

Defining Seasonal Affective Disorder (Pg. 6)

Trudeau: A look
at his leadership
(Pg. 2)

My experience
with diaspora
(Pg. 5)

NHL players
that will
dominate 2024
(Pg. 13)

Let's talk about Trudeau

PM Justin Trudeau is facing growing calls to step down as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, should he heed them?

Iyan Velji

Contributor

On Feb. 28, 1984, then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau went for a contemplative walk in the snowy streets of Ottawa before announcing he would step down as leader of the Liberal Party.

Now, nearly 40 years later, there are growing calls from all sides of the political aisle for Pierre's son, Justin Trudeau, to do the same.

The question now is: will Trudeau follow in his father's footsteps and step down as Liberal leader, or will he attempt to run for a fourth term?

One major reason the elder Trudeau made the difficult decision to retire was declining poll numbers.

In 1983, newly appointed Conservative leader, Brian Mulroney, had gained 55 per cent support from decided voters while Pierre Trudeau had hit a low of 27 per cent, according to *United Press International*. In August of that year, not long before his resignation, Trudeau decided to reshuffle his cabinet, replacing five of his ministers, in an attempt to reverse the numbers.

Fast-forward to 2023, and the younger Trudeau's situation displays numerous parallels.

An *Abacus Data* poll from 2023 painted a frightening picture for Trudeau with 81 per cent of Canadians saying that it is time for a change in government. Meanwhile, polling from *338Canada* has estimated an 99 per cent chance of the Liberal Party losing to a majority Conservative government if

an election were held today.

In the most direct poll conducted by *Abacus Data*, 56 per cent of respondents stated that Trudeau should step down while only 27 per cent responded that he should run again.

Duane Bratt, a political science professor at MRU, summarized the situation saying, "Anytime you see a party in the 20's, that's not good for them."

Trudeau's declining popularity has been felt beyond the realms of polling data.

During his opening remarks at the 2023 North American Indigenous Games, Trudeau was met with an initial chorus of boos as he greeted the crowd. Eventually, the Liberal leader was able to regain the crowd's favour after reiterating his commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. More recently, a hundred Vancouver police officers had to be sent to a restaurant so that Trudeau could escape a crowd of pro-Palestine protestors shouting at him.

In response to the growing discontentment of his administration, Trudeau took a page out of his father's playbook this summer dropping seven of his cabinet ministers and tasking more than a dozen ministers with new roles, according to the *CBC*. However, a Nanos Research poll for *The Globe and Mail* revealed his major cabinet shuffle did not have a positive impact on 70 per cent of Canadian voters.

Student impact

Beyond falling poll

numbers, Justin Trudeau's policies towards students have generated controversy.

In some ways, the Trudeau administration's policies have been beneficial to post-secondary students with initiatives to waive interest on Canada Student Loans during the pandemic and offer better mental health support on campuses.

However, some of Trudeau's decisions have also sparked backlash casting doubt on his administration's ability to effectively address student education.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, the Trudeau government came under fire after awarding WE Charity the sole contract to administer the \$912 million Canada Student Service Grant program aimed at paying students for volunteer hours. Despite claiming the opposite, WE Charity had paid Trudeau's ex-wife, mother, and brother to appear at events, according to the *Toronto Sun*. Eventually, the controversy led to the resignation of Trudeau's finance minister Bill Morneau and the end of the WE Charity's operations in Canada.

Then, in October of this year, Trudeau's administration introduced new measures making it more difficult for foreign students to obtain visas in response to the national housing crisis. These changes have been criticized as harmful to international students who pursue university admission in the hopes of obtaining permanent citizenship.



Justin Trudeau has held the title of Prime Minister since 2015. Photo courtesy of Flickr

Critics have also pointed to the potential repercussions on the Canadian economy where international education contributes \$22 billion annually. Furthermore, the moves seem contradictory to Trudeau's stated position that different factors over multiple decades have contributed to the housing crisis and that international students should not be blamed.

On campuses, there has also been growing discontentment from students recently regarding Trudeau's stance on the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

A third year Policy Studies student, who chose to remain unnamed, stated that Trudeau should step down or call for an unequivocal ceasefire in Palestine, going as far as to call him a "wimp".

She added that she was unsure if any political candidate would be "worth being put up on" the pedestal of Prime Minister.

Like his father, Trudeau has made landmark moves during his time as Prime Minister. The Trudeau government legalized marijuana, formed Canada's first gender-neutral cabinet, established National Truth and Reconciliation Day, and has supported AI research in Canada.

Yet, despite these accomplishments, Trudeau faces a precarious future.

Bratt said "the sheen is off of Trudeau" and his chances of winning re-election could be very difficult.

Regarding replacements for Trudeau, Bratt suggested Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and former head of the Bank of Canada Mark Carney.

With declining poll numbers, contentious policies towards students, and a mounting list of scandals, the common thread seems to be a desire for the younger Trudeau to take his own walk in the snow.

Denied vote for free contraception, but MRU has you covered

Julie Patton

News Editor

In November 2023, the Alberta government voted against a motion put forward by the NDP to provide free access to prescription contraception.

Had the vote gone through, Albertans would receive universal access to free contraception such as oral hormone pills, contraceptive injections, copper and hormonal intrauterine devices, subdermal implants, and emergency contraception, also known as Plan B.

The NDP had hoped to follow in British Columbia's footsteps, as the province was the first in Canada to provide free contraception in early 2023.

Manitoba and Ontario are also following suit, with Manitoba adopting the same program and Ontario choosing to have prescription contraception included in the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

"The UCP have no problem cutting massive cheques for their friends and insiders, but are refusing to consider the price of Albertans' access to vital healthcare," NDP Critic for Status of Women, Julia Hayter, said in a press release.

"Universal access to free prescription contraception will ensure Albertans, especially women, are in control of their economic future and their health."

Despite the denied vote, many Alberta women do have access to covered contraception through their insurance and health benefit plans. At Mount Royal University (MRU), prescribed contraception for students is

covered up to 80 per cent.

Covered at MRU

"It's really important to understand what your benefits cover," Francesca Simon, manager of MRU Health Services, said.

All MRU students pay into a benefits plan at the Students Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU), unless students specify otherwise.

Simon said the process of accessing covered contraception on campus is quite simple.

For both an IUD and oral hormone pills students need a referral from a doctor. Simon said it is best to get referrals from your family doctor, however the doctors at MRU can make them as well.

"Just say 'I'm looking for a referral for an IUD,' and they'll book you in for an appointment with a doctor and then you'll get the referral," she said.

The referral should be made to the pharmacist at Wyckham Pharmacy. The campus pharmacy is located in the basement of Wyckham House, and there, both IUDs and prescribed birth control can be picked up.

"The nice thing about going down to see Thomas [the pharmacist] in Wyckham Pharmacy is that all you have to do is provide your student number, and as long as your plan is activated... he'll direct bill, so you just pay the [remaining] balance," Simon said.

For students wanting an IUD, they can pick it up at the pharmacy and then book an appointment at MRU's Health Services Medical Clinic for IUD insertion and follow-up care appointments.

Accessing the plan

Students who have access to the SAMRU Student Benefits Plan must be taking nine or more credits at MRU and have paid a Student Association fee. To activate the plan, students need to visit the Student Health & Dental Benefits Office, also located in the basement of Wyckham House.

There they will confirm student eligibility, provide you with your plan number,

and help set up your Canada Life account.

Once the account is set up, students can use their benefits plan for more than just contraception.

"If you are a student with a plan and you want an appointment for physio or massage, you need a referral from a doctor, so either your doctor or one of our doctors, and then you get \$25 off per visit for massage and \$30 off per visit for physio," Simon said.

The plan also covers eye appointments, eyewear, dental, chiropractor, and more.

To learn more about benefits at MRU visit the Benefits Office or Health Services online or in person.



MRU's campus pharmacy is located in the basement of Wyckham House. Photo by Julie Patton

THE REFLECTOR

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Consequences of a dry winter

Calgary's unusually dry winter may have many consequences for Spring

Matthew Hillier

Staff Writer

Calgary's weather conditions aren't just annoying anymore, they may be potentially dangerous for farmers, ranchers, and average citizens. Alberta is seeing dryer and dryer winters, and that doesn't just mean your skin is going to need extra time, love, and care.

Shweta Chugh has been a teacher of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies at Mount Royal University (MRU) for over 10 years.

"It's been unusually dry and warm. You can say it's a combination of many factors. First one being an El Niño in the Pacific Ocean that we are seeing, which considerably brings warmer weather in Northern America," she said. "So this is the time when we have those jet streams going in. So, we will see warmer weather compared

to the other years and warm westerlies blowing in and raising the temperature higher."

You can tell it is a dry winter when you don't see much—or any—fog, smog, or strong cold winds. An absence of these things may make winters easier but they can have harsh consequences for the province come spring.

A lack of melting snow flowing into rivers means that farmers and fish that are dependent on these sources, may not have the proper amount in the water table.

According to CTV, precipitation was well below average with just three millilitres recorded, which is 85 per cent less than average.

Chugh said water levels will be significantly impacted by a dry winter.

"Most of the rivers are dependent on the snowpack,

so whatever snow we accumulate during the winter the more precipitation we get on the ground," she said. "It's good for us in spring because that's when the runoff begins and then it is followed by rain and that's good for the farmers to carry on with their agriculture, then they do not have to run deep into groundwater sources."

"But if this warmer trend continues this will lead to an early peak of the spring runoff. Dry winters also bring increased risk of forest fires as much of the precipitation that would end up in water cycle from snow is lost increasing the risk of forest fires starting, and when they do start they are more likely to not be put out by the natural rain cycle."

These problems are worsened by the usual suspects, those being

climate change, rapid industrialization, and a lack of resources being devoted to fixing these problems.

In addition Calgary is also seeing a low Elbow and Bow River level this year which is leading to water restrictions. These restrictions are in place to maintain water levels in the Glenbow reservoir, which is still recovering from the dry winters of the previous years.

According to CBC this problem has been compounding since the early '70s with the snowpack now around half of what it was in the 1960s and 1970s.

Alberta is in for more dryer winters, that much is sure. With that we can expect more challenges surrounding agriculture and an increased risk for forest fires, which have already proved trouble for the province.

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The end of 2023 saw a dry winter which can have many implications for ranchers, farmers, and average citizens.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Disconnection and diaspora

Reflections on being stuck in-between two worlds

Keo Bunny

Contributor

When I stepped off the plane in Cambodia, I was hoping for the wind to caress my face and the air to flow through my hair. It didn't, instead I was met with the humid force of the South Asian atmosphere. Even inside the airport, you can feel the heat seep through the building.

It was the first time I had been back in the country in eight years and while I had lived here for over a decade when I was a kid, being back was distinctly different than how I thought it would feel.

A disquieting sense of diaspora started to pour over me. I was in my home country— why did I feel like I didn't belong?

I didn't want to set expectations but it was hard not to. When your home country is all your family talks about, it's no longer just a vacation, it's returning to where your heart is supposed to be.

But my heart was split. Canada and Cambodia might be close to one another alphabetically, but they're 11, 265 kilometres apart—and very different culturally. Yet it feels like I had a foot in both worlds. This is the basis of where my diaspora comes from.

I was introduced to the idea of diaspora a couple of years ago in a university class called Postcolonial Literature and it changed my view of myself and the world. But how does a word that sounds like a greenwashed laundry detergent change someone's worldview so drastically? Simple—because it affects

millions of people worldwide and the likelihood of you being in or knowing someone in a diaspora is probably higher than you think.

Diaspora, according to the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, means members of a community that have moved or dispersed from their country of origin to another place. Think about you, your friends, family. How is that experience different from someone who has lived in Calgary their whole life?

On a personal level, diaspora for me has always been about the feeling of being stuck in the middle of two cultures. My passport says Canadian-Cambodian, but what does that actually mean?

Moving here at such a young age, I lacked the cultural identity to fully connect to one or the other.

Even though I was born with two Cambodian parents, it seemed like Cambodia sensed an outlier within its borders. I was told my mannerisms, the way I spoke and presented myself and even the way I looked were different from the average Cambodian. People who spoke Khmer (the Cambodian language) in front of me thought I wouldn't understand.

More than anything, it was interesting to feel like a tourist in your own country. The trip was nourishing and stoked my curiosity for my own culture. I tried food I didn't even know existed and learned things about my family and culture that staying in Canada could never

answer for me. While I got to sightsee across the country, I couldn't help but slightly mourn a lifepath lost—in another world, I would know these country roads like the back of my hand. I would live and love and die in Cambodia, never feeling the bitter bite of Canada's cold.

On the other hand, I also wonder what it would be like to be born fully Canadian, to have that mountain air under your wings all your life. To have roots as deep as mountains anywhere would be strengthening and Alberta

is no exception.

This feeling of being torn between two cultures is not uncommon for diasporic communities. Miguel Oblea was born in the Philippines and moved here in 2008 but still maintains strong family ties to his home country.

"I feel a bit closer here to Canada since I've spent more of my life here... [but] I still feel connected with... our language and culture. My family speaks Tagalog at home and we still celebrate some of the traditions..." he said.

The university class I took that unpacked diaspora introduced me to another idea that I really took into my heart as well. The benefit of having one foot planted in both worlds is that you see the world differently. You don't see the world in purely a Canadian or Cambodian perspective, you see it in both. You have a unique perspective that takes into account both cultures. Essentially, while you're not able to be fully immersed in one world, it's pretty neat to be able to know both.



The Cambodian flag is the only one in the world that features a building, the Angkor Wat. Photo by Keo Bunny

SAD? Or just sad? :(

Defining characteristics of Seasonal Affective Disorder and the 'winter blues'

Arroy Jacob

Web Editor



Esther Mandapalli is an MRU student and advocate for mental health awareness during the winter months and New Year season. Photo by Arroy Jacob

It's called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)—also informally known as seasonal depression. But once you add the words 'disorder' or 'depression' into the sentence, suddenly you feel the urgency of the condition. However, SAD is commonly confused with the "winter blues," two conditions common in January after the holiday cooldown. But distinguishing between the two can be harder than accepting you have one of the conditions to begin with, let alone doing something about it.

The cause

Canada's subjection to the early onset of midnight-black 4 p.m. afternoons beginning mid-December and ending late March introduces SAD

to two to three per cent of Canadians in their lifetime, where another fifteen per cent experience a milder, lesser form of depression known as the "winter blues" according to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

National Institute of Health: News in Health reports, "Shorter days seem to be a main trigger for SAD. Reduced sunlight in fall and winter can disrupt your body's internal clock, or circadian rhythm... Shortened daylight hours in winter can alter this natural rhythm and lead to SAD in certain people."

People typically do not develop SAD or the winter blues during the holiday weeks specifically. But comparing this period to the new year winter darkness combined with the onslaught

of returning responsibilities, it is simple to deduct why January is dubbed the most depressing month of the year.

The difference

Despite the similarities, it is important to return to their distinguishable symptoms. National Institute of Health: News in Health also says that the winter blues tend to include symptoms that only last up to two weeks. These symptoms may include: lower energy, sleeping troubles, tendency to overeat, and a mild lack of motivation. These symptoms relate to sadness.

But sadness is not equivalent to depression. People who suffer from SAD can experience more extreme symptoms for periods longer than two weeks.

These symptoms include: severe social withdrawal, oversleeping, excessive lack of motivation, low libidos, large appetites for sugary and starchy foods, feelings of hopelessness, and sometimes, suicidal thoughts. These feelings and tendencies can easily transform into habits and become routinely present in people's lives even after the sun returns from hibernation in the summer months. Catching onset symptoms of SAD is critical to creating effective treatment plans, something that one individual I spoke with tries to advocate for.

The impact

Esther Mandapalli, a General Science major at MRU offered to give her experience with SAD and the winter blues growing up in Calgary. She advocates to her friends and colleagues about the importance of mental health and how the winter season can negatively impact young people in more ways than one.

"You don't know when you have the winter blues or seasonal depression. It can really be a gamble and it can really be scary when you find out."

Mandapalli recalls a period of time where she had figured she was experiencing mild forms of the winter blues and what she did to prevent its evolution into SAD.

"The lack of sun and Vitamin D really messes you up, and I feel that people don't talk about it enough. Over the winter break, after the finals rush, when you have nothing to do, there is a lull period of just... nothing! At first it felt nice, but that's because you confuse it with relaxation."

"Slowly, exhaustion

swallows you whole. Then comes a lack of motivation. When I was feeling this way for a week and half, that's when I spoke to my doctor and I'm glad I did. She helped me realize my symptoms early on and came up with a game plan. That's why I really emphasize people to get help early on before it gets any worse."

I asked Esther what "game plan" meant to her and her doctor. I was impressed to see how quickly she spun the situation into her own form of fun.

"It means making the most of your winter! You're on holiday for a reason, right? To me, that looked like getting outside more during the day. Our bodies crave Vitamin D through sunlight and so it's important to get it in the best ways possible."

"With that comes more social interaction with friends, family, and support. I was lucky enough to not need light therapy (increasing your exposure to effective bright light) specifically, but I still highly recommend trying it if their doctor is good with it. And in terms of medication, Vitamin D supplements can be an underrated gamechanger. I couldn't recommend it any more."

SAD and the winter blues are currently rampant this month as the winter 2024 semester gets underway. Understanding where your body might be mentally and emotionally however is what will keep you feeling less afraid of the words 'disorder' and 'depression.'

If you or someone you know is in immediate distress, or is thinking about hurting themselves, call or text 9-8-8 for the Suicide Crisis Helpline.

Tricia Nguyen: The powerhouse behind Calgary's 'Cuties Club'

Emma Duke

Features Editor

I was first introduced to the Cuties Club market in early December, when I attended one of their markets. Because, well, I wanted something to do on the weekend, and it sounded great; a handful of small business owners selling their products. I was down.

Upon entering the market, held on the upper level of Calgary's Good Thrift, I immediately fell in love. What struck me first is that the vendors gathered around the shop showcased incredibly unique creations—from phone charms to strawberry hair clips to cupcake candles—I'm sure that every passerby wanted almost everything, yet none of the products being sold felt basic or typical in any sense.

I walked away having purchased, yes, a few items for myself, but also a bunch of Christmas gifts, including, my two personal favourites, a bouquet of crochet flowers, and a clay flower mirror.

I rushed home to show my family my purchases—it didn't take long before my mom and sister, jealous of my finds, made a trip to the market themselves. They came back with items to show off, and now I was jealous! My mom, who is quite familiar with the experience of carrying more than she can hold, was shocked and amazed that she found a purse for her coffee.

I knew this market was unique—and I was impressed, but I was especially in awe when I learned that the brains behind this market was one 22 year old woman, Tricia Nguyen.

Nguyen's roots were in creating handmade tote bags and scrunchies, back in high school. Then, a couple

of years later in 2022, she hosted her first Cuties Club market in collaboration with another small business, Tigerstedt & Friends.

Now, with a total of 16 markets behind her in 2023, Cuties is Nguyen's full-time job.

Cuties is a place for more than just shopping, though. Nguyen wanted to name her creation 'Cuties Club' because she wanted to build a community, a place where vendors and customers alike feel safe and welcome. With over 6,000 Instagram followers and markets with often over 60 vendors, I'd say she's succeeded in her goal. "We host workshops, markets, events and provide a platform for like-minded individuals to create community. I have been able to see so many of our vendors create such meaningful friendships which inspire us to continue to expand this platform," said Nguyen. One upcoming workshop is a paint night on Jan. 12, from which all proceeds will be donated to Good Neighbour's art program.

In addition to the community aspect, Nguyen has created a space where small business owners have a good shot at selling their products to the public. According to Nguyen, many Cuties vendors launch their products at Cuties, and the results have been rewarding. "We have been able to see many of them continue to strive to all levels, from growing their platforms to being able to realize what their true passions are," she said.

Starting a small business is a feat of its own, curating a market of small businesses is another, and building a

community is only possible if you are bursting with heart, passion and persistence. Nguyen accomplished all three by 22, and she has big plans for the future.

The Cuties Club creator is opening her own store in January—Cuties Cafe & Shop will sell Vietnamese desserts and snacks, paying homage to Nguyen's ethnicity. There will also be a retail section, featuring curated products from select small businesses in Calgary.

What stands out to me about Nguyen is her dedication and passion. At any age, entrepreneurship is impressive—as a 22 year

old female, starting several successful businesses is awe-inspiring. Nguyen didn't just succeed in wanting to be her own boss and own something of her own, she gave people a chance to share their passions and creations with the world; she created a space where everyone can feel at home.

As someone who is trying to cut down on spending costs, I often feel buyer's remorse after making a purchase that I know wasn't necessary. After leaving the Cuties market, however, I felt even better than I did walking in. Vendors were so appreciative of every purchase, so touched that customers were drawn

to their work. There is something so uplifting about supporting local businesses—you are validating a person's dream. In creating Cuties Club, Nguyen realizes not only her own dream, but the dreams of hundreds of business owners.

Nguyen is one to look out for in the near future. Having come so far in 2023, I cannot wait to see what she accomplishes in the upcoming year. I have no doubt that whatever she dreams, she will do, and while she's doing it, she is sure to touch lives with her infectious enthusiasm, drive, and care.



Tricia Nguyen is the creator of Calgary's 'Cuties Club.' Photo courtesy of Tricia Nguyen

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Canadian comedian Abbas Wahab overcame depression while pursuing his dreams

James Windler

Contributor

This past June, Statistics Canada released data regarding mental health and work-related stress among individuals aged 15 to 69 years as part of a set of supplementary surveys to the Labour Force Survey.

Statistics Canada found that “over 4.1 million people indicated that they experienced high or very high levels of work-related stress, representing 21.2 per cent of all employed people.”

While the data for this particular survey was collected in April 2023, if it had been conducted just a few years prior, Abbas Wahab, who was working long hard hours at an unfulfilling engineering job, would’ve undoubtedly been a part of the 4.1 million Canadians struggling today.

Wahab, originally from Sudan, immigrated to London, Ont. with his parents when he was just six years old.

The move to Canada meant high expectations from his parents. Wahab recounted childhood memories when family friends would come over and ask what he wanted to be and before he could say anything his mom would say “he’s going to be an engineer.”

“Before I knew it, I was under the impression it was my dream to be an engineer.

Fast forward now I am an engineer and I’m just kind of getting really depressed, and I don’t understand it,” said Wahab.

“I got a nice car, and I got all the stuff I wanted to get when I hated school and was just trying to get through, I thought ‘Oh, once I start getting money, then I’ll be happy.’”

Things didn’t turn out that way. As Wahab started working near hundred-hour work weeks his depression worsened.

As things started to spiral out of control Wahab started looking for ways to self-medicate, which further worsened things.

“It was stupid because I’m just chemically balancing, it was just dumb. When you do a job you don’t like, it manifests in poor health,” said Wahab.

“So, I’m having all these health problems and I decide to finally leave and suddenly all of that disappears, but now it’s a financial struggle,” said Wahab. “So, it switches, but the financial struggle impacts your health a lot less than this existential angst when you’re doing something that’s against the grain of your being.”

Starting over fresh

Wahab had his eye on

comedy long before he decided to quit being an engineer.

Wahab’s work as an engineer brought him down to the San Francisco area which offered him the first glimpse of hope after engineering.

A thriving comedy scene opened the door for Wahab to start performing at night after he would get off work.

One night a week turned into two, which quickly turned into Wahab going to open mics every single night.

With Wahab leaving engineering he knew that his path was leading him back to Toronto.

He knew sooner or later he’d have to have a difficult conversation with his mom about the career change, but as fate would have it, an opportunity from the biggest fast-food chain in the world would change the dynamics of that conversation.

After returning to Canada, Wahab was chosen as a billboard model for McDonald’s brand-new spicy chicken sandwich.

“That’s all it took, everyone called me crazy, and that I lost my mind. Who would leave engineering to do this?” Said Wahab.

“But that’s all it took, all it takes is for your parents to

be able to point at something everyone can see and be like, that’s my son, it had nothing to do with talent, they just chose a guy, and there’s been hundreds of guys chosen since, but that’s what legitimized me in their eyes.”

With a renewed drive, focus and family support, Wahab’s career started to take off.

While he says his life is in a significantly better place now, he had to deal with many people who questioned his choice to leave engineering.

“I feel so much better, but at first I was constantly combating people’s perspectives and opinions of ‘You made a mistake,’ then other people would be very patronizing,” said Wahab.

“They don’t say all that

stuff now because I built a following for myself through online social media and I get recognized all over the world, but for years I had to deal with a lot of naysayers.”

Wahab is about to kick off his third Canadian tour which will bring him to Calgary on Jan. 14 where he will be performing at Yuk Yuk’s located at 218 18 Ave SE, inside the Elbow River Casino.

Wahab mentioned that he had Calgary circled as one of the places he’s most excited to perform during his tour. You can find more information about the show at yukyuks.com and for tickets head over to abbaswahab.com.



Abbas Wahab will be taking on Yuk Yuks International Stand-Up Comedy on Jan. 14 in Calgary. Photo courtesy of Abbas Wahab

OUT'N ABOUT

Winter Pop-up

Embrace Winter with the University District Winter Pop-Up on Jan. 21 from 1-4 at Central Commons Park. Enjoy skating performances, Cabane à Sucre (maple sugar taffy making), and lively entertainment.

Fireside Festival

Check out SAMRU’s Fireside Festival on Jan. 11 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., in Wyckham House. Unwind with activities like a local artist market, photo booth, hot chocolate, and s’mores before the new semester fully begins.

Club Expo

Discover your passions at SAMRU’s Clubs Expo on Jan. 16 and 17 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Main Street of campus. Explore diverse clubs, make friends, and get involved.

Wycked house Beach Party

Escape the Winter cold and dive into the Wycked House Beach Party on Jan. 25 at 8 p.m. Enjoy a beach theme, live DJs, and tropical beats. All ages are welcome.

Debunking Kourtney Kardashian's Lemme Purr gummy vitamins

Isabella West

Arts Editor

Kourtney Kardashian, best known for her role in reality television, has heavily turned toward the world of health and wellness in recent years as evident through her blog, Poosh, and frequent explorations of alternative health and wellness avenues on *The Kardashians*.

In September of 2022, Kardashian partnered with Lemme, a vitamin wellness brand. Kardashian's initial posts had a particular focus on the gummy, 'Lemme Purr.'

The brand claims that the Lemme Purr gummy can "target vaginal health and pH levels that support freshness and taste," said Lemme in an Instagram post.

Kardashian made a post on her own Instagram claiming "the right probiotics can help bring balance back to your vaginal microbiome which is why we were so excited to formulate and launch this gummy." The post states that the said products use clinically-studied SNZ-1969 probiotics specifically tested for vaginal health, as well as an addition of Vitamin C for an extra immunity boost, and a 'little pineapple as a bonus.' When asked about this product and its claims, Dr. Fiona Mattatall, assistant professor at the Cumming School of Medicine at University of Calgary said, "taking medical advice from someone like Kourtney Kardashian who, to my knowledge, has no background in science, microbiology, gynecology is unwise."

In order to gain a better understanding of this product and the technical language used within its endorsement, Dr. Mattatall shared some insight.

What is SNZ-1969 probiotics?

When referring to the SNZ-

1969 product listed as the main ingredient in the Lemme Purr gummies, Dr. Mattatall said "it looks like there's early studies suggesting it might work in one area but that doesn't necessarily mean it will work in another." She went on to explain that "the microbiome of the vagina is a very complicated thing that we're in the early stages of understanding," and to date, there are no probiotics that are universally supported for being evidential.

According to Dr. Mattatall, there are many elements to consider when evaluating what may work to support a vagina such as hormonal environment, the food that somebody's eating, and other things that are going in the vagina like if someone is sexually active.

Can pineapple change the taste of your vagina?

Dr. Mattatall explained that anything you are putting into your body can affect what comes out.

"It is true that some things that you take in, do affect the composition of the things we put out of our bodies."

Although the Lemme Purr gummies do emphasize pineapple as an ingredient, Dr. Mattatall noted that a pineapple substitute is not always better than real fruit.

"Eating actual pineapple would be far healthier than eating a pineapple extract in a gummy. So I would always go back to actually eating real food rather than a gummy that is flavoured like pineapple."

Should I be worried about the smell of my vagina?

"What's more important is to understand what is normal



Kourtney Kardashian endorsing LemmePurr, a gummy that claims to "support freshness and taste." Photo taken from Lemme Instagram

in terms of everybody's own vagina," said Dr. Mattatall.

People with a vagina, must learn to become familiar with what's normal for them. If something seems off or a new odour is presented, that may be cause for concern and further health care should be considered, explained Dr. Mattatall.

"For someone who is having menstrual cycles getting in touch with an understanding that at some part of your cycles, the fluid that's in and around the vagina, the consistency of it, the smell of it, will change back and forth, and just getting a sense of what's normal for you. And then, if it's something's falling outside of that normal, then maybe getting attention for that."

It is important to remember that when approaching health concerns, it is always best to connect with a professional in the field as opposed to someone who has "a large presence in our world and on social media," said Dr. Mattatall.

When considering new products, "correcting something with gummies sold by a social media personality

is not the appropriate way to go about a health concern," simply because of their lack of expertise and their hidden motive such as profit, explained Dr. Mattatall.

Timothy Caulfield, a professor at the University of Alberta, can be acknowledged for his time spent debunking celebrity claims and addressing issues in the public interest.

"The whole supplement industry is largely built on a lack of evidence, there's very little evidence to support most of the supplements that are pushed out there," said Caulfield.

Because of the platforms of influence that celebrities hold, Caulfield finds it vital to inform the public and stop misinformation.

Caulfield suggests evaluating what evidence that products have, asking oneself if it is accurate and believable and if the endorsers have your best interest in mind.

This method can be used while looking into the Lemme brand, specifically the Lemme Purr gummies. On the Lemme website under "The Proof," the brand reiterates what they have been claiming in their Instagram posts. Lemme

displays all of their ingredients on The Proof page. The first ingredient listed is SNZ-1969 Probiotic which "is shown in clinical studies to support vaginal health, freshness and odor," said Lemme.

However, what it fails to mention is where such a study can be found. The next ingredient mentioned is pineapple extract, however, the brand fails to mention its significance in any way. The last ingredient stated is vitamin C which is "a powerful antioxidant and pro-collagen vitamin that is an essential nutrient to support immune system health, skin health and promote overall health and well-being," said Lemme. However, the question of how does immune system health and skin health correlate with vaginal health? Another raise for concern is why shouldn't consumers simply just take vitamin C as opposed to this gummy?

On the Lemme website, it is also stated that they "collaborated with the best scientists to create delicious gummy vitamins and supplements using clinically-backed ingredients." However, no scientist is accredited.

Calgary's best student-friendly budget bites

Bella Coco
Staff Writer

When it comes to searching for a bite, the food and restaurant choices can be overwhelming. But for students, the price point can be the biggest determining factor of where they might treat themselves next.

As a student, on a budget, who considers herself a foodie, I took it upon myself to explore the Calgary landscape for budget-friendly gems. Or, should I say, jams.

The first restaurant I visited was Jams Diner, a charming breakfast joint nestled in the heart of Inglewood. The diner boasts quality and demonstrates such, with homemade jams, hot sauce, and brilliantly crafted dishes.

After I did some pricing research online, I arrived at Jams on New Year's Day with my girlfriend, a self-proclaimed breakfast connoisseur.

The place was packed, but

our timing was lucky and we were seated right away. Our server popped by to take drink orders—a vanilla latte and plain coffee, \$5 and \$3.50, respectively—and offered complimentary banana bread to make up for a lengthy wait time.

I ordered the spicy maple BLT with a side of hash browns which was \$17, and my girlfriend ordered the double french toast with hash browns for \$15.50. The menu provided price points ranging from \$13 to \$20 meals.

Needless to say, our breakfasts were polished off in record time. The wait time became even more understandable when Jams' boasts about quality revealed themselves to be true. The spicy maple BLT was crispy, fresh, and refreshingly unique with the tinge of spice provided by the maple-flavored bacon. The hash

browns came in patty form and paired perfectly with Jams' playful house-made jalapeño-mango hot sauce.

The total came to \$41 before tax and tip, for both meals and beverages. The service was kind and consistent, and the meals guaranteed that my visit to Jams would not be the last. For pricing and quality, I gave Jams a 4 out of 5.

My next stop was a charming street-style Italian place, Via Cibo, which quite literally translates to street food. This time I took my mother, who shares my love for Italian food. As a half-Italian, I knew I'd be picky about a place that presents fresh and local ingredients. But as a student, I gravitated towards their \$10 lunch

Continues on Pg.12



An order of linguini with rosé from Via Cibo. Photo by Bella Coco



Pink Friday 2
Nicki Minaj
Young Money,
Republic Records

Score: A+

Pink Friday 2 is the fifth studio album by Nicki Minaj released on Dec. 8, her 41st birthday, as a sequel to her debut album *Pink Friday* (2010).

The album consists of 22 versatile songs ranging from genres like drill, pop, rap, dancehall, afrobeat, R&B, and trap sounds.

Artists like J. Cole, Lil Wayne, Drake, Lil Uzi Vert, Future and more all add their own touch to the album Minaj proves she is a lyrical genius with a fierce flow with each song, you'll recognize a few popular samples such as "Move your Feet" by Junior Senior (2003), which was remixed into "Everybody" with Uzi.

The popular anthem "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" by Cyndi Lauper (1983) spins out to "Pink Friday Girls," a fresh remix of a classic.

This album is perfect to listen to while getting ready with your friends, a non-stop party with each song, Queen Nicki conquers the charts yet again with this latest release.

-Jillian Zack

Thank God We Left The Garden
Jeffrey Martin
Fluff and Gravy

Score: A+



Thank God We Left The Garden is the fourth studio album by American musician Jeffrey Martin. Released on Nov. 3, it was recorded in a small shack he built in Portland, Oregon.

The album consists of 11 songs that move you with the simplicity of his voice, a soft folk sound with an emotional richness. As if he infused his songs with heartfelt emotion that is more apparent with each listen.

"Paper Crown" is an honorable mention, it pokes your heart with his sweet lyrical storytelling. Martin created a spacious sound, inviting listeners into a safe and cozy space where they can

reflect on the persistence of evil in the midst of good. He welcomes you to remember the beauty of the world around you through his music.

There is a consistent theme of human persistence and strength, the urge to experience the full scope of existence.

To remember what it is to be alive, Martin delivered an album that lightens you up with each song, a liberating listen.

-Jillian Zack

Watch out for these 5 NHL players in 2024

Zach Payne
Sports Editor

As the calendar flips over to 2024, the NHL season is right around the halfway mark. However, it is also a good time to take stock of what teams and which players found the most success over the last calendar year, and to project what will happen in the next year.

Evaluating using a calendar year rather than a season is a good way to track consistency from season to season. It is also just another way to set a clear sample size for evaluation purposes as well.

So with that being said, here are five players who are set to find the most success in 2024:

Connor McDavid

Having just played his 600th career game, the best player in the sport is already closing in on 1000 career points. He needs just 97 points to reach the milestone, and given his resume, the odds are that he will get there in 2024. McDavid has also been scoring like a madman as of late and is reviving the Oilers' playoff hopes nearly single-handedly. Since Nov. 20, McDavid has played in 19 games and has scored a ridiculous 39 points. As a result, Edmonton's 14-5-0 record over that time is relatively unsurprising. Should the Oilers ascension continue, McDavid will ensure that they threaten any team they face in

the playoffs.

Quinn Hughes

The Vancouver Canucks have been one of the best teams in the league this season. A huge part of that is the elite production they have gotten out of their best players. However, none have been as impressive this season as Quinn Hughes. The star defenceman is scoring at an absurd 101-point pace and has been involved in not just the Norris trophy discussion for best defender, but the Hart trophy discussion for league MVP. Hughes has established himself as one of the best offensive defencemen in the league, and the best part is that he's only 24 years old. Which means in theory, he's still going to keep getting better as he enters his prime.

Alexander Ovechkin

In pursuit of greatness, Washington Capitals superstar and captain Alexander Ovechkin hit a bit of a snag in late 2023. To open the 2023-24 season, he had just seven goals in 34 games. Far from the elite goal-scoring paces he has been known for in his career. However, he also was at a career-low 5.9 shooting percentage, far from his 12.8 per cent clip for the rest of

his career. That is bound to improve at least by a few percentage points over the rest of the 2023-24 season and into the 2024-25 season. With some regression back to the mean, Ovechkin will no doubt see his scoring production spike. As it stands, Ovechkin sits just 64 goals behind Wayne Gretzky for the most all-time, he should be able to put at least a decent dent in that gap by the end of 2024.

Connor Bedard

The rookie phenom has exceeded even some of the loftier expectations for his rookie campaign. Bedard is currently on pace for 32 goals and 38 assists. A 70-point pace would be fairly impressive on its own, but it's made more impressive when considering the quality of the Chicago Blackhawks roster around him. Chicago is currently sitting near the bottom of the standings, and one of the only other quality forwards on the roster, Taylor Hall, suffered a knee injury that ended his season just 10 games in. Bedard is arguably the only player on the roster that is in the long-term plans. So with the production he's had so far, imagine what will happen when the Hawks surround him with more talent heading into the 2024-25 season. As one

of the most hyped prospects since the turn of the century, Bedard continues to display the audacious talent that has convinced people he will be one of two or three best players in the league.

Adam Fantilli

Another rookie who is having a very good rookie year, though with much less attention being given to him, is the Columbus Blue Jackets' third overall pick from this past draft, Adam Fantilli. The former University of Michigan star is enjoying a rookie campaign that has him playing at a very respectable 50-point

pace. While not quite as impressive as Connor Bedard (few players are), Fantilli is showing a ton of promise as a 19-year-old in the NHL. Not many players his age even threaten to make the league, let alone make as profound of an impact. Fantilli projects to be one of the league's brightest young stars, who should see a more traditional spike in production in his sophomore season. With players such as Johnny Gaudreau already on the Columbus roster, plus more to come over the offseason, Fantilli is in a great position to expand on his rookie campaign in the 2024-25 season.



Edmonton Oilers forward Connor McDavid became the fifth fastest player to reach 900 career points, and continues his push for point number 1,000. Photo courtesy of Andy Devlin/Edmonton Oilers

#S

28, the number of consecutive games the Detroit Pistons lost

3.16, the striking differential of Driscus du Plessis, which ranks 10th in the UFC

1.31, Christian McCaffrey's average touchdowns per game in the 2023-24 season

602, how many games it took Connor McDavid to reach 900 points, 5th-fastest in NHL history

UFC 297 Main Card Preview

The UFC is coming back to Canada, here is a preview of the Main Card of the first pay-per-view event of 2024

Zach Payne

Sports Editor

The UFC is ringing in the new year in style, as UFC 297 will travel north of the border to Toronto for the first pay-per-view event of 2024.

The event will feature multiple championship fights, along with several more intriguing matchups for the Canadian crowd to enjoy on Jan. 20.

There will be nine Canadians on the card, including one in every single fight on the preliminary card. This means the hometown crowd will have someone to get behind in almost every fight.

Additionally, the main

card has one of the most entertaining personalities in the sport—headlining the event in Middleweight, Champion Sean Strickland. Everything is in place for an exciting pay-per-view and for a rare Canadian event to open in 2024.

Here is a quick preview of all the fights set to appear on the main card.

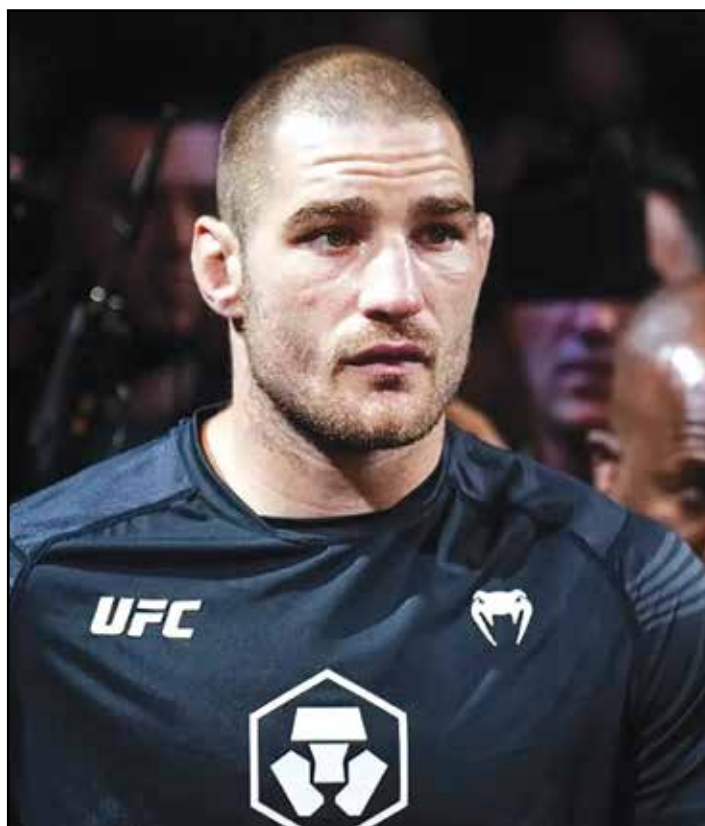
Middleweight Championship: Sean Strickland vs Dricus du Plessis

Strickland shocked the MMA world, dominating

former champion, Israel Adesanya for five rounds en route to one of the biggest

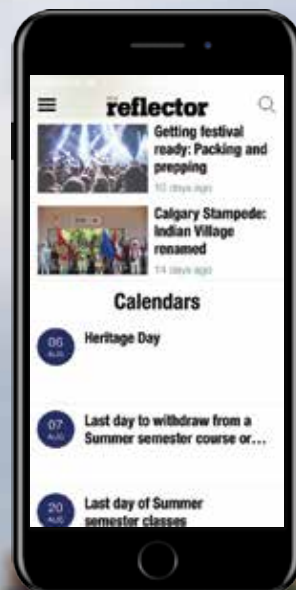
upsets in a championship fight. After scoring a huge knockdown in the opening

Continues on Pg. 15



UFC undisputed Middleweight Champion Sean Strickland walking toward the octagon before a fight. Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

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Continued from Pg. 14



After earning a shot at UFC gold, Dricus du Plessis prepares for the biggest fight of his life. Photo courtesy of X/@dricusduplessis

round, Strickland put on a defensive masterclass en route to a unanimous decision. Having captured Middleweight gold, he will now defend his belt for the first time.

Dricus du Plessis has been a steady riser in the middleweight rankings but saw the spotlight fall on him suddenly after some tension with Adesanya. Originally, it appeared that it would be du Plessis getting a title shot in September.

After defeating Robert Whittaker, du Plessis and Adesanya had an intense standoff in the octagon. However, the South African contender could not recover in time to be able to make the fight. Thus, Strickland was awarded the fight that he eventually won.

Women's Bantamweight Championship: Raquel Pennington vs

Mayra Bueno Silva

In the last UFC event in Canada, one of, if not the greatest female fighter in UFC history, Amanda Nunes, retired as the undisputed double-champion, including her Bantamweight title. As a result, the belt is now vacated for one of these two women to win it at UFC 297.

Pennington rides into this fight on a five-fight win streak. Four of those wins were by decision, and one by guillotine choke. However, she has not fought since Jan. 14 of last year. Meaning that by the time this fight rolls around, it will have been over a year since her last bout. Whether or not the prolonged absence from the octagon will be more of a blessing or a curse.

In the other corner, Mayra Bueno Silva has found similar success in recent fights. She technically won her last four fights, but her most recent victory over

Holly Holm was overturned to a no-contest after Bueno Silva tested positive for a banned substance.

Having not fought since mid-July, she is hoping to win this fight with no asterisks attached to it and to capture UFC gold.

Welterweight bout: Neil Magny (13) vs Mike Malott (NR)

Moving away from the title fights, we have a fight between an aging veteran, and a Canadian trying to break into the top-15 of the welterweight division.

Neil Magny is coming off of a pretty brutal loss to Ian Garry. In that contest he had his legs get abused for three straight rounds en route to a unanimous decision loss, and one at the hands of an opponent that was aggressively taunting him all fight. Though he may not be in a position to compete for a title at this stage in his

career, he still possesses a lot of experience and skill that makes him a difficult matchup.

His opponent in this fight is Canadian Mike Malott. Having appeared in three UFC fights plus one on Dana White's Contender Series, Malott is a perfect 4-0 with four finishes. Three by submission, and one by knockout. Three of those contests were finished in the first round, and none of his UFC appearances have made it to a third round thus far.

Malott hopes to continue his ascension into the top-15 with a statement win in front of the Canadian crowd.

Featherweight bout: Arnold Allen (3) vs Movsar Evloev (9)

In an exciting featherweight bout between rising contenders, Arnold

Allen is looking to hold his spot in the top-three as he pushes for a title shot. Allen had been on the path to a shot at Alexander Volkanovski, with 10 straight wins to open his UFC career. Unfortunately, he fell short against Max Holloway, stopping him from getting a shot at the belt.

However, he still has a very impressive resume in the UFC so far. That being said he will face a very interesting test against another rising contender.

Movsar Evloev currently boasts an undefeated 17-0 record and is 7-0 in the UFC.

The only blemish on his record so far is that all of his fights have ended in a decision. He's following a path somewhat similar to Belal Muhammad in that he is very content to take the fight to the ground and minimize risk en route to a decision. He will hope to change that narrative with a statement against Allen.

The Detroit Pistons are on pace to break all the wrong NBA records

Zach Payne

Sports Editor



Detroit Pistons guard Cade Cunningham is one of the lone bright spots on the team this season, as Detroit is on pace to shatter all the wrong NBA records. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

When young kids dream of becoming professional athletes, they don't just want to make it to the show. They dream of being superstars, living for the big moments, winning championships, and going down as legends in the history books.

Some kids get to live out that dream. Others end up in the history books for the wrong reasons. Currently, that is happening, as the NBA world is watching something special unfold this season.

That is because the Detroit Pistons are finding themselves re-writing the history books, breaking records that nobody wants attached to their names.

The magic number for the current moment is 28. That is the amount of games the Pistons lost in a row. They now own the single-season record for the longest losing streak and tied for the longest losing streak that

spanned across seasons. However, with how dreadful the Pistons have been this season, there may be more records on the horizon.

As it stands right now, the Pistons hold a pitiful record of 3-31. Since starting the season 2-1, they've gone 1-30. They hold a winning percentage of just 8.8 per cent.

If their current pace holds, they will finish the season with a record of 7-75.

For context, the current NBA record for the worst in a season belongs to the 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers. That team finished their season with a record of 9-73. The worst winning percentage in a season belongs to the 2011-12 Charlotte Hornets. In the lockout-shortened season, their winning percentage was just 10.6 per cent.

The 2023-24 Pistons are on pace to break both of those records. The worst part

is, they are on pace to do so with room to spare.

It's difficult to describe just how bad this team has been. Even during the 76ers' prime tanking years under Sam Hinkley, they never even were quite this bad.

So what is going wrong with the Pistons? (aside from everything). It starts at the top, with a fundamental lack of self-awareness from management. You see, Pistons management was actually under the impression that the team could take a step this season. Led by emerging young star Cade Cunningham, and former coach of the year Monty Williams, there were signs of optimism regarding the direction of the team. As a result, they decided to go all-in on Williams as their coach of the future, giving him a lucrative six-year contract.

Safe to say that the deal has not been as advertised

thus far. Through all the struggles, Williams has been constantly tweaking his lineups. He's also yet to produce a combination of five players that has shown any signs of life.

A major problem for Williams is that the roster is fundamentally flawed. The Pistons are not built for the modern NBA, as they have too many players that are incapable of shooting from a distance. They are currently second last in the league, shooting just 33.4 per cent from three.

Because of that, it has been very difficult to effectively space the floor offensively. Which makes life more difficult for Cunningham. He has less space to operate with the ball in his hands, and no reliable shooters to pass to.

In a vacuum, the Pistons are asking Cunningham to play hero ball every single night. But even when he

plays outstanding, there usually isn't even enough of a floor from other players to escape with a win.

Another issue plaguing the Pistons is in the over-emphasis on the backcourt and centre positions, while completely neglecting the wings. Detroit has only a single player who is competent and plays on the wing. He also happens to have been injured for an extended stretch.

Bojan Bogdanovic has been relatively solid throughout his NBA career. This season he is one of very few Pistons players capable of shooting from three with any semblance of consistency. The problem? He's played in just 15 of 34 games. However, now that he has returned to action, that's at least some modicum of good news.

But on the whole, there aren't a lot of sources for optimism as of now. Cunningham stands alone in that regard.

Detroit has fundamentally mismanaged and misunderstood their roster over the past few seasons. All of those issues are now reading their ugly years to create the ultimate disaster of a basketball team.

Now the only thing for them to do is sit and watch the disaster unfold. The saving grace is they are barreling toward another high-draft pick. They just have to start actually hitting on those picks and build a supporting cast around the young talent.

As for the rest of this season, Cunningham and company have to fight for their lives to avoid becoming the poster child for terrible NBA teams.