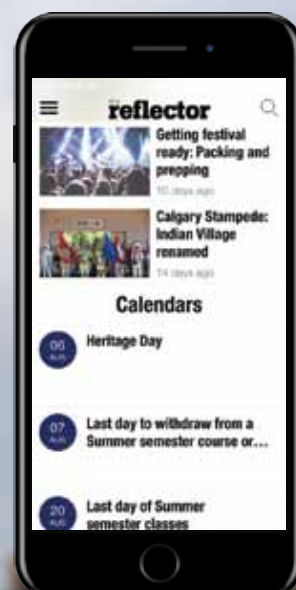
Giroux has won many individual awards over the years but there is still one honour that he is missing: the coveted Stanley Cup championship. Giroux now has a chance to make that dream come true; at the time of writing, the Florida Panthers sit at the top of the Eastern Conference with 90 points. With the addition of Giroux, the Panthers arguably have one of the best offensive lineups in the league and will almost undoubtedly be one of the favourites to win the Stanley Cup this year.

It will be strange seeing Giroux in anything other than a Flyers jersey but this trade to Florida might be his greatest chance at a Stanley Cup championship.



Former longtime Calgary Flames captain Mark Giordano will bring veteran leadership to the Toronto Maple Leafs. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

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# The Toronto Raptors have overachieved this season. What's next?

**Jed Mabazza**

Staff Writer

The Toronto Raptors have many decisions to make this upcoming offseason if they want to have another shot at winning a title within the next three years. Let's take a look at how this season may influence the kinds of moves that the front office might make in the offseason.

## Exceeding Expectations

Prior to this season, many predicted that the Raptors would be a fringe play-in team since they were retooling. But at the time of writing, the Raptors are tied with the Cleveland Cavaliers for the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference at 41-32. At the very minimum, the Raptors have secured a spot in the play-in tournament.

This team is definitely ahead of schedule, not because of one particular

player but because of the team's growth as a whole. Fred VanVleet is now officially an NBA all-star. Pascal Siakam is back in his all-star form and a candidate for all NBA. Scottie Barnes is in the top three for Rookie of the Year. Gary Trent Jr. is a walking bucket and is proving to be a great two-way player. OG Anunoby continues to be a lockdown defender and an offensive threat from the three-point line. Chris Boucher is definitely a dark horse candidate for Sixth Man of the Year. Precious Achiuwa has blossomed since the all-star break. Need I go further? The Raptors development team is delivering as always.

## Setbacks

As great as it's been to watch this team, it has

also been frustrating at times. Most of the time, the Raptors are on a winning trajectory as long as their starters are rolling. But when the starters are in a slump, it suddenly becomes very difficult for the team to sneak a win. Why? Bench depth.

Aside from Chris Boucher and Precious Achiuwa, the Toronto Raptors lack a formidable bench. According to NBA.com, the Raptors are dead last, 30th, in bench scoring at 24.8 points per game. Because of this, the starting lineup is relegated to long nights, logging the most minutes in the league according to NBA.com at 34.3 minutes.

## Offseason

This offseason is solely dependent on whether or not the front office wants to win now or play the waiting game. Here's my take: the Raptors need to address glaring holes in their roster while it's still early. It's clear that the team favored financial flexibility with the Goran Dragic trade, which gave the team a veteran in Thaddeus Young while putting the team approximately \$3 million below the luxury tax. This gives the team flexibility in preparation for the 2022 free agency and for any possible trades that the team might make.

The 2022 free agency class has the potential to be decently strong, with notable players including Zach Lavine (UFA), Bradley Beal (PO), John Wall (PO) and Colin Sexton (RFA) among many others. These players are all formidable scorers that the Raptors could definitely be interested in. Granted, these are all elite starting-level players,



**The resurgence of Pascal Siakam has been central to Toronto's surprising success. Photo courtesy of Keith Allison**

but there are plenty of other free agents that the Raptors could look into for bench scoring including Malik Monk (UFA), Joe Ingles (UFA), Anfernee Simmons (RFA) and Victor Oladipo (UFA) among others.

However, the Raptors do not have the luxury of signing whomever they please this coming offseason due to the salary cap. According to Sportsnet.ca, the Raptors "already have \$110.6 million committed in salary to eight players. The cap is projected to be \$121 million." This means that the Raptors have approximately \$10 million to use in any free agent signing or trade. If the Raptors are looking for bench depth, it's quite clear that they won't get it via free agency. Instead, the Raptors might be forced into making a blockbuster trade. This is where things can get tricky for the front office. Do they

want to break up the core in order to solidify the bench? I think it's a risk worth taking.

It's all a matter of who the sacrificial lamb will be. The Raptors could go any direction with this as all of their starters would certainly attract attention from multiple contending and rebuilding teams. But I'd like to think the Raptors could get the most value out of either a Fred VanVleet or OG Anunoby trade. Of course, these are tough pills to swallow as I'd still be heartbroken if either one of their eras came to an end in the six. But the team has enough scoring and leadership from Siakam and Trent. To add to that, Scottie Barnes plays well ahead of his years and can facilitate the ball seamlessly. Regardless, I think the



**Fred VanVleet has played up to his all-star selection this year. Photo courtesy of Keith Allison**

**Continues on Pg. 16**



# Cougars women's volleyball makes unlikely silver medal run

**Gage Smith**

Sports Editor



The Cougars women's volleyball team poses together after their silver medal victory. Photo courtesy of David Moll

The Mount Royal University (MRU) Cougars women's volleyball team made a Cinderella run in the U SPORTS Women's Volleyball Championship, earning themselves a silver medal and making program history. MRU was cheered on by what was essentially a home crowd as the tournament was held at the University of Calgary's Jack Simpson Gym.

Out of eight teams to make the championship tournament, MRU was seeded seventh, above only the University of Calgary Dinos. Despite the long odds, the Cougars would go on to defeat the favoured Brock University Badgers and the University of Alberta Pandas without dropping a single set in either game. The win against the Pandas was especially impressive because

it was a bounceback for MRU as they lost to the Pandas 3-1 the week before.

The run would end in a hotly-contested gold medal game against the Trinity Western University (TWU) Spartans who were favoured to win the tournament. TWU took the first set in convincing fashion at 25-14, but MRU swung right back in the second with a 25-14 win of their own. The number

one seed would seal the deal in sets three and four though, winning them 19-25 and 20-25 respectively.

Haley Roe and Madison Marshall were two of MRU's leaders in the gold medal game. Roe contributed a game-high 15 kills and 12 digs and Marshall added nine kills, 12 digs and a block.

MRU's unlikely run was recognized when U SPORTS was putting together its

Championship All-Star Team; half of its members are Cougars (Haley Roe, Quinn Pelland and Savannah Purdy.)

This silver medal victory was Cougars women's volleyball's first-ever placement in a U SPORTS Championship, so to make it as far as they did is nothing short of outstanding. The future is bright for this young program.

## Continued from Pg. 15

Raptors could land some quality bench pieces in any trade involving the current core.

Alternatively, the Raptors could opt for organic growth and play the waiting game with this core and second unit. This is clearly the direction that the front office took at this year's trade deadline. The addition of Thaddeus Young did not resolve their need for shooting depth but it did give the Raptors a veteran presence for the bench to take advantage of to help in their development. To their credit, some bench players have shown improvement in the scoring column since Young joined the team,

especially Precious Achiuwa who has been averaging 12.9 points per game since All-Star Weekend according to NBA.com. This is an improvement from his scoring pre-All-Star Weekend, when he only averaged 7.5 points per game.

Needless to say, the bench can definitely improve with time and they certainly have some great projects in Achiuwa, Malachi Flynn, Yuta Watanabe, Sviatoslav Mykhailiuk and Dalano Banton. The core already has great chemistry on and off the floor as well.

Organically developing seems like a safe and sustainable option. My only concern with organic growth is that it's time-

consuming and it might waste the window of their players who are entering or already in their primes. Pascal Siakam, Fred VanVleet and Gary Trent Jr. are at the very minimum, entering their primes. Now is not the time to waste them. The window to build a championship team is this offseason, because the East will only continue to get more competitive.

One thing is for certain: if and when the time comes for the team to pivot to championship contention, the Raptors can be confident that they have one of the best, if not the best, league executives at the helm of the front office in Masai Ujiri. In Masai we trust.



Not many expected Gary Trent Jr. to bring the offensive production he has this season. Photo courtesy of All-Pro Reels