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QriTical's Transathletic Panel: Addressing the misinformation circulating Bill 29

Sarah Palmer

Staff Writer

Nearing the one-year anniversary of the group's establishment, QriTical—Mount Royal University's queer and transgender research hub—hosted the Transathletic Teach-In panel on Friday, Nov. 8.

Patrons attended either virtually via Zoom or in-person at the Riddell Library's Ideas Lounge. Listening to the insight of five guest speakers, the panelists spoke about the current state of transgender inclusion in sport from 1 p.m., to 3 p.m.

Dampening the research hub's launch party, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith announced a range of controversial policies aimed at the province's transgender population last March.

Overshadowing QriTical's festivities once again was the United Conservative Party's tabling of Bill's 26, 27 and 29 on Oct. 31—barely a week before the panel.

From medal-winning Paralympian Valentina Petrillo to professional hockey player Jessica Platt, competitive athletes and academics from a variety of different sports and identity-diverse backgrounds shared their thoughts while dissecting the proposed legislation.

The possible approval of the three amendment acts would reshape the level of access that Alberta's transgender youth have to gender-affirming care and self-identification in pre-secondary school—while shifting the eligibility that transgender athletes of all ages have to competitive sports.

Panelists spoke specifically about the possible impact of Bill 29, the Safety in Sport Amendment Act, which would ban transgender athletes from competing in non-designated co-ed leagues while allowing school authorities and sports organizations to report eligibility concerns of current players or people requesting to create mixed-gender leagues.

During the first reading of Bill 29, Minister of Tourism and Sport, Joseph Schow indirectly called the allowance

of trans-women competing in sports leagues alongside biological women “an unfair advantage” and described that the proposed legislation would enforce that a person's registered sex at birth would determine their competitive eligibility.

Particularly focusing on fairness in women's sports, the legislation would effectively make female leagues available to biological females only while limiting trans-women to competing in co-ed leagues.

“That unfair advantage that people think we have really comes from a misogynistic viewpoint that women are inherently worse than men, that they're smaller or weaker than men,” said Platt. “Those kinds of viewpoints really take away from the work that myself as a trans-athlete would put in.”

Announcing her gender identity as a trans-woman on Instagram while playing for the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) team, the Toronto Furries, Platt became the first openly transgender person to play professional hockey in Canada in 2018.

Having now ended her professional career, Platt remembers feelings of support while looking back on her time spent playing on the team. Learning about Alberta's proposed legislation makes her thankful to have been accepted into a woman's league, and reminds her about the challenges she faced as an athlete who transitioned.

“When I transitioned, I lost my sense of safety,” said Platt. “People have this idea that people transition to win, but people transition to be happy.”

Sharing that she's seen an abundance of online rhetoric of people saying that they think biological-men transition so they can place higher in women's sports leagues, Platt questions this opinion in finding that trans-women continue to face barriers—regardless of them achieving elite-athletic status.

“Who's going to give up their privileges as a cis male



QriTical, MRU's queer and trans research hub, aims to put a spotlight on transgender athletes and their accomplishments through their transathletic teach-in. Photo courtesy of QriTical

for little to no money as a pro athlete in women's sports?” Platt said. “You have to worry about being judged constantly, you're going to risk rejection, harassment, [and maybe even] violence.”

Having completed their thesis on the experiences of trans and non-gender conforming persons in sport, panelist Eva Bošnjak agrees that the legislation reinforces harmful gender stereotypes and finds that this idea is informed by biological men having naturally higher levels of testosterone, the hormone responsible for muscle and bone strength, according to Harvard Health Publishing.

“What this misconception does when it is embedded into a policy is that it masks transphobia under the guise of fairness,” said Bošnjak. “People think that testosterone is a predictor of sport performance, and the data shows us that it is not.”

Citing the 2021 review by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES), Bošnjak summarized that there is limited evidence proving that having an increased amount of testosterone makes for better athletic performance and that the collection of biological data is methodologically flawed and often overused

when informing policies.

Noting that sports like gymnastics don't consider traditionally-masculine features as an athletic advantage, Saskatchewan-based national trampoline gymnast and panelist Eb Campbell believes the sport is “exceptionally gendered” nonetheless.

Seeing that men's and women's categories are completely different sports, Campbell explains that gymnasts start specializing in their areas of interest incredibly young—posing challenges for transgender athletes hoping to continue the sport after announcing a change to their gender identity.

“Some trans athletes will, because of this, just decide to wait until they're done to come out,” said Campbell. “Or they will come out but stay competing in the category they started in because moving over isn't really a choice.”

Identifying as non-binary, Campbell finds that non-cis-gender people should be permitted the opportunity to compete in categories that best align with their skill level instead of their gender identity. Campbell, for example, enrolls in men's categories for trampoline and tumbling while participating in

a woman's roller derby league because those are the sections they feel their athleticism matches their teammates most accurately.

Suggesting a solution to how sports are categorized, Bošnjak recommended that men's leagues should be renamed to “open” and exist as a category where anyone can participate regardless of their gender. For women's leagues, Bošnjak said the category should be made available to anyone who's a member of a marginalized group—including biological women among non-binary and transgender people.

Having quilted a mosaic informed by their individual perspectives, panelists agreed that Bill 29's passing would be a backward step for Alberta. By restricting transgender people from enrolling in co-ed leagues, Bošnjak feels that this would reinforce the narrative that sports are intended for cisgender people.

“I want to see [sport] categories or criteria where it doesn't matter if a person is taking hormones or not taking hormones,” said Bošnjak.

“I just want them to be able to participate in the category they are most comfortable in [and] I want them to feel respected. I want them to feel seen.”

U.S. election results and its effect on Canadians

Bella Coco

News Editor

Thirty-four felony counts, six bankruptcies, two impeachments and one conviction. Donald Trump has won the 2024 U.S. election and will be the 47th president of the United States.

However, before the election results were announced, more than one-third of Canadians huddled around their televisions and live-streams to eagerly, or anxiously, watch the 50 states on the U.S. map flash red or blue.

Leger, a North American market research company, conducted a U.S. election poll with 1,562 Canadians aged 18 or older from Sept. 21 to Oct. 18. And while it may be easy to tune out of another country's election or government, the results revealed that 70 per cent of Canadians were interested in the election.

Additionally, if Canadians could vote in this year's U.S. election, 64 per cent would vote for Kamala Harris, 21 per cent would vote for Donald Trump and 15 per cent were split.

However, the election has come and gone, and it has put Trump in power as America's next president. With that being said, there is a certain level of curiosity to see how Trump's performance regarding climate change,

immigration and trade relations will affect Canada.

Duane Bratt, a professor of policy studies at MRU, says that with Canada's reliance on the U.S. market, the uncertainty between Canadians, and more specifically, Canadian students, will only grow.

"We've seen that when the economy is bad, it is tough for new graduates. We saw that in 2008-2009 with a global financial crisis. If you're graduating, this is not good news," Bratt says.

Trade relations and the economy

The morning after Trump's re-election, he immediately announced a 10 per cent global tariff on all imported goods. This has been a threat throughout Trump's 2024 campaign trail, and it is a threat that could have a significant negative impact on Canada's economy.

According to Radio-Canada, there is potential for some trade negotiations between Ottawa and the U.S. However, if negotiations were to go sideways, there is the possibility of retaliation from Trump and the U.S., which could throw Canada into the deep end of a trade war.

From major corporations to small businesses—all who may hire fresh graduates—could



With Donald Trump re-elected as the 47th U.S. president, his incoming policies and promises may have negative effects on Canadians. Photo courtesy of Defending Rights and Dissent

be expected to be negatively impacted by the trade tensions between the U.S. and Canada.

"This is bad news for them as well. Even if those startups aren't in a trade area, just the overall spillover effect of increased uncertainty, increased unemployment and reduction in GDP (gross domestic product) would affect them as well," Bratt says.

Bratt says that tariffs are seen as Trump's major signature economic policy. This idea can be dated back to

the 1980s, where Trump had been a trade protectionist. According to Bratt, Trump has been pulling tariffs out of his playbook ever since. From the first Trump administration to the forced renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the threat of tariffs has come up time and time again.

"The problem with the tariff is that it overall will increase prices, either because the tariff increases the price artificially of the foreign good, or because consumers are now going to purchase the domestic good, which is now more expensive than the foreign good. And so what we have seen is that when tariffs are imposed, it increases prices, and it increases inflation for consumers," Bratt says.

When asked about how tariffs may affect varying industries, Bratt says no job sector is safe for a future post-secondary graduate in Canada.

"Even if you are not in an industry that is trade-dependent, there's going to be a spillover effect to your sector as well," he says.

Immigration and work visa policies

While the economy is always looming in the back of everyone's mind, Trump's border control policies may

also affect Canadian students and graduates looking for work opportunities in the U.S.

Students looking to apply for work visas for U.S. internships and jobs are encouraged to act on it much sooner rather than later.

"It's going to be very tough. The second pillar of his campaign was around border controls, and he's talking about a mass deportation of anywhere between 10 and 15 million people," Bratt says. "Even if you're going through the process legally, Homeland Security and the rest of the immigration department is just going to be so fixated on deporting illegal immigration, it's going to be tough to process legal immigration."

What now?

With so many unknowns up in the air over the future of Canada's economy and overall relationship with the U.S., it is tough to suggest how to prepare for such major potential shifts.

For Bratt, he says that for future post-secondary graduates in Canada, there is unfortunately no right answer on how to handle the coming change. The only thing to do right now is hope.

"There's just so much uncertainty. There's no magic bullet here. I would just say, be resilient. Be resilient."



Trudeau is "optimistic" that Canada and the U.S. can maintain mutually beneficial trade relations with Trump's presidential re-election. Photo by Shealah Craighead

Calgary Refugee Health Clinic on the brink of shutting down

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Amirmohammad Bagheri

Staff Writer

The Calgary Refugee Health Clinic (CRHC) has been providing healthcare and support to refugees facing language or cultural barriers since 2011. Their services include initial health assessments and screening tests, and treatment for acute health concerns and chronic health conditions.

Their team of doctors includes family physicians, infectious disease specialists, psychiatrists and internal medicine physicians. With the help of partnerships with Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), this clinic has provided multi-specialty care for over 10,000 refugees and their families.

On April 1 2025, the Calgary Refugee Health Clinic will be officially dropped by Mosaic Primary Care Network, which is their primary source of operational funding. As the time draws near, the clinic has now opened its doors to crowdfunding as it aims to reach a goal of \$300,000. This is only the bare minimum amount of money needed to maintain their lease and keep

the place open.

Mosaic Primary Care Network disclosed the following statement with CBC News as their reasoning for the change of decisions in funding.

“Over time, patient volume and complexity of care have grown significantly, surpassing the capacity of Mosaic’s PCN’s mandate,” they stated.

Other than resorting to crowdfunding, the clinic has also tried to reach out and gain funding through the provincial government. Several meetings with Alberta Health officials have been conducted including one with the assistant deputy minister of health. However, these efforts have proved to be unsuccessful.

According to specifications coming from Health Minister Adriana LaGrange in an interview with CBC News, provincial funding needed for the clinic flows through primary care networks. Because of the flow through primary care, their requests have been declined.

“I’m certainly worried about anyone – refugee or

otherwise – who comes to Alberta and requires care. We want to make sure that everyone is looked after,” LaGrange says.

LaGrange also mentioned that Alberta Health is actively meeting with the Mosaic PCN in order to strive toward a reasonable solution.

As this is the only clinic offering health and various care services for between 1,000 and 1,500 refugees on a yearly basis, the closure of the clinic could drastically affect those who count on the tremendous efforts of its healthcare workers.

As the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in Calgary increase in a steady manner, the impact could be severe.

In an article posted in City News, the medical director of the Calgary Refugee Health Society, Rachel Talavlika, mentioned the circumstances that these refugees have to endure. Alongside very challenging transitions, Talavlika reports on the fact that if the refugees are not part of a resettlement system, their health and well-being decline, which then leads to a surge of health crisis’.

According to Talavlika, the reason why the refugee clinic was created in the first place was due to the fact that most emergency rooms or walk-in clinics do not meet the needs of those suffering from such situations.

Talavlika also mentioned that if the CRHC shuts its doors, these patients will suffer costly consequences. With refugees working hard and making contributions in Calgary, the lack of healthcare could also affect Alberta, and the rest of Canada as well since these refugees are hard workers who are more than willing to contribute to our society.

The clinic also offers services for the better transition of refugees to other parts of Canada as some refugees initially enter Calgary as their first port of entry.

With the financial support of \$1.6 million being pulled out, they have about five months left to gather enough money to keep the lights on. So far, only \$10,480 has been donated since crowdfunding began 27 days ago at the time of writing this article.



There is support for refugees across major Canadian cities like Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto. However, limiting healthcare access limits work and living opportunities for refugees. Photo by Can Pac Swire

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Why Donald Trump won, again

The failure of the Democrats, and why third time was the charm for Trump

Ryan Montgomery

Staff Writer

Judgment day hath come for the Democrats. It is a cold day in hell and the devil has long since put on his winter coat. That is to say in flowery biblical language—the Dems lost hard and have no idea how this happened. Most pollsters predicted a close, if not decisive, Harris win.

At this moment, we don't quite have all the requisite information to say unequivocally why Trump won or Harris lost. At the time of my writing this, the votes aren't even fully counted, so maybe I'm wrong about everything and this can be a humorous time capsule of my hubris. Usually, hindsight is 20/20 but right now we're sitting at 15/20 or something like that. I'm not sure, I'm not an optometrist. Because of this, this article will be the best estimation of one wayward Policy Studies student's take on the election.

The holy grail of this exercise in retrospection is the 2024 electoral exit polls. These are the demographic questions asked by pollsters and pundits that tell us which people voted for which candidate and why. They are invaluable for analysts and politicians alike as they show why candidates win elections. With these, we can see which strategies paid off for each candidate and which ones sunk them. For the purpose of this article, we'll be using the CNN and NBC exit polls.

To say the least—the polls do not look good for Harris. The only demographic that Harris won a larger vote over Biden was black women. Her support in every other demographic shrunk from 2020—only holding onto core Democratic groups such as women and black voters. Fifty-three per cent of women voters voted for Harris, four per cent less than Biden's 57 per cent. While Trump's support among voters with and without a college degree increased from the last election, Harris' support among educated voters waned compared to Biden's in

2020.

Men of all colours, creeds and credentials leaned for Trump. The only exception was black men, who leaned Democrat—albeit by a lower margin than in 2020. Trump also made significant inroads with the Latino vote. The majority of Latino men voted for him, a demographic which Biden won handily in 2020. Trump also substantially increased his support among Latina women, which is known as a traditionally Democratic group. Latino voters in Pennsylvania only narrowly voted Democrat over Republican—so sadly no, despite as funny as it would have been, Tony Hinchcliffe was not a deciding force in the 2024 presidential election. Much as Trump's celebrity gaffes didn't hurt him, Harris' celebrity support did not win her much love from voters. Alas, endorsements from Taylor Swift do not win elections.

Biden shoved a stick in the Democrat's spokes in more ways than one, namely by refusing to step aside. By holding on for 75 per cent of the term till the bitter end, Biden prevented the Democrats from creating any semblance of a unified platform before the election. Dropping out three months before voting day threw the Democrats into a tailspin—brevity, it turns out, is not the soul of presidential campaigns. Initially, his belated yet abrupt retirement created a rally-'round-the-leader effect for Harris, with her approval rapidly surging in the polls. This newfound support, however, proved fleeting for the vice president (VP).

The novelty of having a presidential candidate who can form a cohesive sentence quickly wore off for the American electorate and the polls between the two candidates closed into essentially a dead heat. Perhaps the Democrats thought that Biden would be the sacrificial lamb on

which all their sins could be blamed, giving them a clean slate to run a new campaign. Maybe the captain could go down with his ship, taking the blame for the high cost of living and the border crisis down with him. However, any benefits of abandoning Biden were then immediately counteracted by picking his largely unpopular VP.

In the 2020 Democratic primaries, Harris only polled in the single digits. Whether she liked it or not, Harris was joined at the hip to Biden. She had no real opportunities to distance herself from his unpopular administration. A VP can't take shots at their own president without shooting themselves in the foot. From the outset, this gave Trump the edge when it came to rhetoric as he was able to portray himself as the outsider candidate once more, despite already having been president, maybe outsider is a state of mind.

Ultimately, Trump connected better with voters on the ground. In the era since Obama's presidency, the Democrats have been fighting populism with lectures on what voters ought to want. Whereas Trump went to the working class and played to their discontent at lost jobs and their Reaganite superpower status in decline, the Democrats took it for granted that voters would see Trump as obviously unfit for office. However, in an election dominated by the cost of living crisis, the southern border, and foreign wars, Trump successfully presented himself as the stronger candidate on all three issues.

On the economy, Harris was at a disadvantage as she was a member of the current administration and therefore could be tangentially blamed for the high cost of living, regardless if it was her fault or not.

On immigration, Harris shifted her opinion notably to the right after becoming the nominee. Prior to being chosen, Harris, along with

the Biden administration, focused primarily on opening pathways for undocumented migrants, with border security being a relatively minor stance in their immigration policy. However after she was chosen as the nominee, Harris shifted her rhetoric to one of tough border security and cracking down on asylum seekers. In other words—she became a Republican. Harris tried to fight Trump on his own turf and just as Mark Twain warned, he dragged her down to his level and beat her with experience.

Finally, in regard to foreign affairs, Biden oversaw a term marked by the Ukrainian war and the reigniting of conflict in Israel and Gaza. Both of these were characterized by policy failures by the Biden administration, with the president being unable to bring Russia to the negotiating table, and unable to effectively restrain Israel. Whether he can do so or not, Trump claimed that he could end the wars almost immediately. Hereas Harris effectively towed the

Democratic party line. In all fairness to Harris, this was an unwinnable fight for her. She could not make any effective statement on the Middle East without either alienating the pro-Israeli Democratic centre, or the pro-Palestinian left. This split in the party gave Trump the edge on foreign policy, deserved or not.

It remains to be seen what a second Trump presidency will look like. Predictions range from a Republican-town golden age where good ol' boys live down on the bayou drinkin' sweet tea and mama's in the kitchen cookin' apple pie. Or to the perishing of the government of, by, and for the people into an Atwoodian dystopia.

Regardless of what happens, it will make for good TV, which for the Canadian populace who treats American politics as a spectator sport, that might be all that matters.

Despite this turmoil to the south, we, as Canadians, can all take part in reciting this sacred mantra, thank the lord for the southern border.



Donald Trump makes a historic comeback as the 47th President of the United States. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Reflector Ramblers

Freshman's first finals: What to expect

Liam Rockliffe

Features Editor

When you begin your first semester at university, almost all of your firsts seem to be easy. Your first assignment, first quiz and first midterm all seem simple enough. However, the one task outlined in bold on your course outline seems to be impossible: your first post-secondary final exam.

It's almost a mystical entity, worth anywhere between 20 and 50 per cent of your final grade. Finals can make or break a whole course—people have seen them as a saving grace from a semester of missed assignments, and some see them as a final boss before the light at the end of the tunnel.

This article should ease your worries and give you information on what actually happens in the final month of university.

Your final exam schedule should have already been posted on Oct. 30, and if you haven't yet, I recommend marking it down on your calendar.

I encourage you to begin studying and note preparation for your final

exam as soon as possible, and if you are currently unsure of anything in your courses, seek your instructors or other academic assistance.

For most people, the exam will be held in the triple gym in the recreation centre, and in previous years students have entered through the second floor doors. The gym is layered in a blue mat which reduces noise and there are over a hundred desks looming in the gym. It can be quite intimidating, but at least now you know what's coming.

I recommend bringing layers and a water bottle, as it can get quite chilly in the examination hall, and nothing stops focus like having your fingers near frostbite. For bathroom breaks, you can simply ask your instructor to go to the washroom and leave. Any instruments required for the test will be outlined by your professor, but I recommend bringing some extra pencils and a sharpener.

A very merry exam season to everyone partaking! Enjoy, and prepare!



Exam hall at MRU located in the MRU Recreation Triple Gym. Photo courtesy of TikTok/@Itsnotanup

A spice of life: How a language can smash cultural barriers

Brennen French

Contributor



A picture taken in Vietnam, a place where learning a new language can take you!

Photo by Brennen French

So you want to learn a second language, but it's too hard? Nonsense—learning a new language doesn't have to be difficult, especially with the many opportunities available. I have taken a liking to the challenge of breaking cultural barriers and bringing newfound knowledge to any culture I'm interested in.

I began to learn Japanese, Spanish, and now American Sign Language (ASL) as a way to level up my understanding of how these cultures have so much more to them than meets the eye. By learning this way, I have seen a significant increase in my ability to be open-minded and I encourage you to give it a try.

How to start?

It is very important to establish the language family you are interested in learning. Japanese belongs to the Japonic family, Mandarin and Cantonese to the Sino-Tibetan family, and Spanish to the Romance family (Latin family). Each of these languages is very different and has its own traditional mechanics which makes doing your research very

important.

Paid resources

There are plenty of resources that range in levels of ease. However, I typically would recommend starting with some children's books and entry-level university literature. When learning a new language, there is no shame in starting from the beginning—we have to learn how to walk before we can run.

Tutors are also an extremely credible and beneficial resource, but a costly one. But websites like italki are an affordable option for lessons or to practice speaking.

I still continually use these resources on a daily basis to increase my grammatical knowledge and expand my understanding.

Free resources

I have yet to meet or travel to a culture that is not impressed or ecstatic that a person is attempting to connect with them in their culture by using their native language.

I strongly encourage everyone to step out of their comfort zone and go to some

cultural events and speak with the locals.

There is no better way to learn and bridge that gap between cultures than learning it from the source.

Other options include language learning apps such as Duolingo, Babbel and Rosetta Stone.

The capability of using these apps to gain some understanding of vocabulary is extremely useful, but my personal experience has not led me to rely on them as books can supply much more in-depth descriptions, and are usually cheaper.

Another way to study subconsciously is to switch your devices to the targeted language or consume media based in that language.

There is no better way to learn a language than immersion.

Final tip

Do not be afraid to get out there and try something new. You will try and try again, and there will be many laughs, but I promise your effort will always be noticed when you take on the huge task of stepping foot into a new culture.

Bound by the law: women's self-defence

When faced with danger in the streets, what measures can women take to defend themselves?

Mia Smith

Staff Writer

In Alberta, women are bound to the same laws as men. Which in the case of self defence, are virtually non-existent.

Christine Sawatsky, a 19-year officer of the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) explains that citizens are also confined to the same protocols and regulations that the police are.

These regulations state that people are allowed to use as much force as necessary to defend themselves or interrupt an attack on someone else.

However, if a female does have a weapon on her—such as pepper spray—it is classified as illegal. If the initial spray was self defence, the defender would most likely be fine, if they could explain and justify the use. But that does not promise that the victim would not be charged.

“You just have to be able to justify, and even then the courts may end up looking at it differently, or the investigator might look at it differently, it is very situationally dependent,” explains Sawatsky.

There are no legal protections that exist for women who are trying to protect themselves. If they use a weapon, they run the risk of being charged.

Sawatsky explains that in most cases, victims are attacked by someone they know. It is rare for the EPS to see a random attack.

In a study done by the Alberta Women's Shelter in 2023, statistics show that there are a range of indicators that are pointing towards women's domestic violence trends being on the rise.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters hit a 10-year high with a staggering 59,000 calls answered by the domestic abuse hotline.

Sawatsky believes it is unfair for the typical woman,



Safe4Life provides self-defence classes to women, and also teaches them about preventative measures. Photo courtesy of Lorna Selig and Safe4Life

who does not interact with people who make her feel unsafe, to be unable to defend herself because random attacks do happen.

However, she does see a lot of women who are carrying

self-defence weapons that are in fearful situations. Not that it is their fault, but the women are then using these weapons in an unjustifiable manner.

How do we defend ourselves?

Lorna Selig, the owner of Safe4Life, truly believes that everything we need to



Resources like Safe4Life and information from law enforcement can help women defend themselves without the fear of arrest. Photo courtesy of Lorna Selig and Safe4Life

protect ourselves we already have on our person.

The program, Safe4Life, is based around the idea of community education and believes the best way to protect oneself is to never get into the situation in the first place.

“Our intention is about awareness, avoidance, and preparedness so that you never need to get in the fight,” explains Selig.

The program is geared not only towards women but more based on age groups.

Safe4Life offers a variety of classes with flexible pricing tailored to each client's needs. They come directly to your location—whether it's an office, warehouse, or another setting—and provide a range of training sessions designed to enhance basic intuition and practical skills.

Although the program teaches basic self-defence techniques, it insists that the best course of action is to escape the situation rather than rely on defensive measures.

“The skill required to carry weapons in a way that would be useful is really not something that we believe can be taught in a condensed period of time,” says Selig.

Trust your instincts

At the end of the day, it is up to you as individuals to make the change.

Self-defence needs to be a part of a bigger conversation within societal regulations.

“We are limited by the law to what we are allowed to carry and do, which is unfortunate. I wish there was more,” says Sawatsky.

As citizens, there is the known responsibility to notice our surroundings and avoid certain situations.

“When you see something, say something,” emphasizes Selig.

YOUR STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Main Care Cupboard

Food & Hygiene drive

Nov. 18 — Dec. 9

How to Donate

Drop off your donation at any time in the Peer Support Centre (Z210).

Drop off donations at the SAMRU table on MRU Main Street from 12:30pm – 2pm:

Nov 19


Nov 21


Nov 26

Nov 28


Dec 3

Dec 5





View the donation wishlist here!
samru.ca/events





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Find West Gate Social in Wyckham House, near West Gate





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Scan the QR code to learn more, or visit the **Peer Support Centre (Room Z210)**.
samru.ca/PSC






Find us on social media @samrubuzz

Charlotte's Web returns for Alberta Theatre Projects' 50th anniversary

Rylie Perry
Contributor

In celebration of its 50th anniversary season, Alberta Theatre Projects (ATP) is putting on the classic tale of Charlotte's Web. Presenting a nostalgic bedtime story with a new face, the team at ATP hopes to inspire wonder and connection in their audiences.

Based on the novel written by E.B. White in 1952, Charlotte's Web tells the story of Wilbur, a scrawny livestock piglet. When his life is put at risk, Wilbur leans on his unexpected spider friend, Charlotte, who is determined to prove that he is worth saving.

Returning to the Martha Cohen Theatre for a third time, the play has been reworked by Joseph Robinette. Unlike previous

productions, however, this adaptation is paying homage to the history of ATP while still moving in a new, fresh direction.

"It is going to be a brand new version of Charlotte's Web," says Haysam Kadri, ATP's artistic director. "Those who have seen it before are going to come to a completely different show, with a different design, a different topography, and a different way of communicating the same story."

Kadri is a Mount Royal University alumni with a vivid passion for injecting arts into society. He is responsible for hiring artists, designers, directors, and also connects directly with the community.

Above all, however, Kadri

is in charge of curating the theme of their yearly productions to guide viewers through a season of different experiences and life lessons. This year's season is humanity and the human condition in all its forms.

The opening production, *The Seafarer*, not only garnered them more subscribers than any in the past 15 years, but it also broke every ticket record in the history of Alberta Theatre Projects.

"The *Seafarer* is an amazing, poetic play," Kadri says. "It really navigates the tumultuous ease of human frailty and redemption."

The third production of the season, *King James*, is an exploration of the role sports and fandom play in

relationships, while the fourth production, *Liars at a Funeral*, is a comedy piece that delves into humour and heartache.

By highlighting the human experience, ATP aims to touch audience members this anniversary season. Kadri said what they love to see is audience members identify with a voice they never thought they would before.

"We want the audience to transform. We want them to learn something new and we want them to be shocked or surprised. When they live vicariously through our storytelling, they are accessing different emotions that they might not have access to regularly," he says. It is the talented team behind these productions that enables ATP to be a trailblazer in terms of developing plays and playwrights, which helps them produce quality, contemporary theatre.

"You need to have faith in the team that you're hiring, and I have such faith in every single human that is a part of this entire 50th anniversary season," says Kadri.

Rebecca Northan, the director of ATP's *Charlotte's Web*, connects with audience members by infusing energy and excitement into all of her projects.

Kadri notes that it is her leadership that has truly guided the production and breathed life into the story.

"The playwright is the first character of every play because a play does not exist without pen to paper," he says. "[But] it is for the

audience. They're the final character of every play. We could be rehearsing the show for years, but if no one's there to witness it, it doesn't exist."

Northan's innovative techniques for engaging and understanding audiences align seamlessly with the theme of community in *Charlotte's Web*, making the production accessible and appealing to viewers of all ages.

"It is one of those plays that is about connection and community. It is all about invoking nostalgia for older generations, but also excitement for the younger generations coming in," Kadri says.

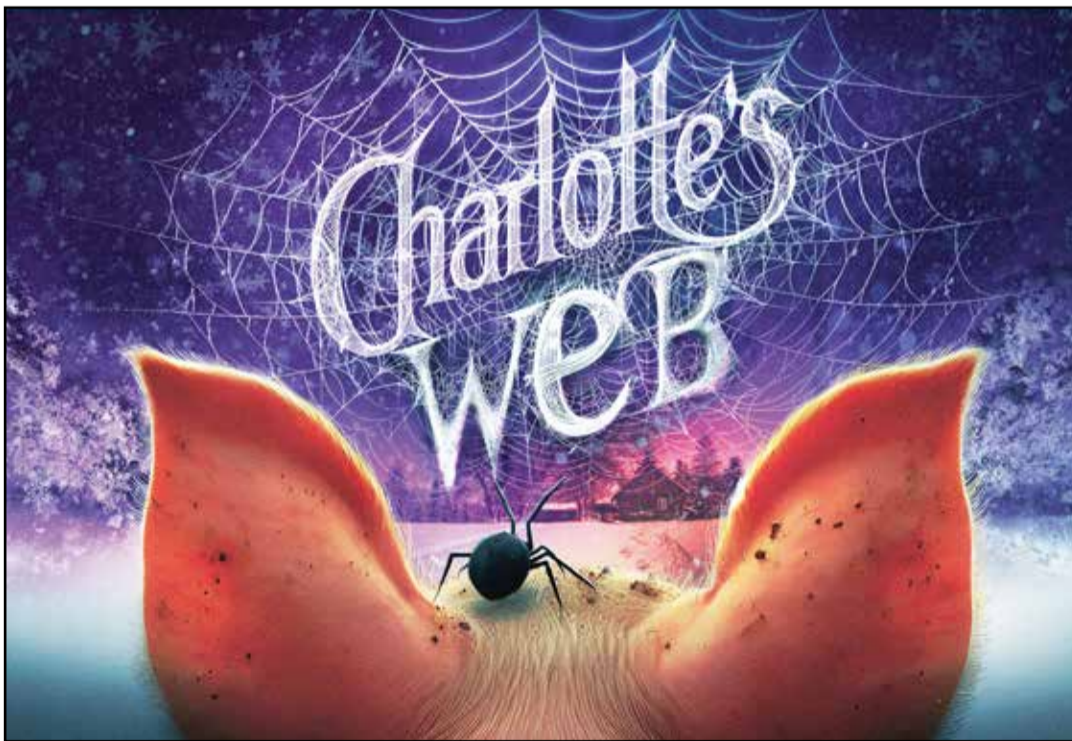
The play will feature elaborate costumes and designs unlike those from previous adaptations, with many of the main characters outfitted in full animal regalia, while others are brought to life through puppetry.

"It's really a dynamic kind of platform to work with," Kadri exclaims.

The play is set to run from Nov. 26 to Dec. 29. Showtimes are at 1:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., varying from Tuesday through to Sunday. Tickets start at \$35 and are available for purchase on the Alberta Theatre Projects website.

ATP is weaving a web to remind Calgarians that while the cold winter nears, nothing warms the heart like community and bedtime stories.

"They're gonna spin some magic," Kadri says.



Theatre poster of Alberta Theatre Project's new show, *Charlotte's Web*. Art by Kurt Firla

OUT'N ABOUT

YYC Foodies Fest

Described as a multidimensional shopping experience, the YYC Wonderland Festival and the YYC Foodies Festival are taking place on Nov. 23 and Nov. 24. At the Chief Starlight Centre, attendees can browse over 150 exhibits and even stop for pictures with Santa Claus. Tickets are as low as \$8 on ShowPass.

Hybrid Minds

On Nov. 28, Commonwealth Bar & Stage is transporting partygoers to the streets of the UK. Famous DJ duo Hybrid Minds will be spinning an electric mix of liquid drum and bass and garage, with tickets starting at \$30.

Holiday Skate Market

Combining Christmas shopping with ice skating, the Olympic Oval is getting people into the holiday spirit. On Nov. 23 from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., people can check things off of their list with over 80 vendors, and enjoy ice skating with rentals available. Perfect for college students with tickets starting at \$5.

Beauty and the Beast

A tale as old as time, this classic is taking the Beddington Theatre stage on Thursdays and Saturdays from Nov. 22. Guests can expect two musical performances with themes of love, adversity, and redemption. Suitable for all ages, tickets start at \$28.

BOOK REVIEW: *Big Swiss* by Jen Beagin

Rating: B+

Ava Puszta

Contributor



Cover of *Big Swiss* by Jen Beagin, a novel about sex therapy and parasocial relationships. Photo by Ava Puszta

Published in 2023, *Big Swiss* follows the life of a middle-aged woman named Greta. Separated from her partner, she earns her living transcribing therapy sessions for the local sex therapist who is only ever known as Om. The woman—Greta—is isolated and is characterized by engaging in self-destructive behaviour without being consciously aware of it.

The book examines the obsessive nature of the human mind as Greta becomes infatuated with one of Om's clients whom she calls Big Swiss. Greta eventually goes against her legal contract and befriends Big Swiss, and the two begin sleeping together. Bringing forward the questions of morality, infidelity and ethics, this novel is an exploration of life, love and sex.

Greta knows everything about everyone in the sleepy city of Hudson, New York. When she takes a rare walk outside, she recognizes at least half a dozen voices. At the beginning of the book, she ventures into public twice and in both instances she recognizes people who do not know her at all.

"She didn't know him personally, but a piece of his transcript came to her...His initials were AAG, and he was sleeping with his sister-in-law," writes Beagin on pages 26 and 27.

Despite this, Greta is bound by a confidentiality agreement which prevents her from interacting with any of these people. This doesn't prove to be overly difficult as Greta is an isolated hermit who has one faithful friend—her dog Piñon. From this, Greta fulfills

her need for companionship by living through the transcripts and thus develops a parasocial relationship with Big Swiss.

I found the book had an interesting example of a parasocial relationship. Defined as one member of the partnership knowing everything the other has offered to the public eye, and the other is a stranger learning everything for the first time. In the context of the novel, Big Swiss is not releasing her information publicly, rather Greta is getting it from her therapy sessions as a mere extension.

"Human relationships [are] pure folly, because nothing [is] ever perfectly mutual. One person always liked or loved the other person a little more than they were liked or loved... it was never, ever equal, and that was pretty much the only

thing you could count on in life," writes Beagin.

This quote sums up the parasocial aspect of the novel in less than a paragraph. I am unsure if this quote is true in reality. It is more a representation of how Greta comforts herself in her relationship choices than an anecdote about average human nature. Part of the reason Greta stays so close to Big Swiss is because she has the upper hand in their dynamic, even though she never admits it—much like her narcissistic tendencies.

Interacting with her becomes intoxicating and Greta finds herself tumbling to the point of no return because of her fascination with a woman she's never truly met. With her obsessive nature and desires, Greta convinces herself that she will tell Big Swiss the truth about their dynamic.

The private information Greta holds over Big Swiss aids her attraction and the unique power imbalance established in their partnership. Technically, Big Swiss has given consent to share the details of her private life—but not to Greta. Their whole relationship is built on a lie, Greta even going as far as to lie about her name. The intimacy the women share is their one reason for returning to each other even though both are aware that what they are doing is wrong.

Wrong in many ways—Greta for legal reasons, and Big Swiss for moral reasons as she is married and attempting to have a child.

Greta is naturally a flawed female protagonist, which is always refreshing during the "girlboss" movement we see in any media outlet. I found Greta to be a more enjoyable "femcel" archetype, in which women blame their personal failures (romantic, career, etc.) on relationships they hold with men. The archetype toes a thin line as I find it can either be done horribly or humorously, as is found in *Big Swiss*.

For me, in order to write a successful femcel archetype, there has to be an element of satire. Authors struggle to write female characters as layered beings. Even when attempting to criticize something like incel

culture, the women frequently remain one-dimensional or throw them into this recent movement in media that shows women can also be narrow-minded and insecure beings. Often, it comes out as a more misogynistic take as opposed to a critical one; it is a very difficult aspect to write about in a way that is clever and introspective. *Big Swiss* uses the archetype to its advantage as it propels the plot forward but does not consume the entire novel.

In comparison, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* by Ottessa Moshfegh exercises this archetype in a way I found to be sloppy, insufferable and juvenile. All I learnt about her as a character throughout the entire novel was that she had depression and as such, everyone should feel sorry for her because she has an excuse to be a horrible person.

Greta does not carry this attitude, rather Greta may not outwardly admit that she is a self-destructive narcissist, but she also does not complain about her life being terrible. She understands that her overall life and mood are at status quo because she is avoiding everything that causes this behaviour in herself. It is not until the end of the book that Greta openly admits that she is a narcissist.

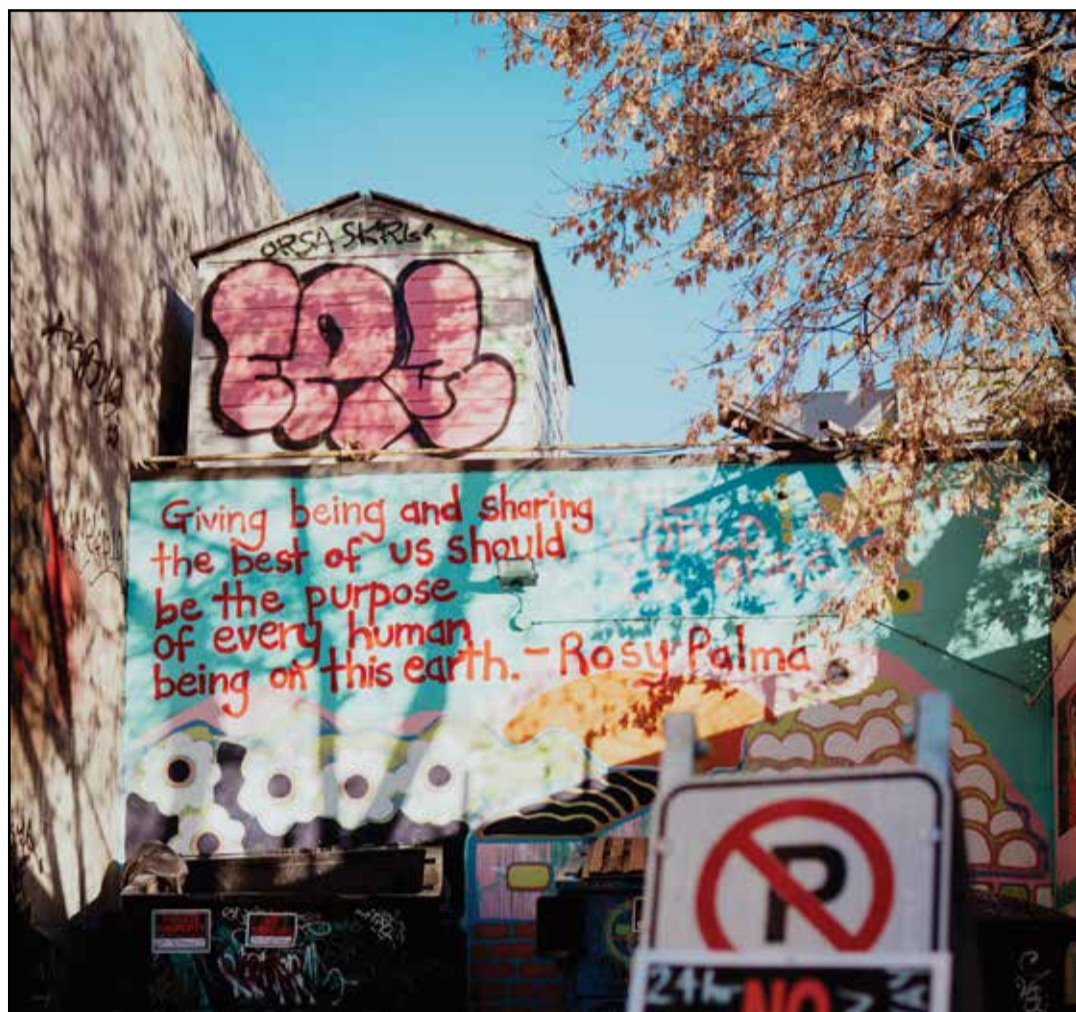
Greta's development in the novel is stunted, and I will admit that. However, she at least learns what is causing her halt in development and where to turn next by taking accountability. She is not surprised by the way her life has turned out because she knows she is the one responsible for it.

Is something like love an ethical practice in this sense?

Both women are bound by agreements with other people, and they are lying to either themselves or those around them. What happens when intimacy becomes confined and how strong is the human brain in these situations? *Big Swiss* holds an interesting argument told through bizarre humour and satire as a woman begins a new transition in her adult life after believing she was all grown up.

Graffiti: Art or vandalism?

Mia Smith
Staff Writer



Local graffiti in downtown Calgary from an unknown artist. Photo by Brennen French

What is graffiti?

Train cars, old buildings, and public streets are all canvases for graffiti—defined as visual communication within the public eye, often without the property owner’s permission.

In short, graffiti is often practiced as illegal street art. Considering its eye-catching medium, graffiti has served as a tool for social and political influence. It frequently acts as a means of defiance against governmental systems.

Civil disobedience is a large part of graffiti culture.

Social commentary acts as a platform for numerous marginalized groups to make their presence known in a political landscape that frequently overlooks them. In recent decades, graffiti and street art have assimilated into the mainstream art scene.

However, many people are questioning whether or not this medium belongs in the sanction of professional art at all.

Dom Topilko, a local street artist and hip-hop enthusiast,

believes that street art is a proper medium in the art world. The main question that Topilko brings up is: if street art loses its significance, what is classified as proper art?

For everyday people who want to contribute to the world of art, graffiti is one of the most accessible ways to do it.

“It’s a way of taking something human that has fallen apart and kind of breathing new life into it,” says Topilko. “Hip-hop as a culture is about expressing yourself individually and creatively.”

History of street art

The origins of the hip-hop movement can be traced back to the mid-1970s in the urban areas of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington D.C.

However, the origins of street art can be traced all the way back to the stone age. People used to leave handprints on walls to let people know that they were there.

“Considering where graffiti started, if you need permission it kind of defeats the purpose of it,” says Topilko.

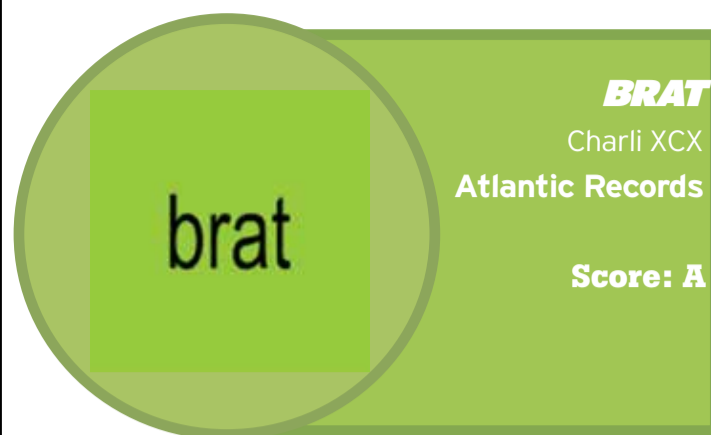
“Tagging,” a common tool in the street art medium, is used to create immortality in a specific area by leaving a unique name, tag, or design to let people know you were there. This is usually how people begin their journey with graffiti and street art.

The fleeting nature associated with street art is part of the appeal. The ability to be washed, diminished or overtaken at any point makes it even more powerful for people to see, knowing one day it may not be there anymore.

It is a temporary protest. In places that lacked money, art or inspiration, graffiti planted its roots. The difference between street art and graffiti, though, is legalities.

Murals, posters, and art

Continues on Pg.12



BRAT

Charli XCX

Atlantic Records

Score: **A**

Charli XCX has made an extreme comeback in her latest album, *Brat*, with many even coining it album of the summer. Listeners even went as far as relabeling the trend ‘Hot Girl Summer 2024,’ to ‘Brat Summer 2024.’ The album showcases tracks that are eccentric and exciting while remaining quite catchy.

The album attracts Gen Z and Millennials because it brings back a sense of that good 2000s nostalgia. With its high-energy beats, moments of emotion, and witty lyrics, *Brat* delivers a range of moods—from the sassy attitude of “Guess” to “Sympathy is a Knife,” where it communicates how sympathy can hurt while using a “knife” as imagery to highlight the pain of insecurity.

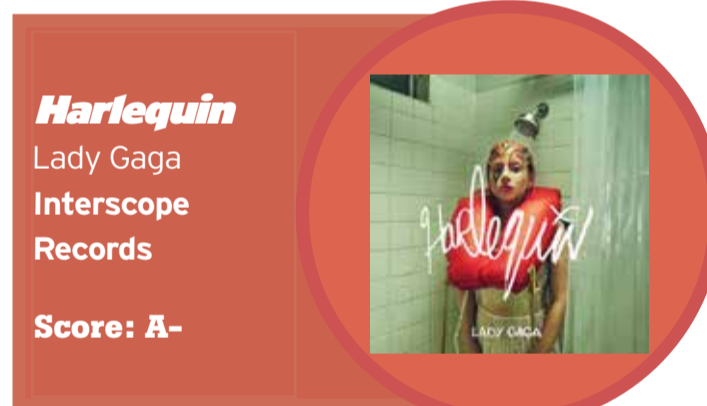
Brat isn’t just a collection of songs in an album; it’s meant to

make a bold statement.

Charli’s ability to merge hyper-pop with a mainstream music makes the album relatable while simultaneously satisfying the craving for unique music. Charli’s ecstatic performances such as her appearance in the BOILER ROOM, brought her music a new layer of life.

With her album *Brat*, Charli delivers an empowering, and deeply personal album that’s perfect for blasting while getting ready to go out, on road trips, or dancing in general. It’s an album that stands out and has become overall iconic—much like Charli herself.

—Anja Pavlovic



Harlequin

Lady Gaga

Interscope Records

Score: **A-**

Lady Gaga has managed to intrigue fans and critics with her latest album, *Harlequin*, once again. Released on Sept. 27, the album isn’t a typical Lady Gaga album as it adds a theatrical element with a mix of jazz and pop which was inspired by her portrayal of Harley Quinn in the film/musical, *Joker: Folie à Deux*.

Gaga moves away from her classics like “Born This Way” and “Shallow” to explore a new genre with songs like “The Joker” and “Happy Mistake.” These tracks showcase her ability to channel the chaotic energy of her character Harley Quinn while delivering incredible vocals and depth. Gaga’s ability to go from her regular pop to jazz gives an insight into her talent, thus, making *Harlequin* an instant standout. Her vocals, along with the calming music give that essence of warm Christmas music, but with a deeper meaning behind the lyrics.

The album has managed to reach fans of all ages. From the jazzy exuberance of “Get Happy” or the bittersweetness of “Smile,” Gaga creates a totally new listening experience from her average type of music—and manages to do it quite well. Her tracks like “Folie à Deux,” harness a hauntingly beautiful melody to compliment her vocals. “If My Friends Could See Me Now,” is a funky jazz melody that demonstrates the different emotions being portrayed in the album. The album takes listeners on a journey through Gaga’s character, truly exemplifying how deeply connected she is to her role. *Harlequin* is proof that Gaga is truly boundless when it comes to her talent, from pop music to jazz theatre, we can’t wait to see what’s to come next.

—Anja Pavlovic

Continued from Pg.11

installations are all classified as street art. However, when street art is done without permission, it is then called graffiti.

“No one is really asking to be seen, you kinda just put your things in spots and it is up to people walking past to appreciate it,” says Topilko.

The influence of Banksy

Banksy is a UK-based artist who is an inspiration to many street artists around the world. He has kept his identity hidden for the entirety of his career as an artist, which, in turn, adds to the mystery and anonymity of street art in general.

On his website, he speaks about how he and his work are unavailable to be bought.

“Are you a company looking to license Banksy art for commercial use? Then you’ve come to the right place—you can’t,” states Banksy’s website.

But, Banksy’s influence over street art internationally, is another story.

In an article written about his influence on the street art scene, Banksy’s success

is based on his traditional graffiti values.

“Banksy has most certainly changed the world for the better, beyond the scope of art. From bringing pop-culture art to the forefront like Andy Warhol before him, while maintaining anonymity, he has remained loyal to his roots of ‘graffiti crew’ life, without ‘selling out,’” writes ArtWorks Advisory.

Topilko speaks highly of Banksy’s influence on the hip-hop scene. The young artist believes that although street art has become more popular, it still should continue to remain anonymous due to the traditional values of the medium.

Graffiti will lose its significance and steer away from its roots if it begins to become less obscure and anonymous.

“There is more mainstream understanding now that graffiti can be something more than just deviant art,” says Topilko while speaking about Banksy.

Graffiti today

Through time, graffiti has grown to be less of a rebellion against political society and more of an art form in the individual expression on the



Graffiti mural that is spreading the message that art is subjective. Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

street. Parallel to the nature of art itself being subjective, the satirical themes of graffiti are up to interpretation in their own way.

In the end, the question of whether graffiti is vandalism

or art is and will continue to be unanswered. The concept is truly subjective on its own.

Part of what makes graffiti so impactful is that it’s vandalism in nature. One could say that the societal

impact of vandalism, and the conversations it provokes, are what makes it art.

“Graffiti being so accessible means it should always be used to challenge what art is,” says Topilko.

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Cougars make back-to-back trips to U SPORTS National Tournament

Zafir Nagji
Sports Editor

Success doesn't come easily in sports; teams and athletes almost always face challenges on their path to the top of their respective disciplines. To overcome those setbacks and find ways to win, a team must have courage, comradery and composure, and this year's MRU Cougars men's soccer team embodied those principles perfectly.

Coming into the 2024 season without their lead goalie—Aidan Dumoulin—who was sidelined all year due to a wrist injury, as well as some of their greatest players from their 2023 Canada West gold medal-winning roster, the Cougars knew that they were in for an uphill battle. To top it off, Stadium Field, the Cougars' usual stomping ground, was under maintenance all year, forcing them to play on the smaller, less refined practice field.

Despite all the factors working against them, MRU prospered, posting a record of seven wins, two losses and five draws in the regular season, qualifying them for the 2024 Canada West playoffs once again. According to forward Joshua Flaksman, head coach Ryan Gyaki's motivational coaching was key in keeping the team focused on the job at hand.

"Before every game, [Gyaki] always tells us, 'don't necessarily do it for yourself, but do it for your brothers,'" Flaksman said. "Do it for your family, do it for your teammates, [do it] for your seniors.' And that's a big motivating factor to get us all hyped up and wanting to perform."

After beating the University of Victoria Vikes 2-1 in the quarterfinals, they moved on to face the University of



MRU's Joshua Flaksman, wearing number 7, can dance his way through any defence with his fancy footwork. The forward was the only Cougar to score in the U SPORTS nationals this year, getting a goal against the St. Francis Xavier X-Men in the Consolation Match. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

Alberta Golden Bears, who were hosting the divisional stage of the tournament. Eighty-nine minutes into the game, both teams remained scoreless, but then Jonathan "JJ" Walter buried the one and only goal of the game in the final minute of play and gave them a 1-0 win.

That sent the Cougars to the Canada West Finals and qualified them for the U SPORTS National Tournament in back-to-back years. The only other team to do that in the last decade is the University of

British Columbia (UBC) Thunderbirds, who the Cougars faced in Vancouver in the Canada West finals.

Unfortunately, the Cougars took a heartbreaking 1-0 loss, earning a Canada West silver medal. However, they remained excited as they prepared to travel to Oshawa, Ont., to compete at the national level. Slated to play the Université de Montréal Carabins in the quarter-final round, MRU conceded a 1-0 loss in an intense 90-minute match. That put them out of contention for a U SPORTS

medal, but the team stayed keyed in and prepared to battle in the consolation match against the St. Francis Xavier X-Men.

After conceding the first two goals of the game, MRU refused to go home without scoring one of their own as Flaksman turned a perfectly timed feed from Skyler Rogers into an unstoppable shot. The boys left everything on the field in the final 30 minutes of the match but ended their season with a 2-1 loss in Oshawa, where the UBC Thunderbirds eventually

secured the U SPORTS National Championship.

Despite the team's disappointment, though, Gyaki truly believed that this year was an overall success and rebelled against the sensationalist tendency to label a non-championship season as a failure.

"It's good to be disappointed with not winning and wanting to strive more," Gyaki said. "But I also think it's very important to have the right mindset of being still being proud of what you've achieved. And I find too often in sports that is that if you don't win gold, everything is a failure. And that's not true at all."

Instead, Gyaki was proud of the way his boys valued their brotherhood, becoming men over the course of their arduous season and showing gratitude for the opportunities in front of them.

"The biggest part for me in those moments is to hear the care they have for each other as people and the support they give each other as people, not just as athletes," Gyaki said. "We talked a lot about being thankful for the opportunity to compete and to be a group of healthy young men that do something we love... It's important to value this time, it's not a given. Not everyone gets to do what we do. So it's very special."

With six players on the roster graduating after this season, the Cougars will have a roster full of fresh faces next year. However, with Flaksman on the field and Gyaki at the helm, MRU fans will have more than a few reasons to show up and cheer on their men again in 2025.

#S

15 consecutive wins for the Cleveland Cavaliers, which is the longest winning streak in franchise history

300 wins for Tampa Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, becoming the fastest to achieve the milestone, in just 490 games

109 points scored in two games by Sacramento Kings guard De'Aaron Fox, setting a franchise record for points scored in consecutive games

7 goals scored by the MRU Cougars women's hockey team in their Friday night shutout win against the University of Manitoba Bisons

All for Juan

The war to land baseball's top free agent

Truman Bartman

Contributor

Juan Soto has been one of baseball's brightest young stars since he broke into Major League Baseball (MLB) back in 2018 with the Washington Nationals. Since that time, he has gone on to become a four-time all-star, batting champion, world champion, and one of the best contact hitters the league has ever seen. This would be quite the feat for any player to achieve. What makes Soto so special is that he has accomplished all of these things at just 26 years old. This has made him one of the most high-profile free agents in MLB history.

2024 resume

Soto is coming off of a season where he put up an MVP-worthy campaign in his first season with the New York Yankees. He batted .288 while also nuking 41 home runs and scoring a league-best 128 runs. More importantly, Soto was a driving force in the Yankees getting to the World Series after he hit a three-run bomb in the American League Championship Series (ALCS) to help the Bronx Bombers advance to the fall classic for the first time since 2009.

There's no denying Soto's

greatness, and one MLB team will be fortunate to obtain his services for the foreseeable future. However, what is still unknown is, who might that team be, and how much are they willing to spend.

Projected deal

Superagent Scott Boras hasn't set a firm starting price for his client, but rumblings around the baseball world have projected that Soto can earn anywhere from \$600 million to \$700 million. Just last offseason, the Dodgers signed baseball unicorn Shohei Ohtani to a \$700 million deal, which should impact the kind of money that Soto and his camp will look to seek out. In terms of length, it is a foregone conclusion that Soto will be offered, at minimum, 10 years and will likely get an opt-out after five.

Top dogs

There are three behemoths who have the best shot at landing Soto, and all three played in the League Championship Series (LCS) this year. Those teams include the World Series Champion Los Angeles Dodgers, New York Mets, and New York Yankees. Each squad is near

the top of the league in payroll and are prepared to spend as much as it takes to claim Soto. The Dodgers are least likely to stay in the hunt for Soto as their payroll is already bursting at the seams.

Having played for the Yankees this past season, many assume that New York has the upper hand. Don't be surprised however if it's their crosstown rivals in the Mets who pull him over to Queens.

Sleepers

Usually, when a big free agent hits the market, teams with an average to below-average payroll are reluctant to engage. What makes this year different is Soto is open

to meeting with all 32 MLB regardless of their situation. It is still a long shot, but teams like the Toronto Blue Jays, Tampa Bay Rays, and Detroit Tigers have all shown high interest thus far.

The Toronto Blue Jays have gained a lot of traction recently, with a date to meet with Soto already set. After missing out on Shohei Ohtani, the Jays are likely to come in with a more aggressive mindset towards poaching Soto from their division rival Yankees. Anytime a superstar makes his way across the border, they have the chance to market themselves to an entire country, like Kawhi Leonard did with the

Raptors. If Soto does decide to head north, he would have the entire country behind him and has the chance to increase the popularity of the game from coast to coast.

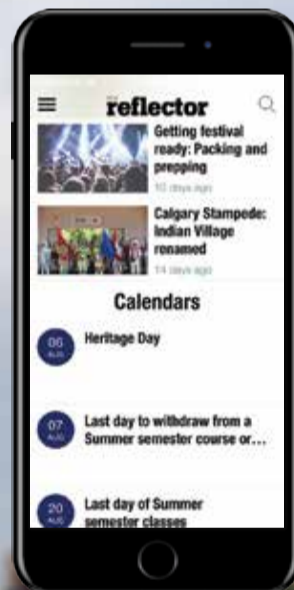
Let the bidding begin

The MLB's free agency period is already underway, and the anticipation for where Soto will land is picking up by the day. Similar to players like Albert Pujols, Shohei Ohtani, and Aaron Judge during their free agency periods, Soto has the chance to change a franchise's entire landscape and shake up the MLB for the next decade.



Soto, pictured, is the biggest fish in the MLB free agency frenzy. Projected to net a contract worth over \$500 million, the Dominican all-star right-fielder is coming off a trip to the MLB World Series and is drawing attention from many suitors, including the Toronto Blue Jays. Photo courtesy of Instagram/ @yankees

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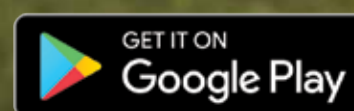
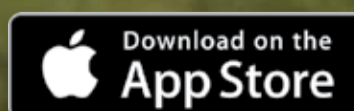


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Where to go if you didn't go pro

The harsh reality for undrafted hockey prospects

Naomi Campbell

Staff Writer



Once Western Hockey League (WHL) rivals, Jayden Wiens (left) and Connor Bouchard (right) are now Cougars teammates, scorching a path together on the ice through the best teams in Canada West. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

Many young Canadian boys grow up idolizing the game of hockey, learning to skate soon after their first steps. Many of them dream of getting drafted into the Canadian Hockey League (CHL) on their way to the National Hockey League (NHL).

Yet as much as the NHL would be considered the end goal for these boys, not all of them get drafted. Even if they do, few get to play a single game at the highest level. So, when prospects leave the CHL but can't find a home in the NHL, where do they go?

What is the CHL?

The CHL consists of the Western Hockey League (WHL), the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) and the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League (QMJHL). Playing in one of these leagues is the first major stepping stone to entering the NHL one day.

While prospects in the CHL cannot play until they are 16 years old, elite players are sometimes granted

“Exceptional Status” if they are considered to be the best of the best, allowing teams to draft them a year earlier. Only nine players in history were given this privilege, including Connor McDavid, Connor Bedard, John Tavares and Shane Wright, all of whom showed immense potential at a young age and have carved out legendary NHL careers.

Path to the NHL

As soon as these boys enter the CHL, their every move is being watched by NHL scouts. This is their time to work themselves to their full potential in hopes of being noticed and later on drafted at 18 years old.

If a player does get drafted into the NHL, they attend training camps where they must prove that they are skilled enough to skate and stickhandle with the best of the best. Unfortunately, most drafted players do not get selected for the team's roster right away and are moved back down to the CHL team they came from,

or to the team's affiliate in the American Hockey League (AHL).

Alternative routes

In Canadian collegiate hockey, almost every team employs the services of CHL alumni. U SPORTS hockey offers a high level game feel for these boys and it gives them a chance to continue playing the sport they love while attending their choice of Canadian university. With scouts in attendance at many games, most players have a chance to get drafted until the age of 21, and in some cases, can be signed onto NHL or AHL teams afterwards.

U SPORTS athletes who have played in the CHL tend to drastically outplay those who didn't, and MRU's own Connor Bouchard is a great example of this. Now in his third year as a Cougar, Bouchard is one of the most skilled collegiate athletes in the country. His immense skill runs in the family, as his cousin, Evan Bouchard, is a defenseman

for the Edmonton Oilers. Even though Connor went undrafted, he continues to put his heart and soul into playing hockey every time he suits up for the Cougars.

Another route that is taken by some undrafted players is to take their careers overseas, with many choosing European hockey leagues. They are a great way for players to learn how to be true professionals and feature an insanely high level of competition. Cougars alum Connor Blake, for instance, now plays professional hockey in France in Ligue Magnus for Anglet.

Falling from the top

Matt Berlin, former University of Alberta goalie, is an example of how you can get so lucky yet fall so short at the same time. On Jan. 28, 2023, Berlin was called up as an emergency backup goalie for the Edmonton Oilers. Berlin's only task was to sit on the bench to back up netminder Jack Campbell.

Little did he know that at the end of the game, team captain Connor McDavid would urge the coaches to put Berlin in net to play the last two minutes of the game. The Oilers were up 7-3 against the Chicago Blackhawks, so they had nothing to lose at that moment. Berlin saved 1 shot and holds a perfect 1.000 save percentage in the NHL.

Even though Berlin got to play in the NHL for one night, he was never drafted or signed. He retired from hockey after graduating in 2023, but fans will always remember the bravery Berlin showed by stepping up to the plate despite not expecting to play at all and having a perfect night.

Berlin's two minutes of ice time also stood as an inspiration to those coming up through the CHL and others vying for a spot in the NHL. With 224 draft spots available every year, players must remain hopeful, work hard, and play to the best of their abilities if they want to make their boyhood dreams come true.

Keeping the skates sharpened

Veteran Jarred Tinordi's perspective integral to Wrangler's success

Truman Bartman

Contributor

A couple of weeks before the 2024-25 American Hockey League (AHL) season began, Jarred Tinordi's future in hockey was uncertain. He spent the last two years with the Chicago Blackhawks, playing in 96 games as a veteran presence on their back end. Considering that he entered the league in 2012, Tinordi is still proving that he has plenty of gas left in the tank.

On Sept. 10, an opportunity presented itself up north, and the defenceman from Millersville, Maryland found himself packing his bags and riding off to Calgary. He inked a one-year, two-way contract with the Flames, where he has spent his time with the team's AHL affiliate, the Calgary Wranglers. So far, Tinordi has carved out a role for himself as both a forceful defender and an impactful leader, enjoying each moment he spends on the ice with his new squad.

"It's fun! Hockey's fun! At the end of the day, it's just a game that I am fortunate

to get to play for a living," Tinordi said.

Tinordi's passion for the game remains strong and he has no doubt that the ice is the only place he wants to be. Even if the physical demands of playing and travelling can test those who love the game the most, the defenceman's love of hockey keeps him on the rink with a smile on his face.

"I've been playing for a long time, but I'm still only 32," Tinordi said. "I mean, it's not that old in regular life terms. I just look forward to coming to the rink every day, which is probably the biggest thing that keeps me loving it."

Despite the continued optimism that Tinordi has had throughout his career, there have been times when he was close to hanging up his skates for good.

"I was up and down for most of my career at the start, and then I was in the minors for three straight years without a single call-up," Tinordi said. "At some point, I started wondering if I was

ever going to play another NHL game again."

Tinordi did get several opportunities after that three-year absence, having stints with the Nashville Predators, Boston Bruins, New York Rangers, and Chicago Blackhawks. He is trying to fight his way back up to the NHL once again, but he is also appreciative of the chance to play for the Wranglers, unlike other athletes who resent having to play in the AHL.

"When I was playing in the AHL as a young guy, I told myself that was never going to be me," Tinordi said. "I never wanted to bring a negative attitude to the rink, because I think it just drags everybody down and doesn't do you any good. I mean, everyone wants to be in the NHL, but if you're here now, put the work in, and hopefully you get another opportunity."

Although Tinordi still has a personal goal of reaching the NHL again, he has humbly taken on a leadership role on a youthful Wranglers team,

playing with high effort and energy and inspiring his teammates, many of whom are younger than him, to do the same.

Leading by example is something that Tinordi takes pride in, especially when it comes to teaching his daughter. As a kid, Tinordi and his brother Matt would often skate with their father, former NHLer Mark Tinordi. Some of Jarred's fondest memories from his childhood were cultivated during these ice sessions. Now he looks to create those same memories for his own children.

"That's what it's all about, right? Family," Tinordi said. "I think my daughter is at an age now where she's going to start remembering some of those moments, where it's her playing the game or coming to the rink."

Watching him spin around the ice with his daughter after a morning practice with the Wranglers, it's hard to tell who is having a better time.

"It's almost a little bit selfish for me because I have

just as much fun by having her at the rink as she does," Tinordi said. "I just want to cherish these moments while we're in it because the end comes quickly, and you never know it's going to be the end of your career."

The flame still burns bright for Tinordi as he writes another chapter of his hockey career this year with the Wranglers. Tinordi's story serves as an inspiration to all those players still hoping for their chance in the NHL. Tinordi's outlook as someone lucky enough to experience the life of a professional athlete as well as his added veteran perspective is something the Wranglers are fortunate to have to help lead their young team this season.

You can catch Tinordi and the rest of the Calgary Wranglers all season long at the Scotiabank Saddledome as they embark on their quest to become Calder Cup Champions. Tickets are available on the official Calgary Wranglers website.



The only thing Calgary Wranglers defenceman Jarred Tinordi (right,) looks forward to more than ice time in the NHL is skating with his daughter (left) after team practices. Photo courtesy of Truman Bartman