



**New MRU club
raises awareness for
Palestine on campus
(Pg. 1)**

MRU's new Palestinian Advocacy Club raises awareness on campus

Sannah Chawdhry, Contributor & Noel Ormita, Contributor

Protests in support of Palestine and Israel have taken place side-by-side around the world since the widely covered Oct. 7 Hamas attacks. But for Palestinian students at MRU, the conflict has been happening for over 75 years.

The Palestinian Advocacy Club (PACMRU), a newly ratified club at SAMRU, aims to educate and spread awareness of the prolonged humanitarian issues in Palestine on campus. Manar Dawud, Lana Al-Digs, Noor El-Borrno and Nada El-Borrno said they started the club to share their culture and spearhead discourse with students.

A glimpse into the pages of history

The PACMRU team shared that there's nothing new under the sun for Palestinians and war. In a joint statement, the leaders of PACMRU told *The Reflector* how they felt.

"This has been an on-going situation for 75 plus years," PACMRU leaders said. "What happened as of Oct. 7 was a resistance to oppression and genocide."

The Nakba of 1948 caused mass displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians. As Jewish immigration increased, Zionist movements pushed for an independent Jewish state according to the United Nations.

After the departure of British forces, Palestine was split into two territories, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, where they lived under

Israeli-military control.

According to Amnesty International, many international humanitarian and war crimes have been violated, including the use of white phosphorus in warzones, unlawful killings of civilians and collective punishment, which includes the disruption of essential services like food, water and electricity.

Not a religious issue

Fawaz Saleem, a nursing student and president of the Muslim Students' Affiliation (MSA) at MRU, said the teachings in the Quran are embedded in their club's identity.

"If you kill one innocent person, it's as if you're killing the entirety of mankind," Saleem said, quoting the Quran. "If you save one singular life, then it's like you've saved the entirety of humanity."

According to *Al Jazeera*, 11,470 Palestinians have been killed as of Nov. 16.

Over the years, Jews, Muslims, Christians, and believers of other religions have all claimed particular ties to Palestine.

"It has never been a religious issue," PACMRU said. "The only thing that makes it a religious factor is that the world isn't standing up with us because we are Muslims."

The need for empathy

Nearly half of Palestine's

population is below 18 years of age according to a report by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in 2022.

"Many of the individuals in Gaza grow up knowing they're probably going to die somewhere around that age," PACMRU said.

According to a recent *Mainstreet Research* poll, commissioned by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), 71 per cent of Canadians agree to a ceasefire in Gaza.

The leaders of PACMRU believe there is no space to be neutral in a humanitarian crisis. Despite a geographical disconnect, people in Canada should pay attention.

"Their tax dollars are funding what's happening," PACMRU said. "Stating ignorance and claiming you're not educated enough does not excuse anything."

In a 2021 Global Affairs report, Israel was among the top ten non-US countries Canada supplied military goods and technology to, amounting to more than \$25 million. \$50 million in funding was announced on Oct. 21 by the Canadian government to provide humanitarian aid including food, water and medical assistance to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

To scale this with recent global conflicts, since February 2022, Canada has committed more than \$2 billion to Ukraine including ammunition, 300 Canadian Armed Forces members and military armory including eight Leopard 2 battle tanks.

The loaded question: what's the solution?

With a long history of conflict in the region and previous peace agreements not honoured, a solution to the crisis is yet to be seen. But for students with deep roots in Palestine they argue it's simple.

"They don't deserve to be born dead," a PACMRU leader said. "It's all about human rights."

#FreePalestine is a common hashtag circulating on social media. Saleem said the freedom of Palestinians requires more than a band-aid solution.

"As nurses we're taught,

don't just look at the broken arm," Saleem said. "Look at factors of what led to the broken arm."

The introduction of national petitions to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for support on a ceasefire, social media movements and boycotting is also on the rise towards brands who are supporting the conflict—drawing similarities to the Black Lives Matter movement during George Floyd's murder.

PACMRU plans to proactively share content on their Instagram page @pacmr, on what students can do to help rather than focusing on what to reject and event announcements.



Over 1,500 protestors took to City Hall on Sunday, Nov. 12, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Photo by Khaoula Choual

Gaza death toll surpasses 10,000

Local Palestinian-Calgarian shares his experience of war and loss

Khaoula Choual

Contributor



Tamer Jarada addresses protesters gathered at City Hall. Photo by Khaoula Choual

Gaza's death toll has surpassed 10,000.

According to Gaza's official media office, more than 12,000 Palestinians have been killed since Oct. 7. However, the official death toll has not been updated in days due to the collapse of Gaza's health system, which was responsible for collecting statistics.

Palestinian-Calgarian, Tamer Jarada, said it was confirmed that 16 of his family members were killed after Israel launched airstrikes over the Gaza Strip. He lost his mother, father,

sisters, his cousins and their children.

This is not Jarada's first time witnessing war in the Gaza Strip. As a young boy, he experienced the First Intifada in 1987 at the age of four. He then lived through wars in 2000, 2008 and 2014.

He said he nearly got hit by an Israeli airstrike in 2008.

"I was just out getting some bread for the family and an airstrike happened, I would say, 20 meters away from me," said Jarada. "I'm alive now just because somebody else was just walking in front of me."

Voices are fading

Jarada said the scale of the mass destruction in Gaza presently has surpassed that of the past wars.

"No one is treating my people there in the Gaza Strip as humans and we are just asking for human rights," he said. "We are just asking for fairness, equity and respect for the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people."

Jarada describes that he and many Palestinian voices are not being heard by the government.

"We go to these demonstrations, we write to MPs, we send

these emails, we meet politicians, but nothing is working," he said. "We feel that our voice is fading."

On Nov. 12, a protest was held in Calgary with as many as 1,500 people in attendance according to *CityNews*. An organizer of the event says there will be a protest every Sunday in Calgary until there is a ceasefire.

Urgent ceasefire

Jarada still has family in Gaza, however, the Israel government has completely shut off electricity and internet access so he hasn't been able to get in touch with his sister and in-laws. Additionally, the Israel government completely shut off food and water supplies to the Gaza Strip.

"We are hurting and frustrated about what has been happening in the Gaza Strip. We have reached a point where we are just waiting and afraid to hear more news about our families and loved ones."

He stresses that there is a need to advocate for Palestinians for basic human rights.

"Advocating for justice for Palestinians is a call to address a wide range of historical, political and

humanitarian issues. It's a statement that highlights the need for fairness, equity and respect for the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people," Jarada said.

Collapsing aid

According to the director of Al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest hospital, Al-Shifa is currently sheltering 7,000 people, including patients, medical staff, and other civilians in need of shelter. The Israeli forces are still occupying the facility.

Aid organizations claim the fuel supply is insufficient, despite Israel's announcement that it will permit two fuel trucks into Gaza each day to power water and sewage operations, according to *Al Jazeera*.

The Palestinian-Calgarian refers to the current Gaza war as "ethnic cleansing and genocide" and argues a humanitarian ceasefire is urgent.

"My thoughts are with my people in the Gaza Strip during this incredibly challenging time. The horror of the situation and the mass destruction unfolding there are painful reminders of the urgent need for a ceasefire and urgent humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of those affected."

Coffee lovers call to boycott Starbucks over Israel-Hamas war

Bella Coco

Staff Writer

With the recent events concerning Israel and Palestine, individuals across the globe have found themselves taking sides in the war.

Starbucks Workers United, a worker-led unionized effort, shared a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, in support of Palestine that read “Solidarity with Palestine!”. The post has since been deleted.

Starbucks criticized the post made by the union and filed a complaint. Sara Kelley, Starbucks’ executive vice president and chief partner officer, put out a statement on Oct. 17.

“As a leadership team, we want to again express our deepest sympathy for those who have been killed, wounded, displaced and impacted following the heinous acts of terror, escalating violence and hate against the innocent in Israel and Gaza this week,” Kelley said. “Starbucks unequivocally condemns acts of hate, terrorism and violence.”

In addition, Kelley stated that Starbucks contacted the union and demanded that they provide a correction to the post and stop using the company’s intellectual property as well as the name and logo. Kelley added that Starbucks’ request was rejected by Workers United, and in response, “Starbucks will file litigation against the union in federal court.”

Stop Starbucks: Support local

As a result of Starbucks’ actions concerning Workers United and their stance, numerous people on social media have announced that they will be boycotting



Consumers are boycotting Starbucks after its executive vice president asked an X account using its name to take down a pro-Palestine post. Photo by Megan Creig

Starbucks indefinitely.

A majority of the boycotters are influencers on TikTok, who have spoken out about the controversy and offered homemade recipes to substitute popular Starbucks beverages.

Omayazein, a TikToker with 2.2 million followers, made a post on Nov. 7 showing her enjoying a seemingly locally made coffee.

“You know what that tastes like? Like a company that doesn’t support genocide,” Omayazein said in the video.

Alternatively, multiple TikTok users have also made videos about the difficulty of giving up their favorite coffee shop or their indifference to the controversy.

In Muslim countries,

the boycott has taken to a whole new level with empty branches in Turkey and Qatar. Baristas have taken to social media as well to voice their observations on customer attendance. Some have noticed no difference, while some are claiming one-third of customers are no longer coming to buy their specialty holiday drinks.

Impact in Calgary

A Calgary barista, who has chosen to remain anonymous, stated that they have noticed a difference in customers at their local Starbucks.

“The lines are still kind of chaotic, but I’ve noticed less people during rushes. But I’ve seen more effects on other Starbucks on social media,” they say.

Some students at MRU were completely unaware of the boycott itself, while some are unsure on how to proceed with social media pressure. Most influencers have seemed to enact a “tell don’t ask” policy, leaving students unsure where to start with the boycott or education on the war.

Most agreed that they weren’t aware of the boycott, but those who were admitted to discovering it through social media. However, most are afraid to speak up or publicly state their opinions due to the backlash of speaking out on either side of the war.

A bold few stated that they planned to take part in the boycott, but according to one student, “It has been difficult giving up a business that is a part of my day-to-day life.”

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Personality tests are lying to you

Emma Duke
Features Editor

If I told you that I was going to get married at the age of 30 in Spain, on June 11, and I knew this because I chose pancakes over waffles on a BuzzFeed quiz, you'd probably think I was either joking, or you'd quickly become concerned about my mental state. You also might tell me to 'not trust everything you see on the internet,' and rightly so.

There's a general consensus that quizzes like BuzzFeed, though fun, don't uncover anything real about our identities or our future. There are, however, more generally respected personality tests that we might put more stake into, like the Myers-Briggs or the Enneagram, though, as we're about to uncover, the validity of these might be in question too.

Popular doesn't mean reliable

As I indicated with the BuzzFeed example (sorry, BuzzFeed), there is a general understanding that some personality tests have no weight—often, the shorter and more shallow the test, the less accurate we feel they are.

On the other hand, more complex tests, that promise to be rooted in psychology, tend to get more traction. The Myers-Briggs test is an example of a test that fits into this category. According to Vox, it might be the most popular personality test in the world, with two million people taking the quiz annually. I, (an ENFJ), am just one of those millions.

The Myers-Briggs test, composed of around 93 questions, will decide which one of the 16 personality types you belong to, based on

four categories: extraversion-introversion, sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving.

The company's website makes the test sound pretty legit: "with more than 70 years of science-based, research-based insight, the MBTI assessment is a robust tool for self-awareness and improvement." They assure us that the test will help us work, learn and communicate. Myers-Briggs creates quite an image for themselves—why wouldn't you want to take the test?

One reason might be that it's not as trustworthy as it sounds.

As *Areo* points out, the test is based on the personality theories of Carl Jung, a psychiatrist in the early-mid 1900s—sounds pretty legitimate! ...except for the fact that Jung's theories weren't ever legitimately tested. In addition to that, the test fails at reliability. One study conducted at Marshall University found that within a five week period, 50 per cent of participants were considered a different personality type than the first time they took the test. *Eek*. A INFP one week, and an ENFJ the next? Which one are you supposed to put on your Tinder profile now?!

Don't worry Myers-Briggs lovers, this personality test isn't the only one under fire.

The Enneagram is also a point of skepticism for some in the scientific community—though in general it's still widely popular and loved. This test became popular in the 1970s and its origins are credited to Oscar Ichazo. This test places you in one of nine categories, based on your answers to a little over 100 questions. The

categories are: the reformer, the helper, the achiever, the individualist, the investigator, the loyalist, the enthusiast, the challenger and the peacemaker.

A company called Statistical Solutions tested the Enneagram's reliability, and found that it is 72 per cent reliable—not bad! Still, the universality of the test is questionable. The director at the Personality Processes Laboratory at the University of Melbourne, Luke Smillie, told *Inverse* the Enneagram is "pseudoscience at best" and "probably at the top of the lists I would not recommend."

The main criticism of most personality tests is that they make broad generalizations and claims about human personality. While they may seem harmless, putting too much stake into the results of a personality test could have harmful implications.

Boxing you in

A study in the National Library of Medicine looked at the relationship between Enneagram personality types and risk of heart disease. The article concludes by stating that "the Enneagram personality system can provide opportunities for evolution and personal and social health of patients because it can define the unique mental and emotional defenses of each personality type." The hopefulness of the authors for a future in which personality tests can determine future health behaviours, worries me.

When it comes to personality tests influencing decisions regarding health, careers, or relationships, it is of utmost importance that these personality

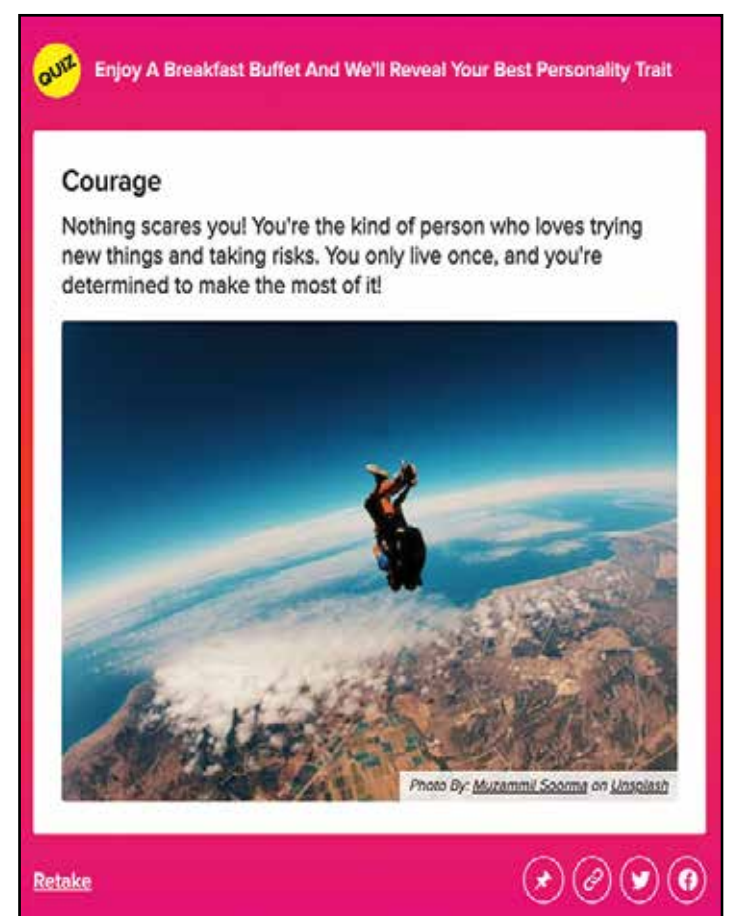
tests are backed up by evidence-based psychology and research. This would likely require a test that is made in conjunction with professionals in these fields, meaning that the Myers-Briggs or Enneagram tests probably aren't the answer.

Even so, I think there is a danger in wholeheartedly trusting that you belong to a category you've been placed into as a result of a 15-minute test. There is also the question of how well we know ourselves—we might be too self-critical and provide inaccurate answers, or alternatively, we might see ourselves idealistically, as we wish to be, rather than as we are.

It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy—you think the results sound accurate, but subconsciously you start acting in ways that make the results come true. It can alter the way you see yourself—and trap you in the false belief that this is who you are, this is the type of career you should have, and this is how you act in relationships, full stop.

Personality tests can be fun, as long as they don't determine your identity and make you feel boxed into a 'type.'

If you are curious to know yourself on a deeper level, other methods such as therapy, might be more effective.



Buzzfeed quizzes are among the most popular online personality quizzes because of their fun, oftentimes humorous topics. Photo courtesy of buzzfeed.com

A survival guide to stress

Emma Marshall

Staff Writer

As the demands of university continue to heighten, students find themselves grappling with stress on multiple fronts as the semester comes to a close. From academic pressures to financial struggles, the path through post-secondary education can be challenging.

In the midst of exams, deadlines, and juggling other tasks like preparing for the upcoming holiday season, students are finding themselves on the brink of overwhelming stress.

"I can just feel it brewing up inside and it's just this thought in the back of my head," said Mia Smith, a third-year communications student at MRU. "It builds until I hit a breaking point, and I don't see it coming because I haven't had time to think about it."

Smith's experience is true for countless other students who find themselves falling behind with responsibilities. The pressure to excel academically, having to work because of financial needs, and even stressors with friends and family, all contribute to a silent battle within.

MRU professor and mental health researcher, Dan Devoe, recognizes stress as a multi-faceted challenge that is unique to every individual.

He explains that stress, in moderation, is actually a good thing because it promotes work ethic.

"However, if stress goes too far, it can exhibit in many different ways. It could end up being depression or an actual anxiety disorder. And so you do want to come up with coping strategies before it becomes a full on psychiatric condition," said Devoe.

Although there are resources available both on and off campus, the main coping strategies that students resort to tend to be maladaptive, or unhealthy. This includes excessive use of television or the internet, procrastination, and even substance abuse.

The professor acknowledges the risk behind this kind of coping, and emphasizes that it can be positive in helping students unwind, but should not be the only strategies being relied on.

"People are trying to get their mind off of it. You know, there's lots of ways to do that. Including beer or cannabis and those sorts of things. So, I think a little bit of that stuff is okay, but then they can push it too far," said Devoe.

Understanding the root of stress is crucial in developing effective coping mechanisms.

Devoe identifies poor time management, unmet expectations, and financial strain as the primary stressors. He also explained that stress can manifest in physical ways, such as restlessness, a feeling of unease, and an inability to control body temperature.

If left untreated, this type of chronic stress can manifest into various other health issues, such as insomnia, eating disorders, panic disorders, and more.

The key to dealing with stress, it seems, lies in acknowledging this feeling and opening up to others about personal experiences with stress.

"I think talking about it is huge, even if it's with your friend who's in the same boat," said third-year student Smith. "Every student has their own level of being overwhelmed and that just comes with being in university—why go about dealing with it by yourself?"

By having these conversations, students are able to relate to each other through their struggles. Establishing a support network of people who understand one another can be a healthy way to stop internalizing stress.

Universities can also play a pivotal role in supporting

students by offering resources such as support groups and campus counseling services. Normalizing stress and providing the tools to cope not only fosters a healthier academic environment but also ensures that students are equipped to navigate the challenges of university life successfully.

"There are supports out there," said Smith. "It's just making them more noticed and available to everyone."

Campus resources are ready and available to help students by spreading information and creating personalized plans for success. Mount Royal Counseling Services offer a variety of options for students to access, including sessions, resources, and

opportunity to speak with the mental health nurses on campus. They accept walk-ins on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and appointments can be made online.

Additionally, MRU Early Support offers students a chance to speak with a professional about their academics, personal life, and struggles. The team creates tailored plans for success based on each student's needs. A professor can refer students to early support, or students can refer themselves.

If you or someone you know is struggling, reach out to one of MRU's many student services, and remember to keep up the conversation about stress and mental health on campus.



Academic and other life stressors can quickly add up for students and lead to real health problems. Photo courtesy of Pexels

Air Canada breaks silence on \$17 million loss

April's shipping container heist raises questions

Matthew Hillier

Staff Writer

This April, an Air Canada plane dropped off a shipping container weighing 880 pounds. Inside was a massive amount of gold and cash adding up to a total of over \$17 million.

This gold belonged to a Swiss bank by the name of Raiffeisen Schweiz being and was being transported by Brinks Security. Less than an hour later, the container was picked up after a

waybill, the document that contains the details of the shipment, was presented to security personnel and then hauled off in a massive semi-truck.

The container and its

gold never arrived at its destination, Toronto, and was never seen again.

This simple but very effective heist is now considered one of the largest heists in Canada's history.

On top of that, authorities have no idea how to recover the gold and thus far, no arrests have been made.

Continues on Pg. 7

Continued from Pg. 6

Air Canada has kept their lips sealed, not commenting on details about the heist, but they did state that they believe the gold was forged into bars. To make matters even worse, the gold and cash was not insured, meaning Switzerland won't get their money back.

Details have been scarce, with both the airline and Brinks keeping a tight lid on the news. However, this changed when Brinks sued Air Canada for responsibility this month.

The lawsuit itself is for the total amount of missing gold and money. Usually in cases like this, Brinks would be held to international agreements on missing or stolen cargo, that being

they can accept very little compensation (less than 1 per cent) for the loss.

However, since Brinks paid a flat fee for Air Canada's AC Secure program to transport the gold, Brinks considers that this loss under the program requires the repayment of the total amount of lost property.

According to the *National Post*, one of the major issues behind the lawsuit is that Air Canada failed to provide "storing facilities equipped with effective vaults and cages, constant CCTV surveillance and active human surveillance patrols."

Essentially, Brinks views the heist as a special case

because of the lack of security, which they believe was inconsistent with the AC Secure program.

In response to the heist, Air Canada has also pledged to "build an improved process" for their Secure program which includes "better technology enhancements, handovers and [an] improved tracing method."

The heist has certainly become one of the most impactful heists in Canadian history.

One thing is certain though, the heist came at a high cost in more ways than one. It will be some time before Brinks trusts a package to Air Canada again.



A 17 million dollar shipment of gold vanished during transport with Air Canada in April. Photo by Megan Creig

You and your water: Calgarians' thoughts on fluoridation

Arroy (AJ) Jacob
Staff Writer

From where the Bow and Elbow Rivers meet, there is water flowing to every home and business, sustaining any Calgarian who cranks open the faucet. But for decades now, Calgarians have thought twice before filling up their glasses as they stop to consider the implications of their water in the long run. The debate for fluoride in our water supply is an example of this conundrum.

Fluoride is already a natural mineral in our water supply—we consume it everyday. In fact, Calgary had introduced 0.7 mg/l (the suggested concentration) of fluoride in our water since 1998, but was discontinued in 2011 by the Calgary Council over their fear of overarching costs. In the 2021 General Election, 64 per cent of Calgarians voted "yes" to

reintroduce fluoridation.

Juliet Guichon, the President of Calgarians for Kids' Health and the Fluoride Yes! campaign says in policy options that "Evidence over more than 75 years shows that [water fluoridation] significantly reduces cavities in children and provides further benefits throughout life."

But Councillor Andre Chabot voted "no" in the proposal for reintroducing fluoride because "the costs presented in the reintroduction plan were underestimated" he says in an article for *CBC News*.

The issue? 66 per cent of Calgarians voted "yes" to fluoridation, but the reintroduction plan was delayed until September 2024.

Now in November 2023, what do Calgarians have to

say about their decision?

"Is it really worth it?"

Rachel George, a student in MRU's Bachelor of Science program has been living in the city for two years. "In my molecular genetics class, we learned about how a cell can choose whether a protein is either necessary, (a cell requires that protein to function), or sufficient, (a cell can live without it). That's what this debate reminds me of."

"There are cities in Alberta that don't have fluoride and are not complaining."

Maybe in the future when there is a better budget, or more money. Point is, fluoride is sufficient for our water, but not necessary."

"I didn't know about the costs."

Isabel Akade is an MRU Bachelor of Business student and lived in Calgary most of her life. She voted "yes" for the reintroduction of fluoride.

"But now I regret it. In the poll they just said 'Do you want fluoride back in our water?' And me, not knowing much about the history and stats of our budget, just said yes. But that's because I was

oblivious to why the Council voted 'no' to begin with," she says. "I didn't know about the costs."

"I think it was a little untruthful for them to just ask me for my opinion on something when they don't give me the stats behind it. That doesn't make me qualified to give an opinion. Knowing what I know now, I would have said no!"



Rachel George (left) and Isabel Akade (right) reconsider fluoride water and its long-term implications. Photo by Arroy (AJ) Jacob.

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Exploring Mystic Falls beyond the screen

Isabella West
Arts Editor

In the quaint town of Covington, Georgia, where Southern charm emanates from its historic buildings and the local landmarks transport you into a mystical world, visitors can not deny its allure. However, Covington isn't just a picturesque Southern gem,

it's also the real-life Mystic Falls, the fictional town in *The Vampire Diaries*.

As you stroll the town square, where vampires, werewolves, and witches had their limelight, you can't help but appreciate the architecture, the warmth,

and most of all, the small-town charm that is severely lacking in Atlanta, just 40 minutes away.

Covington's mystique extends beyond the on-screen drama. The town is a character of its own with its rich history as the "Hollywood of the South," which many local store owners were quite proud to announce.

In fact, this little town even has its own version of the Hollywood Walk of Fame featuring stars like Ian Somerhalder, Patrick Swayze, and Reese Witherspoon.

Another *Vampire Diaries* classic that can be seen in the real-life town is the Mystic Grill, where characters from the show gathered both on and off-screen. All throughout the restaurant, there is memorabilia and signed menus that have welcomed stars from every genre.

Right around the corner from the Mystic Grill is the infamous alley that claimed many lives in the show. In the alley, there is a gift shop that has all of the *Vampire Diaries* merchandise you could think of and even clothes that the

stars wore in the show.

However, this business is not the only one in Covington that embraces *The Vampire Diaries* enchantment. Wildart LLC is in the heart of the Square and holds true to the name of Southern Charm. Judy Hernandez owns a pop-up booth within the store featuring her own brand Bitten The Label.

Hernandez has lived in Covington for seven out of the eight seasons of the show. She recalled Ian Somerhalder, who plays Damon Salvatore, living just 10 minutes out of the town all throughout filming and would see him all of the time. However, Hernandez said that she had never seen a fanbase so passionate about the show until very recently.

"Nobody ever thought about him like this," said Hernandez. "This many people never came here and the people that did, were much older than the young girls that are coming now."

Because of the uproar of the fandom, her connection to the show and its actors, and her placement in the town, Hernandez decided

to create her own clothing brand, Bitten The Label. With a *Vampire Diaries* convention on the way, Hernandez knew it was the perfect time to launch her clothing line.

At first, it was just for fun but has since received so much love in just a year, that she is now opening another store in December as her brand grows.

Hernandez had previously owned her own clothing boutique in the Square called Shelve Jean, which unfortunately was destroyed in a fire in August of 2023.

Despite losing all of her merchandise, Hernandez said that customers and locals supported her both before and after the fire.

"I had such a big response. I had over 300 orders in two weeks and no clothes," said Hernandez.

Now, Hernandez is looking forward to seeing how her brand grows each day. She said that she is constantly meeting new people from all over the world who have come to Covington for the



The infamous town where *The Vampire Diaries* was filmed exists as the "Hollywood of the South" in Covington, Georgia. Photo by Isabella West

Continues on Pg. 11

OUT'N ABOUT

More Than A Store market

Shop ethically this season at More Than A Store (MTAS) annual pop-up market, running from Nov. 23 to 26. Discover socially conscious goods benefiting communities worldwide.

Harm Reduction & Naloxone Training

On Nov. 28, attend Wellness Services and the School of Nursing and Midwifery's two-hour free training session on harm reduction practices, and responding to opioid poisoning.

BIPOC Student Art Showcase

Join the Council of Alberta University Students at West Gate Social on Nov. 29 for the BIPOC Student Art Showcase to celebrate diversity through creative expression.

The Dancing Queen Dining Experience

Experience an ABBA tribute night on Nov. 26. Enjoy dinner, followed by a lively disco that'll transport you to the idyllic Greek islands and have you dancing along to ABBA all night long.

Creative careers

The Reflector chats with Katie Lois Leahul about her career as a painter

Mikaela Delos Santos

Publishing Editor

Katie Lois Leahul is a Calgary-based painter, showcasing contemporary cubism through acrylic mediums on canvas. The self-taught artist is inspired by natural landscapes which are adapted into her own unique geometric style. Our team got to know Leahul by talking about her career and her journey in the industry of fine arts.

The Reflector: For this issue, our theme is careers. And [we] thought maybe [we] can try to find a way to connect the two arts and careers... [We felt like] there's so much misconception around the field of arts and how you have to be a poor artist, you have to suffer for your art. And [we] don't think that's necessarily true...

KLL: Hundred per cent!

The Reflector: So that's why [we] wanted to talk to artists like you... tell [us] a little bit about how you

started and how you got into art to begin with.

KLL: I'll try to keep it as brief as possible. Because it's really kind of more like a life story. I think for creatives, people who are really in the arts... but I think that it's malleable, in terms of how you view it, but I've been doing art forever... I think we're all creative. I think it's built within us. I have two little boys and it's quite amazing to see these little minds and how creativity really just exists within everyone. But to take [a] career in it is a different kind of love about it, I think that I never set out to have a career in the arts ever... I grew up in an era where it was way too risky... You couldn't have a career in it.

KLL: But I got started in my version of arts when I decided to change my major to marketing because that is what I felt was the closest to being in the arts. So that's kind of how

it started... I didn't want to do what I had originally gotten into school for. And I realized very well a year or two years in that I was like, 'this isn't for me.' And I think the best advice I'd received at that time was, I think 70 per cent of the time anyway, [many] students change their major before they complete it, and I was like, well, that gives me permission to change.

KLL: That put me on this trajectory of following my intuition. And then it wasn't until 2016 that I really started not taking an arts career seriously but just taking my creativity seriously, and I started to paint in 2016 more deeply and by asking questions, and working with mentors. I ended up getting my first gallery in 2019. It's a really wild story, but I think it wasn't necessarily that I believed that I could be fully in the arts as a career in general. So, there's a major perspective

change that I had to have.

The Reflector: And you said you're self-taught and then you had your own gallery within three years of starting. Would you say you were always creative?

KLL: I was always creative, [at a] very young age, [and I] loved it. It was something that just brought me peace and relaxation... it's probably different for different people, but it's the flow—is what people call it for artists often. It's transporting, so it was an escape. Always forever, I would just paint but I never thought I could have a career in it. I didn't even take a single art class in university. Not one. Because I really think at the time I was just like 'no, you can't have a career in that' ... But I think what happened in 2016 is I realized I needed creativity in my life just in general. So I created it. And it wasn't with intention or it wasn't with expectation, career wise. I got a lot of advice along the way and I chose to follow it.

The Reflector: For someone who's in that point in their life where they don't think that they can have a career in arts but they want to, what piece of advice would you give them after knowing everything that you've been taught?

KLL: Well if you really want it, it will happen. But I think the challenge that I've learned is that it doesn't always happen when you want it to happen. So patience is key. And authenticity, really learning to express yourself truly as who you are, but also jumping through fear is key. You've got to be brave, but you've also got to be realistic. And remember that failures are good.

KLL: We talked about art as a career, I wrote it out because

I was just like 'I need to think about what has my career been'... one, two, three, four, five, six, careers. All of them brought me here. I used to work in a gallery for a period of time and the woman who found the gallery, she said 'I'm not creative, but I am a creative.' She said, 'I'm not an artist, but I love creativity'. And I thought, 'Oh, that's a really good way to put it.' I think it's all within us.

The Reflector: You could go and do art therapy or dance therapy... It's such a huge field.

KLL: Yeah, there's ways you can bring it in and in different ways. I'm at a point now in my life where I'm doing art so I paint, I have a studio in my garage. I also run a business so I do marketing consulting as well. But I choose my clients very carefully. I've really set some big fences around who we'll bring on and what my capacity is. I guess it has been helpful to really understand that so that I can do both but I think I've learned that I actually need both. Sometimes it doesn't always come in full time or the way that you expect so I think it's being open because the arts industry changes so fast, just like marketing. And if you're open to what comes—you're not super set on the vision that you have—then you can create whatever you want. Have bits and pieces in the way that you want.

The Reflector: What are maybe two to three pieces of advice or even one piece of advice that you still remember and you still hold dear today?

KLL: Just try. Stay curious and fail and fail and fail. It really doesn't matter. What matters is what you do next. So risk? Take it.



Self-taught artist, Katie Lois Leahul, finds inspiration for her art from Canadian landscapes. Photo courtesy of Katie Lois Leahul

Continued from Pg. 9

Vampire Diaries experience and who have also seen her brand on social media. She said that when guests come in, she invites them to try her clothes on, take pictures, and to share the photos with her if they would like to.

“I just think that the involvement with my brand and with the customers has been remarkable and I think that that in itself has got me where I am,” said Hernandez. “I involve myself and I involve other people that love it.”

As the sun sets in Covington, casting an amber

glow over the town square, the atmosphere takes on an enchanting quality. You can almost imagine the characters of Mystic Falls taking the same steps you are. For those who immerse themselves in the magic of Covington, the experience not only brings a deeper connection to the show but also to the residents of the town if you take the time to get to know them.

The sense of community here is evident as locals welcome visitors with a warmth that makes the trip

entirely worth it.

Whether you’re a die-hard *Vampire Diaries* fan seeking to relive your favourite moments or just a traveler who happened to stop by, Covington offers a unique blend of reality, fantasy, and that good old Southern hospitality. As you leave this charming town, you carry with you not only the memories of Mystic Falls but also the connections you made with the community members along the way, at least I know I did.

The trials and tribulations of Ticketmaster

Bella Coco

Staff Writer



Taylor Swift will soon enough embark on an extension of her Canadian leg of her Eras Tour, leaving fans desperate for tickets. Photo courtesy of FLICKR

With concert fever taking the world by storm post-pandemic, music lovers are having a harder and more strenuous time attempting to get tickets to see their favorite artists and bands.

One of the most notable Ticketmaster failures this year was when Taylor Swift announced her Eras Tour. Due to high demand, multiple pre-sales were put into place

to ensure fans got tickets to see their favorite pop star.

Pre-sales with banks such as Avion and RBC gave fans exclusive access to sales and contests. In addition, fans were encouraged to sign up for the pre-sale via Ticketmaster Verified Fan. Fans would be selected at random and sent a code to access the pre-sale.

Fans from all over the world

signed up for the U.S. leg of the tour, and many Swifties dubbed it “The Great War of Ticketmaster.”

With the new development of Swift’s Canadian leg of her Eras Tour, Ticketmaster

Continues on Pg. 12



Golden
Jungkook
Big Hit Music

Score: A

The youngest member of the globally acclaimed boyband BTS, Jungkook, released his debut album *Golden* on Nov. 3. Jungkook is the last of the band members to release a solo album, with the exception of Jin, before fulfilling a mandatory 18-month military service next year. BTS’ fan base, called ARMY, is one of the strongest K-pop fandoms in the world evidenced by the support behind the boy’s solo activities during a group hiatus.

Golden consists of 11 all-English songs showcasing the artist’s mastery of his vocal versatility and follows a falling in love to heartbreak storyline chronologically.

The main track “Standing

Next to You” shares a groovy and EDM beat about committing to someone amid hardship. Jungkook has developed a more mature side with infectious tracks and trending dance moves. One of the more notable songs and a personal favourite is “Too Sad to Dance,” a heartbreak song with a pop beat preceding the last track of the album “Shot Glass of Tears,” a more mellow tune. The *Golden* title comes from ‘Golden Maknae,’ referring to the youngest and most talented in the group, which other members have acknowledged.

-Noel Ormita

I’ve Tried Everything But Therapy

Teddy Swims
Warner

Score: A+



Jaten Collin Dimsdale, commonly known as Teddy Swims, released his first studio album on Sept. 15 offering a combination of R&B, soul, country, and pop - blurring genre lines is something he is known for. I first discovered him on TikTok from his song “The Door” and have been hooked ever since because of his ‘feel good’ energy through saying unspoken words about love, moving on, and self-growth.

Growing up listening to artists like Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Al Green, Swims takes inspiration from these musicians which is reflected in his versatility and sound as an artist. “Some Things

I’ll Never Know” is one of the more notable songs on the tracklist and is reminiscent of Rascal Flatts’ “Bless the Broken Road” with a modern husky tone. He has mentioned in past interviews that this is his favourite song of the album and I agree because it gives you comfort journeying through life with unanswered questions.

The second track on his album, “Lose Control,” reached international acclaim peaking at number 49 on the Billboard Hot 100, and is his first song to be featured on the chart. Swims wraps up his 2023 North American tour at the end of the month in Tampa.

-Noel Ormita

Continued from Pg. 11

received additional criticism from her tried and true Canadian fans. Many expressed anger and frustration on social media when they found that many American fans of the singer got codes and tickets to her Toronto and Vancouver shows, and claimed that Ticketmaster should block out additional, international buyers.

In a social media survey asking MRU students about their experiences with Ticketmaster, not one respondent praised Ticketmaster.

A user who got Eras Tour tickets said that the process was extremely painful and stressful, and that it was a miracle that she managed to get tickets.

Another respondent claimed that using Ticketmaster was a lose-lose situation. Those who do not sign up for the pre-sale most likely won't be able to buy tickets, and even those with a code may not get into the queue on time and

just helplessly watch the seats disappear.

In addition, the user touched on the fact that Ticketmaster prices were ridiculously overpriced, especially for artists who are just starting out or have just claimed their fame.

Concert ticket prices for breaking-out artists such as Olivia Rodrigo and Noah Kahan have received criticism from fans.

Rodrigo, who announced a tour for her sophomore album on Sept. 13, had floor ticket prices selling for \$700 to \$800. Kahan, who is currently performing on his *Stick Season (We'll All Be Here Forever)* world tour, had floor tickets at the Scotiabank Saddledome for around \$500. Fans of both artists have demonstrated their displeasure for the sky-high ticket prices.

Another issue fans have with Ticketmaster are what people call "hidden fees." After fans claim their seats for a concert

and move to check out, they end up paying for more than the ticket and the taxes. In addition to what could well be a \$1000 floor seat, Ticketmaster has an order processing fee and a service fee.

These fees typically range from \$20 to \$60, depending on the artist and the venue. The one thing these additional fees all have in common is that they infuriate fans.

Veteran users of Ticketmaster recommend that concert enjoyers do their best to sign up for pre-sales, be prepared to spend more than anticipated, and to not be surprised if things don't go according to plan.

According to *REUTERS*, demand for concerts are the highest they've ever been.

Photo courtesy of Pexels





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BIPOC STUDENT ART SHOWCASE



Free Event!

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November 29

7 pm – 10 pm

West Gate Social on the MRU campus

Please don't drink and drive.

Second-year guard Nelson embraces impact role on MRU men's basketball roster

Zafir Nagji
 Staff Writer

The Canada West basketball season is officially underway and the MRU Cougars men's basketball team have firmly established themselves as a powerhouse roster that is not to be taken lightly. With dynamic guard play, star talent, and impeccable coaching, the men's program has gotten off to a 3-1 start as of Nov. 17. Thanks, in part, to the team flowing effortlessly on offense while locking up opponents on defense.

And, let's not forget about the team's breakout second-year guard and X-factor, Ijah Nelson, who has become the third star of an already talent-loaded roster.

Last year, Nelson had a phenomenal rookie season, being selected to the Canada West All-Rookie First Team and averaging just under 11 points-per-game while shooting 43 per cent from the field. However, Nelson couldn't contribute at the level he wanted to at the season's conclusion after he suffered a shoulder impingement which caused him discomfort anytime he attempted to shoot the ball.

"I feel like I let the team down last year with my shoulder kind of getting out early in that play-in game," Nelson said.

"I spent the off-season doing any type of treatment I could. Massage and deep therapy,

acupuncture, anything I could just to get my shoulders better."

With a chip on his shoulder —no pun intended, Nelson entered his latest season with the Cougars hoping to make a splash and help contribute to the improvement of his squad. In the first four games of this season, Nelson is averaging four more points, two more rebounds and two more assists per game than he did last year. He also improved his efficiency by shooting four per cent better from the field and a whopping 10 per cent better from three-point range when compared to his rookie season.

"I think last year I was a little bit more patient, but this year I see the floor a little bit better. I'm getting more opportunities, I'm getting more shots up, I'm being more aggressive," Nelson explained.

"I wouldn't say it's huge for our success, but I definitely think it's a key factor. Just being aggressive to make it easier for the main guys like Holt [Tomie] and Kevonte [Watts]."

Alongside his larger role on the team came a level of responsibility to his teammates, who Nelson believed had the most significant impact on his explosion this season. Their confidence in each other,

along with their confidence in Nelson, gave them an unshakeable swagger every time they stepped on the court. And, to Nelson, this has been crucial to their success.

"The guys have a lot more trust in me. They're giving me the ball," Nelson said.

"They're helping me out and they're confident in me. We're confident in each other as a team."

Even with this level of progress though, Nelson remains humble. Knowing that there is always room for improvement, he sees himself

contributing to the team on a higher level than just on-court statistical excellence. This includes accepting the responsibility that comes with the expansion of his role within the team.

"A personal goal of mine is just to keep shooting the ball well," said Nelson. "It opens up a lot for the team, more lanes to attack, and the defense has got to play closer up on me. So, it gives me an opportunity to attack, drive and kick for my open teammates."

The Cougars will go as far as their stars will take them.

Between Holt Tomie, Kevonte Watts, and now Ijah Nelson, their three-pronged attack of dynamic guards can score and defend against the best of Canada West. Combined with their seemingly endless depth with Sixth Man of the Year Candidate, Thomas Teshome, incredible forward talent with players like Mawien Mawien, and unreal athleticism from players like Daniel Mulder, the MRU Cougars are ready to make their mark in this year's Canada West conference.



After a successful rookie season, Ijah Nelson has become the third star for the Cougars basketball team. Photo courtesy of MRU Cougars

#S

143, points scored by Connor Bedard as a member of the Regina Pats during the 2022-23 WHL season

27.2, points-per-game LeBron James has averaged over the course of his career

130, points scored by the Atlanta Hawks on Nov. 1 against the Wizards

6'0", the height of MRU's rising basketball star, Ijah Nelson

The race for the NHL's Calder Memorial Trophy

Noah Wilson

Contributor

Just two months into the regular season, the NHL's Calder Memorial Trophy race has already been ignited. With generational talent, Connor Bedard, at the helm, this season's rookie class is shaping up to be one of the best first-year cohorts to take the ice in since 2015—the year in which an NHL audience first saw Edmonton Oilers captain, Connor McDavid, make his top-league debut.

When hockey fans debated who would take home the NHL's Calder Trophy—awarded to the League's Rookie of the Year—it seemed like the early season agreement was that the accolade was Bedard's to lose.

However, this class has proven that the first-overall draft pick in the 2023 NHL Draft will have to put in some serious numbers if he wants to add the 'Calder' to his trophy case in June.

Opening this season, the top-three picks from the 2023 draft have all had productive starts to their respective careers.

Bedard, who hails from North Vancouver, B.C., currently leads all rookies in scoring with nine goals in 13 games, while second-overall pick Leo Carlsson, who is fresh off his first career NHL hat-trick, is close behind with six goals in 11 games. Third-overall pick Adam Fantilli hasn't had an issue producing

either, as the Columbus Blue Jackets prospect has a steady nine points in 16 games played—putting him in fourth place in rookie scoring.

What has made this rookie class so amazing thus far is not just these three players, however. At the 16-game mark of the regular season, there are already 13 rookies sitting above seven points. For those unaware, that is typically a very impressive production from players in their first year.

Of those 13 rookies, Arizona Coyotes' third-overall selection in the 2022 NHL Draft, Logan Cooley, leads this season's rookie class in assists with 10, followed by Anaheim Ducks forward Pavel Mintyukov, who has nine assists.

This rookie class can put up the numbers, but so can Bedard. The top-talent rookie is currently rampaging through the League, with 13 points—nine goals and four assists—in 14 games. What's scarier is that it seems like Bedard is getting better with each game he plays and more comfortable with every shift he endures. He's showing traits that we only see in generational talent.

Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin both had it, along with newer faces, McDavid and Auston Matthews. The sky's the limit with these players and it's apparently no

different with Bedard.

Hockey Hall of Fame inductee and four-time Stanley Cup Champion, Wayne Gretzky attested to this concept during a past broadcast during NHL on TNT by expressing his thrill towards the Blackhawks' superstar, stating that the phenom has not only met the expectations but passed them.

"With young players, one of

the hard things is you always tell them, 'You gotta shoot the puck, you got to shoot more,'" Gretzky said.

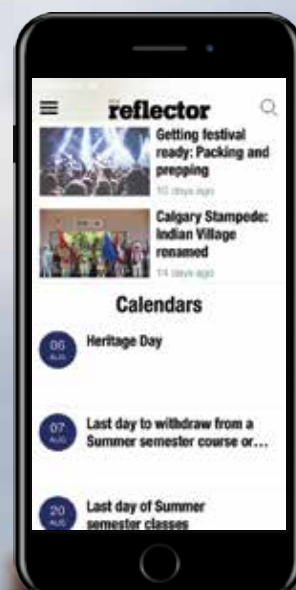
"Young guys don't want to be called selfish on the hockey club. You want to show your teammates, 'Look, I'm not a selfish player.' And he's not a selfish player. He sees the open man, but he doesn't hesitate to shoot the puck. I think he stepped in nicely, and he's been everything

that everybody thought he was going to be. And he might even be better than we thought."

Bedard's raw skill and maturity on and off the ice are what give him such an advantage when compared to this rookie class.

As this season progresses, there is no denying that Bedard will continue to set the world on fire while proving that he's the real deal.

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



Connor Bedard was first pick in the NHL 2023 draft and now plays for the Chicago Blackhawks. Photo courtesy of Jeff McIntosh/*The Canadian Press*

LeBron James' lasting legacy in full effect in Year 21

Zafir Nagji

Staff Writer

In December 1984, in the small American town of Akron, Ohio, a young woman named Gloria James gave birth to a boy. Only 16 years old at the time and without the baby's father in the picture, Gloria wondered how she would be able to raise her son on her own. Little did she know that her son, LeBron, would become one of the greatest basketball players of all time.

Now, in present day, LeBron James, 38, is the oldest active player in the NBA and is entering his 21st season in the League. During his two-decade long tenure in the NBA, James has amassed record after record on his way to achieving 'greatest of all time' (G.O.A.T) status and continues to play at an unprecedented level for someone in such a late stage of their athletic career.

James' journey to undisputed greatness comes with a long lineage of championships, awards and records—and it all started at St. Vincent–St. Mary High School in his hometown of Akron.

After a dominant high school basketball career that attracted national coverage at his games which dubbed him as 'The Chosen One,' James skipped college and took his talents straight to the NBA. Drafted first-overall to the lowly Cleveland Cavaliers in the star-studded 2003 NBA Draft, some of his teammates were skeptical of how much impact an 18-year-old fresh out of high school could have in the world's most talented basketball league.

This skepticism about James' talents didn't last long, as the freshman was named the Rookie of the

Year in his first season in the NBA. In just his third year, James had already dragged the Cavaliers to the Eastern Conference semi-finals and was named the team's lone All-Star. A year later, in 2007, he carried his Cleveland teammates on his back to the NBA Finals with superhuman efforts, including a 48-point explosion in Game 5 against a dominant Detroit Pistons.

Unable to win an NBA Championship in his first stint in Cleveland, James was still named the League's Most Valuable Player (MVP) in 2009, was the scoring champion in 2008, made six-consecutive NBA All-Star Teams from 2004-2010 and led his team to five consecutive playoff appearances, including one NBA Finals appearance in 2007.

After seven seasons in Cleveland, playing on a team that could not attract more elite talent to help him, James, to the displeasure of Cavaliers fans, migrated to the Miami Heat where he teamed up with his best friend Dwyane Wade and five-time All-Star, Chris Bosh. Nicknamed 'The Heatles,' this big three looked nearly unstoppable.

Even though they suffered a disappointing NBA Finals loss in their first season together, LeBron took the reins of the team in his second season. By the end of his four-year run in Miami, James was indisputably the best basketball player in the world.

During his time with the Heat, James won two MVP awards in back-to-back years (2012, 2013) along with his first two NBA Championships (2012, 2013).



Lebron James has been a professional basketball player since 2003, when he was awarded Rookie of the Year for the 2003-04 season. Photo courtesy of Erik Drost/ Wikimedia Commons

After taking his talents to South Beach, James returned to Cleveland in 2014, where he promised his home state of Ohio a championship as he joined top talents, Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love.

After his two co-stars were injured in the 2014 NBA Playoffs, James' Cavaliers would lose in their first NBA Finals appearance against the Golden State Warriors. During this playoff campaign, James became the first player in NBA history to lead both teams in points, rebounds and assists during the finals. In all four years of James' second stint in Cleveland, the 'Cavs' made the NBA Finals against the Warriors. But, it would be in the 2016 NBA Playoffs where James' kept his promise to the Cleveland crowd, as the Cavaliers became NBA Champions after the team, willed on by James, came back from being

down, 3-1, in the seven-game series.

In his four-year-long second stint in Cleveland, James made four-consecutive NBA Finals appearances from 2014-2018, won his third-career NBA Championship and Finals MVP in 2016 and, in 2018, and tied Jerry West for the most 40-point games in a single post-season run with eight.

In July 2018, Magic Johnson and his picture-perfect smile famously flew to James' Los Angeles home in the hopes of convincing 'King James' to join the Los Angeles Lakers—the organization he is still with today.

And, his Lakers career could not have been scripted better by Hollywood itself. After struggling with a groin injury in his first year with the team, James won his fourth NBA title and Finals MVP in 2020. James' legacy

was further cemented in 2023, when he became the NBA's all-time leading scorer by breaking a record that had stood almost 40 years. He also averaged the most points per game for a player in their 18th, 19th and 20th career year, and is on pace to set the record for a player in their 21st year as he currently averages 24.3 points-per-game.

James' story isn't finished, either. According to James and his wife, Savannah, the 38-year-old plans to play in the NBA until his sons, Bronny and Bryce, make their way into the League. If this is true, James will continue his career for three more seasons, minimum.

Meaning, NBA fans should enjoy watching him play while his career lasts, as the League will be an unimaginably different place without the kid from Akron.

A first-time NBA experience from the perspective of a Calgarian

Matt DeMille

Sports Editor

Let's be honest, avid sports fans living in Western Canada have it rough.

Why, you ask?

Of the five main professional sports that are consumed across North America—the NHL, NFL, NBA, Major League Baseball (MLB) and Major League Soccer (MLS)—only one league can be seen frequently and locally across the western provinces.

For the NHL, which has markets in seven Canadian cities including Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg, the long-standing venture to branch out to a more northern climate makes complete sense. The collective love and passion for hockey runs deep in Canadian culture and each team is cherished by its city.

But for the other four professional leagues, the addition of permanent locations throughout Western Canada is just too unfeasible—and rightfully so.

The NFL or MLS wouldn't want to insert a multi-million dollar franchise into McMahon Stadium—nor would they want to consistently play in -30 C weather. The MLB wouldn't even consider adding a team to Calgary's now defunct Foothills Stadium. And, the NBA would much rather look at markets in Eastern Canada or Vancouver before even looking in Alberta's direction.

This leaves us sports-craving, Western Canadians with little options when it comes to watching professional sports live and locally—that is, unless you want to risk your lives by watching the Calgary Flames under the crumbling confines of the Scotiabank Saddledome.

So, when the opportunity

presents itself, Calgarians will jump at any chance to get their live sports fix when they find themselves traveling out-of-province. Or, that's what I caught myself doing when I flew down to Atlanta, Georgia, as a part of *The Reflector's* annual appearance at the Fall National College Media Convention.

As a part of our week-long visit in the Peach State, our editing team and I decided to take in the city's sports scene by attending an NBA game at Atlanta's State Farm Arena—the home of the Atlanta Hawks. A first-time experience for myself, I was immediately taken aback by how different an NBA atmosphere is to an NHL experience at the Saddledome.

Before we even stepped foot into the arena's outdoor entrance and pavilion, the vibrant music of Atlanta's hip-hop scene blaring from the speakers and the hooting and hollering from the team's fan base pulled me closer to the venue. With each step I took toward the arena, my excitement levels rose and my heart-rate increased—as it always does when I get ready to take in a highly-anticipated game.

As we strode through security and into the arena's concourse, the music heightened along with the cheers from an already raucous crowd. No more than minutes after walking through the welcoming doors of State Farm Arena, I understood that this wasn't the same kind of atmosphere that was normally found in Calgary. Despite it being just the Hawks' fifth game of the regular season, I already sensed the lively passion and excitement the spectators had for their home team. Whereas,

nowadays in Calgary, the 'C of Red' only emits a lackluster sense of excitement as the Flames' continue to deal with their early-season struggles—but that's a story for another time.

As does everyone living on a student budget, we trudged up several sets of escalators to find our seats. However, unlike the press level sections in the Saddledome where spectators can barely recognize the on-ice combatants and are breathing in more carbon monoxide than oxygen, I'm convinced that there wasn't a bad seat in Atlanta's venue. Instead, our seats in the upper-portion of the arena provided us the opportunity to appreciate the views of the entire venue along with the court. Between stoppages in play, I peered up at the rafters to admire the countless banners celebrating milestone seasons and former players, while checking out other aspects of

the arena that made it unique to others in the country.

The in-game experience was also a huge change of pace from what I've grown accustomed to in Calgary. While basketball has never been my go-to choice when tuning into a televised sport, I admit that I've grown a new admiration for how the game is played and its entertainment value. An in-house DJ keeps the game lively and the audience involved by pumping music and chants throughout the arena while 'hype' teams, who are found running between sections, also keep the crowd engaged by tempting them with free loot.

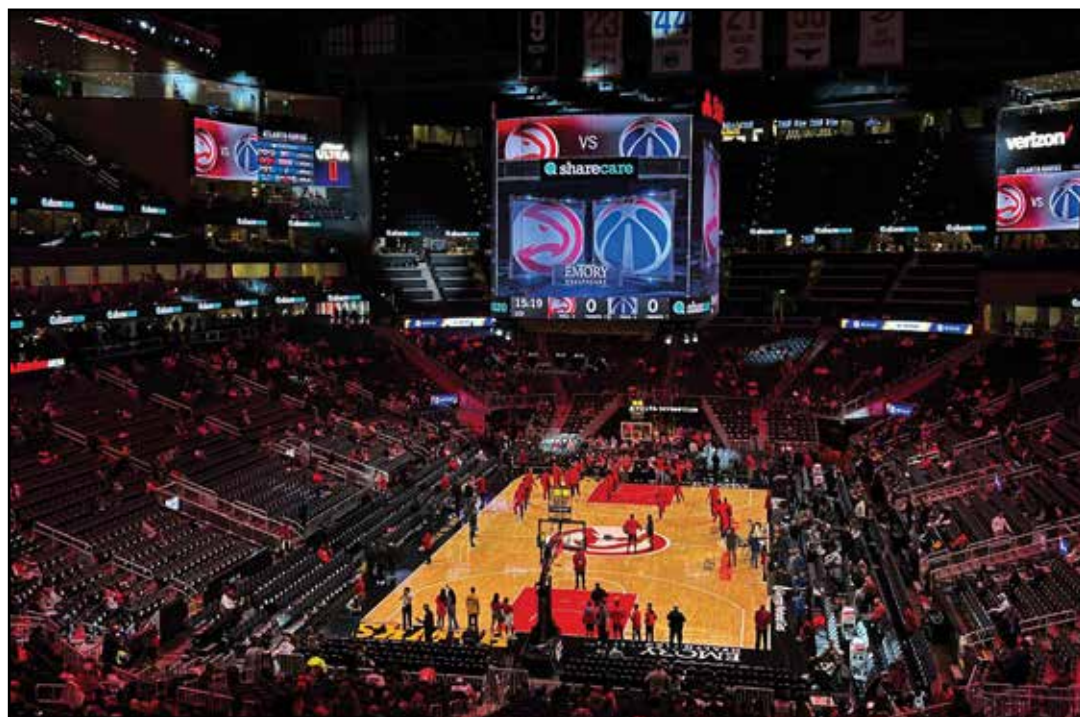
But, nothing was more entertaining than the game itself. I'll be the first to admit that I only know the basic rules of basketball and personally don't follow the NBA too closely, but none of that mattered at the game. As a matter of fact, the NBA

might be the easiest and most entertaining game to follow for first-time spectator. The two- and three-point scoring systems are easy to follow and the high-scoring pace keeps you invested for the entire game, regardless of the score.

However, it's always a positive when the home team also picks up the win at the end of the night—which is exactly what the Hawks did. After falling behind to the visiting Washington Wizards in the first quarter, the Hawks, who were spurred on by the Atlanta faithful, rallied back to win the game by a score of 130-121.

While it is disappointing that Western Canada is missing out on the opportunity to catch more top-level professional sports live and in-person, I will continue to catch any live games I can when I visit a major sporting hub across North America.

I encourage everyone else to do the same.



The Atlanta Hawks hosted the Washington Wizards at the State Farm Arena on Nov. 1. Photo by Megan Creig