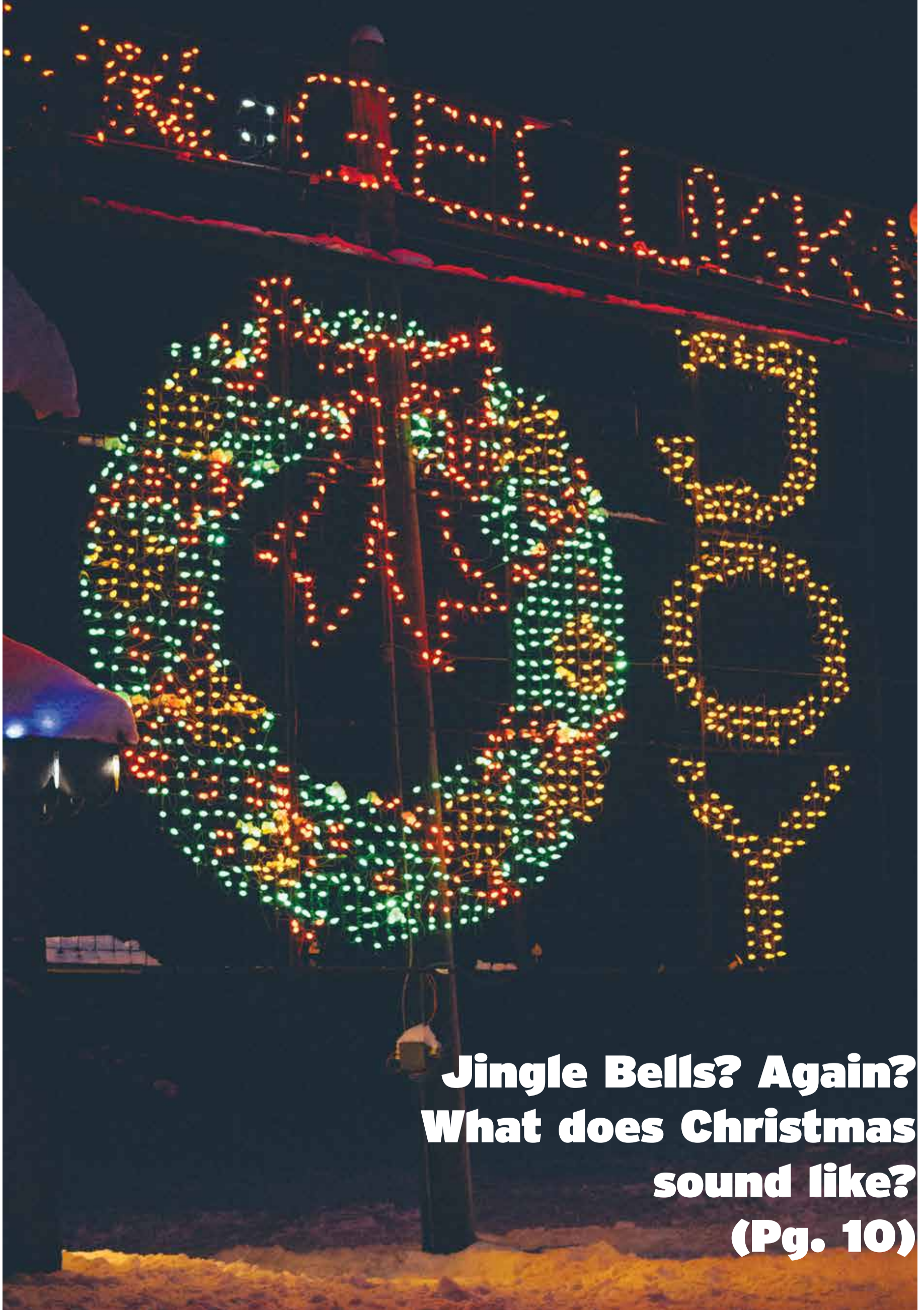


the reflector

FREE
December 5, 2024
www.TheReflector.ca



**Jingle Bells? Again?
What does Christmas
sound like?
(Pg. 10)**

How AI could improve SETI research

The impact of AI on the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence

Iyan Velji
Staff Writer

The pursuit to discover intelligent life akin to our own beyond Earth, also known as The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), is one of humanity's most ambitious and profound scientific endeavours.

By discovering Extraterrestrial Intelligence (ETI), lives could be enriched with new information bringing the possibility of the beginning of a new Renaissance. The idea of detecting extraterrestrial communication dates back over a century.

In 1899, Nikola Tesla famously claimed to have detected "Martian signals" which he believed were radio emissions originating from Mars. Sixty years later, in 1959, the first academic paper on SETI was published by Giuseppe Cocconi and Philip Morrison in the journal *Nature*.

This milestone was followed by the first SETI experiment a year later in 1960, Project Ozma, launched by astrophysicist Frank Drake.

More recently, the Breakthrough Listen initiative backed by scientists like Stephen Hawking has been scanning around one million stars in the Milky Way and nearby galaxies for technosignatures that could indicate the existence of intelligent civilizations that use advanced technology.

SETI research methods

At the heart of SETI is the Fermi Paradox, formulated by physicist Enrico Fermi, which highlights the discrepancy between the seemingly high probability of advanced extraterrestrial civilizations existing and the lack of evidence of their existence.

Given the universe's immense age of approximately 13.6 billion years and the vast expanse of space, a great amount of advanced civilizations should have emerged millions of years before humanity embarked

on interstellar missions.

One estimate for the number of extraterrestrial civilizations in the Milky Way galaxy is the Drake Equation developed by Frank Drake in 1961. According to the original values of the Drake Equation, there should be at least 50,000 extraterrestrial civilizations in the Milky Way galaxy.

Recent discoveries by missions like Kepler have reaffirmed this original estimate identifying thousands of exoplanets capable of supporting life within their stars' habitable zones which are regions where conditions might allow liquid water to exist. The first confirmed planet found within the habitable zone of a star other than our sun is Kepler-22b, which is classified as a "Super Earth."

Many SETI scientists propose utilizing the Moon as a prime location for ground-breaking extraterrestrial research. Above Earth's ionosphere, the Moon offers access to low-frequency radio waves blocked by Earth's interference, broadening the range of detectable signals.

Other scientists have proposed searching for pulses of laser light rather than radio waves in what is known as Optical SETI (OSETI).

OSETI has gained traction as a promising approach to SETI research due to the advantages of optical signals for communication such as higher bandwidth, faster transmission rates and minimal interference. However, OSETI faces the challenge of filtering out background light from stars to detect faint signals.

A controversial form of SETI known as Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence (METI) focuses on actively sending messages into space with the intent of contacting extraterrestrial civilizations. In 2023, proponents of METI used the 500 metre Aperture Spherical Telescope (FAST) in China to transmit



The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), has been supplemented by AI to fast-track the journey and allow for new information. Photo generated by ChatGPT using OpenAI

a binary message known as "The Beacon in the Galaxy." Unfortunately, it will take 10,000 years before Earth can get a reply due to the vast distances involved.

The Search for Extraterrestrial Artifacts (SETA), another form of SETI research, looks for physical signs of alien technology within the solar system. Some scientists have hypothesized the first interstellar object detected passing through the Solar System, 'Oumuamua, could be an interstellar probe transmitting or leaking radio waves.

According to a 2023 draft paper, 'Oumuamua could potentially be a parent craft that releases many small probes during its close passage to Earth. These probes referred to as "dandelion seeds" might be engineered to slow down safely upon entering Earth's atmosphere to land and explore.

SETI and AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be defined as "a system's ability to interpret external data correctly, to learn from such data, and to use those learnings to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation."

In 2023, researchers at Breakthrough Listen were able to utilize deep learning, a subset of machine learning, to identify eight promising technosignatures worth investigating further. The research covered 820 targets and gathered over 480 hours of data using the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope.

Advances in AI are also opening up new ways to look for signs of alien technology by enabling the identification of anomalies that could be side effects of alien activity. A key innovation in this approach is the development of an AI that can spot anything unusual compared to normal data patterns known as an "anomaly engine." For example, machine learning and convolutional neural networks (CNNs) can help process phenomena such as fast radio bursts (FRBs) like FRB 010724 discovered six years after its initial detection in archived data.

Another advancement in AI, Large Language Models (LLMs), could help facilitate communication with extraterrestrial civilizations. Some scientists have proposed utilizing METI to transmit an LLM such as Meta's Llama-3-70B or Mistral AI's Mixtral

8x22B to an extraterrestrial civilization to interact with and receive detailed responses about humanity.

While intriguing, this idea can be seen as both radical and risky due to the potential misuse of information by ETI and the technical challenges posed by the large sizes of most LLMs.

Advances in AI may have significantly shaped the development and capabilities of extraterrestrial civilizations. Some alien civilizations may have already reached the AI singularity, the point when the ability of computers overtakes the human brain.

In the end, SETI is as much a journey within as it is a search across the stars. It reminds us that our capacity to seek, question, and understand is boundless.

Whether or not we ever detect an alien signal, SETI drives us to confront essential questions about intelligence, survival, and what it means to reach across the vastness of space in search of connection.

As we look to the future, one thing is clear: many see the quest to find intelligent life in the universe as, fundamentally, a quest to better understand ourselves.

Rapper “Young Thug” has been released from police custody

Amirmohammad Bagheri

Staff Writer

On May 9, 2022, Atlanta-based rapper Jeffery Lamar Williams, otherwise known as “Young Thug,” was arrested at his home by law enforcement alongside 27 other members of the alleged criminal street gang Young Slime Life (YSL).

This arrest was due to racketeering and gang-related charges that included gang charges, drug charges, gun charges, leading a gang and violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.

In this case, prosecutors alleged that Young Thug’s recording label was a mask, which was overshadowing and hiding an organized crime syndicate responsible for at least 70 to 80 per cent of all violent crimes committed across Atlanta. These crimes include murders, car jacks, thefts and shootings.

Williams was denied bond on several attempts and remained behind bars until the trial started in November 2023. The highly publicized trial that took place saw multiple changes in judges, multiple accusations of prosecutorial misconduct and more. It also became another example of a trial with rappers where their music is played and used against them.

On Oct. 31, 2024, Young Thug was released from jail on a plea deal after a two year trial. The inability of a possible negotiation between Williams’ side and the prosecutors passed the full responsibility of the sentence to the county’s Superior Court Judge, Paige Reese Whitaker.

The rapper pleaded guilty to one gang charge, two gun charges and three drug charges with no contest concerning his RICO and gang leader charges. Judge Whitaker imposed a sentence of 40 years with the first five to be served in prison. However, she changed the latter to time served, followed by 15 years on probation.

“I take full responsibility for my crimes or charges[...] I want to say sorry to my family, my mom [...] Really, everybody who has something to do with this situation,” Williams said to Whitaker.

“I’m going away. I’ve learned from my mistakes[...] I came from nothing and I’ve made something, and I didn’t take full advantage of it. I’m sorry.”

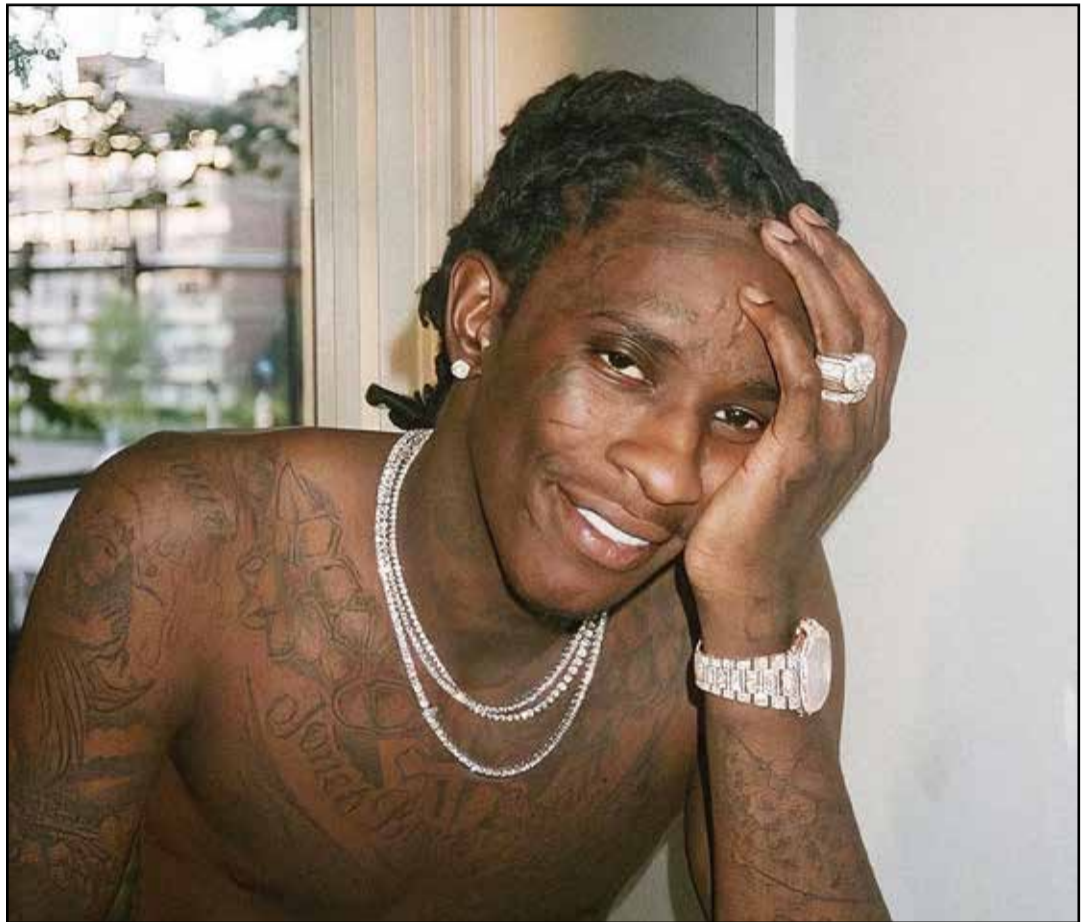
Whitaker appreciated his heartfelt speech and the fact that he realized his impact on people around the world. She also reminded him about the fact that young people tend to emulate the various vulgar behaviours presented in his songs.

Williams’ probation terms are relatively very strict. These limitations include 100 hours of community service and no contacts initiated with gang members or former co-defendants except his brother and fellow rapper Gunna. Additionally, as a requirement, Williams is to host anti-gang and anti-gun presentations at least four times per year at schools or community organizations involving children.

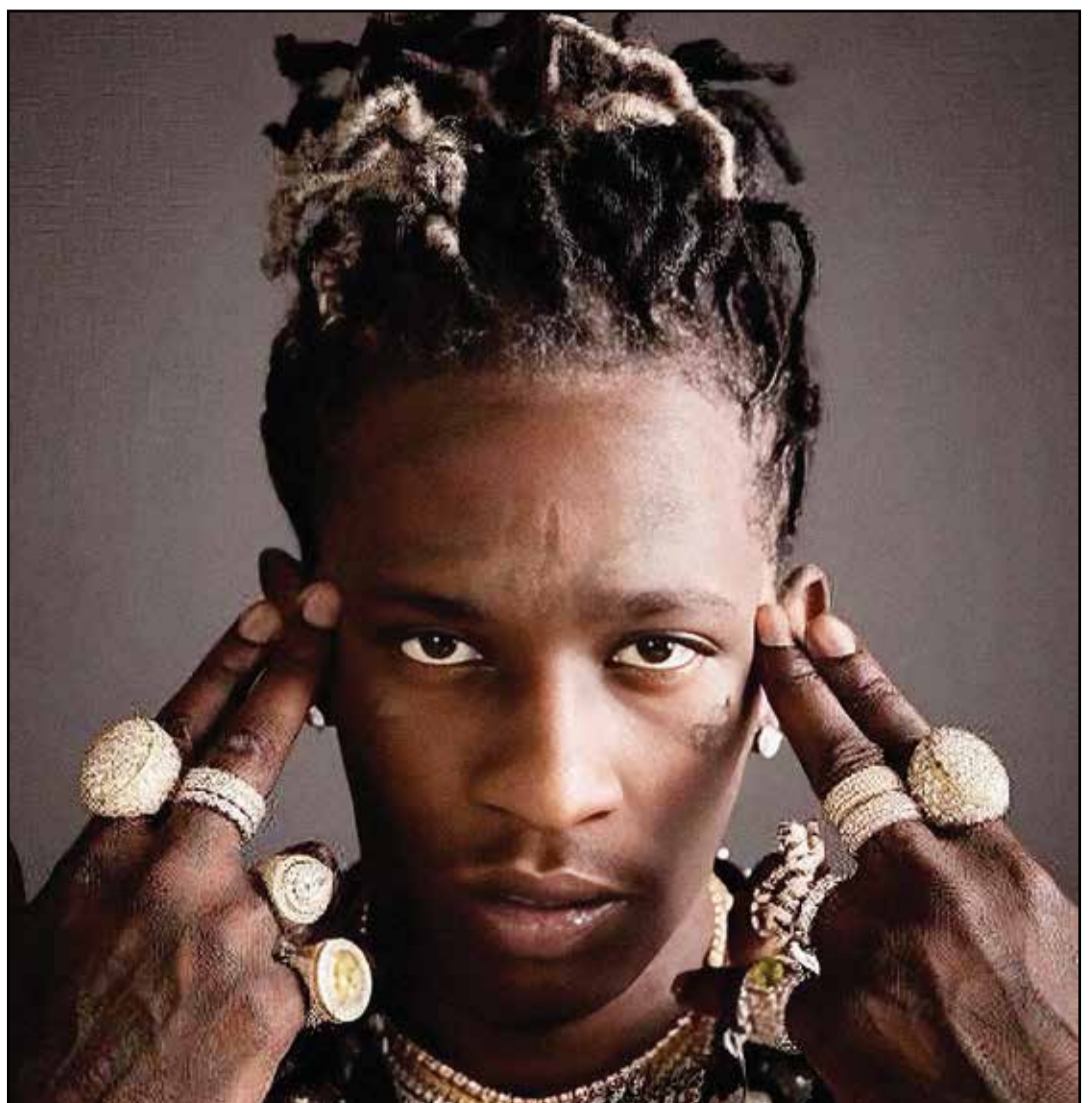
As stated by PBS, the famous rapper must also stay away from Metropolitan Atlanta for the first 10 years of his probation unless there are weddings, funerals, graduations or serious illness of family members. While Williams is still allowed to travel locally or internationally for work, he has to be inclined to submit to random drug screens as well as never possess a firearm.

Williams must also stay away from mentioning anything that has to do with violence or promoting gang related activities in his songs. In addition, Williams must also not show hand signs or terminologies that promote his crimes. If Williams ever violates these terms, he will be required to serve 20 years in prison. On the contrary, a successful completion will grant him 20 years of time served.

Since his release, Young Thug has promised a new song on social media. Although his new music will be much more tame than what it used to be, his fans are ready to see this new chapter in his music career. With over 250,000 likes on his posts on X alone, it is clear that Young Thug’s fans are ready to listen and support him through his new music.



Young Thug’s jail release is long-awaited by fans, who are eager for new music. Photo courtesy of @loadedlyricz on Instagram



With his release on multiple conditions, rap fans are interested to see how Young Thug will navigate this new chapter of his life through music. Photo courtesy of @loadedlyricz on Instagram

Holiday shopping affected by Canada Post strike

Karra Smith

Staff Writer

Canada Post employees went on strike Nov. 15, 2024, after the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and the Canada Post corporation were unable to reach an agreement over a number of regulations and changes in Canada Post's business structure.

With initial bargaining beginning in November 2023, both parties have been incapable of meeting in the middle over a number of issues. Some of the key points of disagreement include employee compensation, job stability, working conditions, schedule changes and many others.

A statement issued via the Canada Post website on Nov. 15, warns that "Customers will experience delays due to the strike activity."

The statement later goes on to mention that "No new items will be accepted until the national disruption is over."

Similarly, CUPW also put out a statement on the 15th.

"We still believe we can achieve negotiated collective agreements, but Canada Post must be willing to resolve our new and outstanding issues."

The back and forth between the two parties has been inconclusive so far with Canada's Labour Minister Steve MacKinnon saying on



Disagreements between the CUPW and Canada Post have devolved into a worker's strike and a delay in shipping across the nation. Photo courtesy of Canada Post

X, "After several intensive days of negotiation ... parties remain too far apart on critical issues for mediation to be successful at this time."

This has led Canada Post to say in a negotiation update that their proposals are focused on flexibility and growth that requires change. Following that statement, Canada Post highlighted the CUPW's decision to not respond to their proposal at all.

As a reply to the statement made by Canada Post, the CUPW issued their own

update, titled "Canada Post's Misinformation."

In the update, the CUPW stated that "Canada Post's latest information update of November 26 describing what is going on at the bargaining table is full of half-truths and outright deception."

Canada Post employees were last on strike in 2018. The strike lasted a month before the federal government mandated the employees return to work. However, in a statement made early Wednesday

morning, MacKinnon says that binding arbitration is "not in the cards" for the current situation.

What this means for students

With the holidays looming, the impact of the strike on students (particularly those who live in residence and receive mail) may cause some added disruptions. With Canada Post not currently accepting or delivering any mail, sending out a package or a letter will have to be done through a different courier—many of which are already preparing for a surge in business.

The downside to this means there will likely be a higher delivery cost on packages as mail couriers separate from Canada Post are competing companies.

Another probable issue for students is the delay of any potential packages coming in before the start of winter break. The outcome of the strike is unknown at the moment as is the time frame for how long it will last—meaning packages currently under the handling of Canada Post have no clear status update.

This also impedes students' accessibility to their packages, which during this time of year has left many people frustrated and confused.



The Canada Post strike may leave holiday shoppers and students with more anxiety this holiday season over delayed shipping. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

THE REFLECTOR

Issue 7, Volume 64

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Publishing Editor: Isabella West
Managing Editor: Ivar Bergs
News Editor: Bella Coco
Features Editor: Liam Rockliffe
Arts Editor: Emma Marshall
Sports Editor: Zafir Nagji
Photo Editor: Aiden Johner
Layout Editor: Emily Kirsch
Web Editor: Arroy (AJ) Jacob

CONTRIBUTORS: Mariam Temem

STAFF WRITERS: Iyan Velji, Amirmohammad Bagheri, Karra Smith, Manveet Kaur Waraich, Mia Smith, Brennen French, Ava Pusztai, Truman Bartman

COVER: Brennen French

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contents are copyright © 2024. No material may be reproduced without express written consent.

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

the reflector

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

All depts.: 403.440.6268
 Fax: 403.440.6762
 TheReflector@TheReflector.ca

UCP Student Aid change

UCP made sudden changes, here is how it affects you

Manveet Kaur Waraich

Staff Writer

As we head into a new academic year, students gear up for pricey tuition costs with heavy dependency on government funding—breathing a sigh of relief when they finally get an email from Alberta Student Aid (ASA) stating “Your funding is confirmed.” Except this year, many students were declined unexpectedly, leaving them scrambling to find a way to finance their education with incredibly short notice. New restrictions on funding eligibility—instated over the summer, with little to no press coverage—caught students by surprise.

According to the most recent data from Open Alberta, these changes impact a significant portion of students. Approximately 66.29 per cent of full-time Albertan students rely on a mix of federal and provincial loans, receiving an average of \$6,583.54 of ASA funding alone.

The policy updates include service improvements, income threshold changes, certain grant enhancements, and alignment with the federal “At Home Budget” policy which expects dependent students to live with their parents if they are located within the neighbouring community of the institution. However, the stricter policies on repeated years and withdrawals have become the leading cause of declined applications—especially because these are retroactive, meaning the new standards apply to students’ past records. This has sparked quite a controversy, with many arguing it is unfair to penalize students who acted under different rules and expectations.

Considering the historic trend of degree completion along with the impact of the pandemic, it is by no means a stretch to infer that students will need more than the standard four years to complete their programs. According to Statistics Canada, 76.1 per cent of students starting their

degree in 2015-16 (the most recent and available data) took six years to complete their program. Additionally, Universities Canada found that “74 per cent of students reported the pandemic worsened their pre-existing mental health challenges and 61 per cent reported developing new challenges.”

As per ASA’s website, “Academic progress policies are intended to ensure students progress and complete their program on a timely basis and prevent excessive loan debts.” The new rules state that students repeating the same academic year more than twice will lose funding eligibility for 18 months. Similarly, those withdrawing or dropping to part-time studies in two separate study periods after 30 days will face the same suspension period.

Janet French, a provincial affairs reporter at CBC shared that student debt is indubitably rising: “provincial loans to students in 2023-24 now tally \$1.26 billion. In 2018-19, that number was \$638 million.” The demand for loans was unprecedented, with the government spending “\$279 million more than expected over the last two years.” Yet, these ASA eligibility changes are avoiding the true issue and reality students face. The demand for increased funding stems from a combination of

factors, from the affordability crisis to unemployment rates.

Naomie Bakana, vice-president internal for UCalgary’s students’ union has “seen demand rise by almost half” for the campus food bank just this year.

Apart from whether these changes are reflective of true student needs, the problems of information dispersal, policy clarity, and navigational challenges are much more immediate.

Third year biology student, Kiana Vadiat, was one of the many students unaware of the changes because she “only ever [gets] emails about when [her] loans are due.” That sentiment was echoed by over 15 students I spoke with during the course of a week. No one knew about the changes, nor did I. SAMRU, Peer Support, and the financial office have all tried to deal with this major shift as affected students poured into their doors.

“Our REC President Tala, on behalf of SAMRU, signed off on a letter to the Minister of Education from various post-secondary student unions and associations across the province,” SAMRU says in their September Recap article. “The letter expressed the concerns these new policies will have on the student population now and in the future, and an urgent call to remove the retroactive changes implemented this

fall.”

The information overload students experience also contributes to missed critical information and navigational challenges. Our campus offers essential services, including the Financial Services, student advocacy, peer support, and early support, to help students through the challenges that arise during their education but many do not have a clear or strong understanding of this support system and cannot access them effectively. Just in the last month, I came across six students (half of them seniors) in stressful situations, completely unaware of the advocacy centre’s services.

Student voice

In relation to the policies, Jujit Kaur, a Business Administration first year student, emphasizes that “students should be able to advocate for themselves.” Although ASA has an exemption for students with disabilities, there are other real-life scenarios that should also warrant a level of flexibility and understanding for affected individuals.

“You have to keep in mind those who have circumstantial things that happened to them,” adds Vadiat. “Like literally my appendix ruptured one year and I had to drop a bunch of courses because I was in the hospital for a while.”

ASA does have a request for review option that allows students to make a case for themselves and provide documentation to strengthen their arguments, but again, many students don’t realize they can be a candidate for consideration. By the time the lengthy process is said and done, many have already experienced the significant impact of losing an essential financial support system, leaving them in a vulnerable position.

Furthermore, the MRU finance office has observed that many students fail to properly read or fully understand the emails sent to them, which often contain critical information about their funding eligibility and program requirements.

When I spoke with the finance office, I was informed that students at risk of these changes should have received email correspondence from both ASA and their office. However, after thoroughly searching my inbox, I couldn’t locate any such emails. A subsequent call with an ASA representative revealed that they do not email students directly about policy changes. Instead, they rely on a “What’s New” webpage, which they expect students to frequent. Unfortunately, many are unaware of this practice and left uninformed.

Personally, without the support of my family, I would not have been able to continue my degree. I had to switch from my personal vehicle to transit, which lengthens my commute to 3 hours every day, and completely cut-down on non-essentials. If I had known about the changes, I could’ve prepared by saving up more. Yet, even with the issues, I still stand in an incredibly privileged position that I know many don’t. I stay at home with reduced rent, and if I’m in a pinch, my family is accessible. Many students can’t say the same. For the full version of this article, which includes exclusive interview quotes and more information, head to thereflector.ca.



Students study diligently to avoid withdrawing and losing funding. Photo by Manveet Kaur Waraich

REFLECTOR RAMBLERS

The community of Dungeons & Dragons

Mia Smith

Staff Writer



Friends engage in the popular game of Dungeons & Dragons. Photo from Wikimedia Commons

Imagine a world where just sitting at a table with your friends causes all problems to vanish. Real-world issues? Out the window. Cash? Try gold. Finals? What even is a test?

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) presents players with a realm where they can create a character based on their personal tastes or passions. You can be a half-giant slinging fireballs or even a gnome who really wants his pizza business to flourish, anything is possible here.

Not only do you get to choose your own story, but you can form a ragtag group of travellers who band together for a common cause. Along the way, you can discover friendship, love, or maybe that you just really like fighting goblins.

Either way, you have the chance to play with like-minded individuals in a nation of opportunities. The holidays can be frightening to some people, but scary monsters are always easier to fight when you are with your friends.

D&D folklore

Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson developed the game in the 1970s, combining storytelling with dice and allowing each player to create their own fantasy character and accompany their friends on journeys. In the game, the Dungeon Master—the narrator and referee—does everything in their power to keep their players interested.

In D&D, creativity is unrestricted. I find it intriguing that we as a culture have certain stereotypes about those who play the game. The popular board game Dungeons & Dragons has always been associated with “geeky” or “nerdy” individuals who are usually depicted as socially awkward, isolated, or shy. One common misconception is that players play in remote, secluded groups or spend all of their time in basements.

The stigma that surrounded D&D sprouted from a time when devil-worshipping in any sense was considered terrifying to society. When people would hear players mysteriously chanting spells and incantations, they automatically assumed they were trying to summon the devil. I don’t blame them. In the seventies, many people labelled it as a devil-worshipping game, overrun by ‘outcasts.’

This stereotype then leaked into the portrayal of D&D players in movies and TV shows from the 1980s and 1990s (like *Revenge of the Nerds*). It imagines them as socially awkward, out-of-touch people who spend all their time playing D&D rather than engaging in normal social activities. However, this stereotype of ‘weirdos’ has changed in recent years.

Building confidence through characters

For a large group of people, D&D has changed their lives and given them tools to prosper through their journeys of social anxiety and other everyday problems. According to recent studies, tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) can even improve social skills and lessen social anxiety.

Liam McConnell, who works at Sentry Box, the biggest game store in Canada, and also plays the game himself, explains that not everyone who plays TTRPGs plays them the exact same way (with fancy effects and 3D maps).

By simply using a character sheet and your own creativity, you can play. Ever dreamed of stepping into a future world filled with lightsabers and robots? Or maybe you’d rather saddle up for a classic Western, where you can tame any horse or wield any gun you choose? There is a TTRPG out there for you.

“If you feel like you are a misfit or a weirdo, you can find people who have similar experiences to you,” says McConnell. “I like to consider Sentry Box a third home for a lot of people, a place that is not home or work, a place they can go over the holidays to connect with like-minded people.”

The holidays can be a scary, lonely time for many people. But how can you be lonely, when you have a fire-breathing community keeping you warm?

Putting a face to the name

Mariam Temem

Contributor

It’s that time of the year when almost all Mount Royal students receive emails encouraging them to provide feedback on their classes and professors. These emails—as everyone knows—are sent by Crystal Koch, a member of staff here at MRU. However, her identity is relatively unknown to many students.

I was given the opportunity to meet with Koch via Google Meet, which gave me the chance to put a face to the elusive name. I had a list of questions neatly compiled on paper, eager to receive answers I’d been itching to ask all week.

As I had never conducted an interview before, I was expecting straightforward responses to each of my questions. What I was not prepared for was the compelling conversation that I was going to have with Koch, which essentially voided my overly planned questionnaire.

Koch is the special project administrator under the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, which is a fancy-sounding title. She describes herself as a “worker bee” and oversees all evaluations between students and instructors such as the SPoT (Student Perception of Teaching) evaluations and is the first person who reads over the submissions.

Koch has been working at Mount Royal for 25 years now and has seen her department evolve over years of technological changes, from evaluations conducted through Scantron to the online survey system we have

today. Both options lead Koch to believe they provide equal opportunity for all students to be heard and provide feedback.

Constructive feedback between student and instructor is a process that Koch says she truly believes in. She says it gives a glimpse into the classroom from a student’s perspective and is a way for students to get their voices heard.

“I am always trying to find ways to connect with students better and meet them where they are, trying to encourage more participation because I really believe that this participation is crucial. Without it, the results lose validity. The more students that participate, the bigger the voice and the more impact it has and the more reliability the data has.”

SPoT is the process of collecting information through a five-minute survey that asks various questions about the performance of instructors. SPoT reviews aid in the data collection process of classes and is used in program reviews which influences how professors format their courses. This program is a completely confidential way for students to express their thoughts on their professors and courses.

I learnt a lot from my interview with Koch who, throughout our meeting, was passionate about her desire to see students voice their opinions and participate in a process that benefits their learning.



Crystal Koch is the special project administrator under the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Photo by Mariam Temem

The not so traditional family

Season of joy and chaos

Mia Smith

Staff Writer

We are entering the winter season of joy, when we may take stock of the year and spend time with those we love.

Each person's holiday season looks different. Christmas used to be a joyful time for me. Nowadays, I spend Christmas rushing around the province trying to visit every member of my family and exhausting myself to the brink. I always thought this was unique to me and my family dynamic, but as I have gotten older I now see that this is the new 'norm' for many people.

The classic happy family

As a society, we are moving away from the traditional norms of getting married and having children. When I was younger, I wanted to live in a white picket fenced home with my perfect husband and kids. But, as I have gotten older, I resent that dynamic. Not because it's wrong but because, for so many (including myself) this was not the reality.

But what is it that really steers the new generation of adults away from this traditional way of living?

What is family?

In classic terms, family means a group of one or two parents and their children or descendants of a common ancestor.

When I think of family, my blood related family comes to mind. However, I also think of my friends as my family.

Restaurant manager

Miranda Stewart, 28, feels that one may create their own community and family without having kids.

"I think that it is your close group that you know best and that know you best," says Stewart.

In fact, for many young people who are living on their own for the first time, friends create a community that is built and kept for one's whole life. Take the hit show 'Friends' as an example.

There is a point in your life where your friends are your family. For myself, I did not realize how true this was until I was in it. My first call when emergency struck was to my best friend, not my mom.

Divorce

The D word. A terrifying reality for 18 per cent of kids, according to Stats Canada 2019. But hey, two Christmases!

"I've never had that traditional family, even my grandparents are divorced," says Stewart. "So I don't even really know what that looks like."

In my limited time off from work, I normally spend my Christmases hopping around and trying not to offend people by where I spend my time. Stewart has a similar experience.

"You feel like you are picking one parent over the other," says Stewart. Even now, a staggering 20 years later, Stewart still resents the holidays due to the sheer

amount of stress that reappears every year.

This is the case for a large number of people. Finding sources of joy in other areas of your life is what it really comes down to. No matter where those friendships originate, it is crucial to cultivate and preserve them.

According to Quora, it is common for people to want to be financially independent and stable before tying the knot and having children. As a young adult in a world of financial ruin, how are we ever gonna be financially independent enough to then take care of the financial responsibility of potential kids?

Societal norms

If we do not settle down and have children, will we be disappointing the grandparents of the world? What do they really think of our generation? Are they embarrassed of us?

In the past, gender norms ran rampant through everyday life. It was common for men to go work and for women to stay home to clean, raise the children, and look pretty with a drink in hand waiting for their husbands to return at the end of the day.

Not only are people shifting away from this stereotypical breadwinner and housewife model, but it also is not attainable even if one wanted it. Due to the economic state of the country, it is almost impossible for an entire family to survive on one person's

salary.

Since her early twenties, Eileen Miller has been happily married and has embraced this "traditional way of living."

Miller believes that the cost of living is a huge contributor to why young people are shifting away from this traditional model.

"Today both parents are working and they do not spend as much time with their family as they should, in our day and age the mother stayed at home and kept the home going," says Miller. "I think that's very important for kids."

"We don't need that family dynamic now," contradicts Stewart. "I don't need to have a child to make sure I am taken care of, I don't need to have a husband to pay my rent or own land."

Miller, who has been married for 60 years, gave her words of wisdom to the next generation, stressing that life is short and to make sure you don't look back and regret your actions or inactions. Even if a lot of options may appear overwhelming and daunting, you must act in your own best interests.

How does one make it work if they decide they want to get married? With high divorce rates, it seems almost impossible in this day and age.

"No secrets from anybody,

you did something you shouldn't have done? Speak up and tell them," emphasizes Miller.

Miller says that, along with a large bottle of wine, the secret to a happy marriage is being open and honest.

Holiday season

The holidays are a fickle time for many people, filled with both joy and tension, tradition and uncertainty. In today's world, where families come in all shapes and sizes, finding two that are exactly the same is like trying to catch two snowflakes that are identical—utterly impossible.

Every family has its own unique mix of personalities, histories, and dynamics, which can make the holiday season feel like a blend of chaos and love.

As this season of joy quickly approaches, Stewart and Miller both emphasize a simple yet effective message: the importance of spending time with family, whatever that looks like to you.

Whether that family is blood relatives or possibly your group of friends volunteering at a soup kitchen or even just staying at home with your furry friends, the holidays are a time to recap on the year and take time to look back, reflect and make your own traditions.



A stereotypical traditional family sharing a home cooked meal. Photo from Wikimedia Commons



Eileen and Gord Miller have been happily married for 60 years. Photo courtesy of Darci Miller

YOUR STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Financial Support

We offer programs like:

- **Emergency Student Funds**
- **Free Tax Clinic**
- **Awards & Bursaries**
- **and more!**




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



Find us on social media @samrubuzz





[STUDENT CONNECT]

Building Connections Between
MRU Students and Politicians

SAMRU.CA

THURSDAY
JAN 16, 2025
4PM – 7PM

Second Floor Lounge
Wyckham House Student Centre
Mount Royal University

RSVP BY DECEMBER 17
representation@samru.ca



Food Support

We offer programs like:

- **SAMRU Care Cupboards**
- **Good Food Box**
- **Free Breakfast**
- **and more!**



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



Find us on social media @samrubuzz



Beyond the gingerbread house

Thoughtful Christmas dates

Brennen French

Staff Writer

The season of walking in a winter wonderland is finally upon us and rumour has it, Santa Claus is coming to town! As December rolls around, the spirit of love and giving is in the air.

Christmas traditions can be a lot. However, getting festive doesn't have to be something complicated or replicated from the classic Hallmark movies.

Whether you're looking for a way to get a special someone under the mistletoe, a grand gesture, or simply a good time out with family and friends, I am positive I have something for you.

Aside from the typical gingerbread house building, and the mistletoe hanging from every door, there are plenty of fun options to get out the door for festive date nights.

Affordable date nights

The classic movie Polar Express is a must-watch for many at Christmas time, but why stream when you could get all aboard in Mossleigh, Alta., roughly one-hour southeast of Calgary. Aspen Crossing is hosting an authentic Polar Express train ride that is accessible to all ages for the affordable price of \$131.94 for two seats.

If the two-seat minimum booking isn't an invitation to take a date, I don't know what is.

Another option resides at Confederation Park where the Lions Festival of Lights is held, free to the public. This event is composed of over half a million festive strunged



Entrance to lions park, located in the northwest of Calgary, where volunteers set up the largest neighborhood light display for the 38th year. Photo by Brennen French

lights. This is an excellent opportunity to face the cold with loved ones and feel the warmth radiating from the beautiful displays of lights. This event started on Nov. 23 and will end in the new year on Jan. 8. This event has more than meets the eye – all lights and displays were put up by volunteers.

The Lions Festival of Lights is an excellent way to get out when the weather is tolerable and enjoy the festive atmosphere within the community.

Too much excitement or outdoors with this cold weather? Calgary Theatre is running the classic play A Christmas Carol as a full production with a two-hour runtime. With a large and

decorated cast, the seating in the Max Bell Theatre is getting booked quickly. Be sure to book soon.

How to give back while saving money

With the holiday season setting in, we can all agree that nobody wants to be alone on the holidays. This is an excellent chance to give back to your community with your loved ones. There is plenty of opportunity to get out of the house and contribute to many different foundations.

One special foundation that was established in Calgary in 1983, is The Magic of Christmas volunteer foundation which employs anyone able to help spread the

Christmas spirit to those who need it. A few days before Christmas, there are volunteer opportunities to dress up as Santa, or one of his many elves, and visit hospitals or care centres to hand out teddy bears. There are many other opportunities too including delivering gifts or caroling in costume to families along a bus route.

With the typical harsh weather in Calgary during December, homeless shelters are always looking for volunteers. Many of these people could use someone to talk to and spend time with during the holiday season. Some of these foundations that accept volunteer work are The Salvation Army Community, the Calgary

Drop-In Centre, and The Mustard Seed. Getting involved in any way possible is a great way to spend time with the community without having to spend too much money, yet making a real difference and contribution to those who need it.

There is no better way to bond with a loved one than getting involved and giving back. Sometimes, volunteering can be a lot for those who are a little bit shy.

No worries—there are still opportunities for our introverted love birds to give back.

Many children around the world lack a lot of the necessities we have and get to use every day. Why not get all snuggled up at home, have a cup of hot cocoa, and donate to pack a Samaritan's Purse Canada shoebox online to help a child in need, and spread joy and resources during a very cherished time of year.

Regardless of what defines a good Christmas date night, the important thing is we surround ourselves with the people we love while being grateful for the time we get to spend with friends and family.

Christmas isn't characterized by grand gestures, expensive gifts, and eggnog. The real meaning of the holiday season is subjective to each person and can't have a right or wrong way to celebrate.

The love we give is the perfect foundation for a great and meaningful date night. An evening together is enough to create Christmas miracles.

OUT'N ABOUT

Spark After Dark

Adding a spin to their monthly adult-only night, Telus Spark is hosting an 18+ event on Dec. 13, with the theme of greatest hits. Combining the most-loved exhibits from 2024, Spark After Dark is throwing the best year end party. With chemist cocktails, serial killer trivia, and robo-coaster rides, general tickets cost \$33, and only \$10 for Spark members.

Beer and Cheer

Eighty-Eight Brewing is hosting a Home Alone pop-up. Complete with decorations straight from the classic holiday movies, they are hosting movie trivia on Dec. 11 and Dec. 12., and the festivities conclude on Dec. 14 with a night of Home Alone inspired drag. Raise your glasses to that!

Dark Side of the Moon

In honour of the 50th anniversary of Pink Floyd's notable album, Telus Spark is transforming its infinity dome into an immersive audiovisual tribute to the icons. Included with Telus Spark admission, viewers experience the impactful universe of this album. One of 100 domes with rights to show, this attraction is over on Dec. 31, never to be shown again.

Masquerade Ball

Need New Year's Eve plans? Commonwealth has you covered. A night of elegant masquerade, complimentary champagne at midnight, balloon drop and more, there is something for everyone. With cool hip-hop upstairs, and chill house downstairs, ring in 2025 the right way.

Soundtrack of the season

The catchy charm of Christmas music

Ava Puszta

Staff Writer



Records and vinyls are a staple for holiday music. Christmas decoration is not complete without a soundtrack. Photo by Aiden Johner

Every year, we see Mariah Carey's face and hear her high-pitched belting in the Bath & Body Works as the mall continues to swarm. Of all the Christmas music, she seems to be the most inescapable - but why? What is it about that specific song that signals reindeer and mistletoe?

What makes a Christmas song?

Rolling Stone ranks *A Christmas Gift for You* from Phil Spector as the greatest Christmas album. Readers of Rolling Stone also voted for "Happy Xmas (War is Over)" by John Lennon and Yoko Ono to be the greatest Christmas song of all time. Most of the Christmas music Rolling Stone ranks highly are older albums given their demographic.

As someone who grew up with the crooners of the 50s and 60s being the ultimate mediums of Christmas cheer, voice has a great amount to do with holiday music in my home. My father has an affinity for Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, and I enjoy

Michael Bublé all year, but his Christmas album does contain something special.

My mother enjoys Boney M.'s Christmas album more than anything else which raises the question: How do the disco singers of "Rasputin" and "Daddy Cool" manage to create an ideal Christmas album? How do the singers of "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go" write one of the most influential Christmas songs?

For cases such as Wham! and Boney M., voice is not as big of a factor for good Christmas music. Boney M.'s Christmas album is reliant on the sounds they use in their music as opposed to the pitch of their voices.

The album, titled *Christmas with Boney M.*, uses instruments such as bells and synths at a high-pitched rate—sounds that people typically associate with Christmas. Bells specifically are seen as a Christmas sound in reference to the classic "Jingle Bells," but also the bells seen on depictions of Santa Claus's

sleigh. *Christmas with Boney M.*, also relies on their gospel ability to create a more holiday-like tone. The tempo is faster than most Christmas music but slower than the typical Boney M., song.

"Last Christmas" had a resurgence in the last few years which is fantastic—holiday season or not—"Last Christmas" by Wham! is a beautiful song. Here it is once again, focus on the instruments used which are synth and sleigh bells. The synth is higher which conveys a joyful tone despite the downcast lyrics.

There seem to be three consistent themes in songs considered festive: Jesus, festivity and tradition, and sexuality. Jesus is an understandable theme given the holiday revolves around Him. Even if Christmas is not unique to Christian households, a lot of fantastic Christmas music has Christian themes. "Carol of the Bells" is a great Christmas song even if it does not sound particularly joyful—"Carol of the Bells" spreads Yuletide

cheer due to its lyrical aspect and tradition for carolers. Similar tones are present in "Little Drummer Boy," "Silent Night," "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," and "Mary's Boy Child."

In regard to festive and tradition-oriented Christmas songs, lyrics and sound are what create the holiday atmosphere. Examples of these include most of what is heard on the radio and in the malls at this time of year such as "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas," "White Christmas," "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," and "Wonderful Christmas time."

Most babies are conceived during the holiday season and Christmas is marketed to inspire romance as we see in the hundreds of Hallmark movies not only played but produced every year (32 new releases in 2024, according to Forbes).

During the holiday season, jewelry companies such as Tiffany & Co., seem to begin advertising more than normal—inspiring engagements as the perfect

gift. Therefore, romance is not an uncommon theme for the holidays as is heard in songs like "Santa Baby," "Baby it's Cold Outside," and of course, "All I Want for Christmas is You."

Christmas is a time for relaxation and family, and traditional holiday tunes often use deep, smooth voices to evoke a festive spirit. To capture the holiday feel, sounds like bells or synths are common in pop music, while horns and organs are prominent in more traditional, religious music.

A song like "Happy Xmas (War is Over)" does not contain any of the elements mentioned aside from the use of bells and the word "Christmas"—so why is it considered the best Christmas song?

Possibly because it does not focus on the elements people usually consider to be important to Christmas. It is a song that requires people to look inward and recognize their own gratitude.

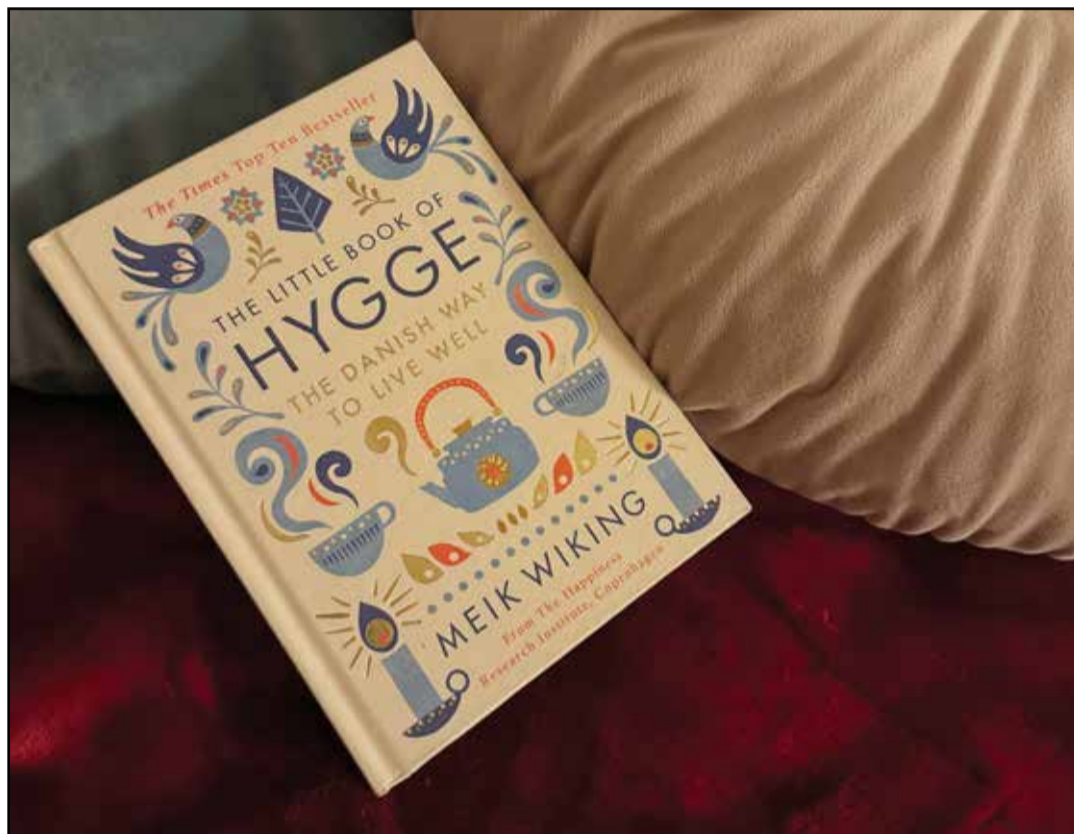
And is that not the true meaning of Christmas?

The key to happiness

A short explanation on the art of practicing Hygge

Emma Marshall

Arts Editor



Backed with research from an institute in Copanhegan, author Meik Wiking globalized the term “hygge” after publishing this book, “The Little Book of Hygge.” Photo by Emma Marshall

The winter air drapes our city in white and coaxes the geese away. Calgarians dust off their winter jackets, a task much easier than brushing two feet of snow from their cars. Even the sun hides in times like these. The impending winter ahead of us is daunting for most, digging up old feelings of tiredness, despair and longing.

Skin once covered in sunscreen turns to long sleeves and gloves. Where has our summer gone? Lost like an old friend, we welcome back the heaviness of December.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Hygge, pronounced hoo-ga, is a psychological state emphasizing comfort, warmth and togetherness. Hard to say, and harder to explain, Hygge has no direct translation to English. In short, it is a pillar in Scandinavian culture, and it promotes their everyday values of slowing down and finding joy in the small things.

Hygge dates back to the 17th century, going by various definitions throughout the Middle Ages. The lifestyle gained traction in the past

30 years, with examples of Hygge showcased in Danish pop culture.

In 2016, author Meik Wiking published *The Little Book of Hygge*, a complete guide of tapping into this Nordic way of living, backed by analysis from The Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen. Shortly after, it was deemed the Oxford Dictionary's word of the year, meaning “to find magic in the ordinary.” In 2017, the use of #Hygge on Instagram reached international audiences and became viral across the globe.

Though Wiking did not invent this practice, he managed to explain it in a global, digestible way. This type of living focuses on shifting energy towards atmosphere, presence, pleasure and togetherness, to live well no matter the season. Outlining the 10 rules of Hygge, Wiking emphasizes this lifestyle as “a survival strategy” in Nordic countries, a reference to the short days and long winters—something Denmark is particularly familiar with. Something we as Calgarians are familiar with, too.

But, Denmark ranks over 10 places higher than Canada on the World Happiness Scale. Maybe we can't blame the weather anymore.

So why not take a page out of their book? Here's a revised guide on how to practice the art of Hygge and beat the winter blues.

Atmosphere and shelter

The first step to being relaxed is a cozy home. We all know about spring cleaning, but tend to neglect fall decluttering. Taking the time to go through cupboards and common areas, tossing and donating anything you don't need, and doing a thorough deep clean is hugely rewarding. A metaphor for decluttering your mind, getting rid of dust bunnies and old recycling frees up space to focus on what is right in front of you. Wiking also emphasizes the role of light in creating atmosphere. Turn off the fluorescent bulbs and opt for dimmer candles or lamps.

Continues on Pg. 12



Naming your album after Jay Z's *The Blueprint*, one of the most iconic albums in the history of the rap/hip-hop genre, sets expectations extremely high. Thankfully, AP Dhillon's latest project, *The Brownprint* does not disappoint.

The album opens up with a soulful electric guitar solo on “Brownprint,” before transitioning to two summery tracks, “Losing Myself,” featuring Gunna, and “Bora Bora,” featuring Ayra Starr. The track “315” follows and is, in the best of ways, a traditional Punjabi hip-hop song.

Dhillon then takes an experimental trip with “Distance” and “Sweet Flower,” which could bring anyone to the nearest dancefloor with their bouncy production and romantic mood, and are followed by “Old Money,” which acts as an

interlude before the final stage of the album.

The penultimate track on this project, “After Midnight,” lays beautiful vocals on a grungy 2000's style rock instrumental.

Dhillon ends the album with “To Be Continued,” a bonus track with a powerfully sad and reflective atmosphere thanks to its emotionally striking violin chords.

The Brownprint is a perfect representation of how Dhillon has garnered such a diverse audience. His voice is pure and emotive on every track, as are the instruments and effects on each beat. Overall, the album deserves a solid 10, is a personal contender for album of the year, and is a must-listen for all—especially those that have yet to discover Dhillon's talents.

—Zafir Nagji

Eternal Atake 2
Lil Uzi Vert
Generation Now/
Atlantic Records
Score: A-



Lil Uzi Vert's ninth studio album, titled *Eternal Atake 2 (EA2)*, will take his fans back to the era in which they fell in “LUV” with him the most: their teen years.

His most recent release previous to *EA2*, *Pink Tape*, was a departure from his usual style, featuring much more of a rager theme. *EA2* represents a return to the fun-loving, lyrically shallow but highly energetic style that made Lil Uzi Vert the star he is today.

Despite its name, it is not a direct continuation of the first *Eternal Atake* album, but rather, an evolution of the concepts from it.

EA2 opens with “We Good,” featuring sounds that will remind listeners of “LUV is Rage 2,” with an offbeat flow and glowing production.

The next three songs are pure nostalgia, but, following in the footsteps of his good friend, Playboi Carti, Uzi introduces us to his new deep voice over his perfectly timed

flows.

We then get a surprise feature from a band everyone forgot about, Big Time Rush, which ends up being a great break as the next few songs go back to Uzi's traditional style.

We even get a comedic song, “She Stank,” which ends up being better than the first 30 seconds of the track would lead listeners to believe. The album ends with “Space High,” which has some of the funniest one-liners on the entire project.

Overall, *EA2* is an easy 8/10 and should have great replay value going into 2025.

—Zafir Nagji

Continued from Pg.11

Presence and pleasure

Being where your feet are is of utmost importance in practicing Hygge. The world outside may be cold, dark and downright bad at times, but one can find pleasure in being present. The Hygge lifestyle suggests taking one-minute every hour to check in with your body. Notice the blanket draped on your legs, or the warmth of the dog beside you. Notice if you need water, tea, a snack, or even a shower. People are encouraged to turn off their phones and be present in the world around them.

According to Wiking, the annual consumption of sweets by one person is 4.2kg, whereas the Danish average is 8.2kg. Hygge begs people to enjoy that chocolate bar or pastry without feeling bad about it.

Equality and gratitude

Using the phrase ‘we over me,’ Wiking emphasizes the importance of community health over individual health. This is because there



Warm lights and colorful decorations setting the scene for comfort, community, and togetherness at a local pub in Calgary. Photo by Emma Marshall

is an increase in serotonin when giving back or helping out, and it results in friends or neighbours feeling loved and supported. This might mean brushing snow off your neighbour’s car in the morning, paying for the coffee of the person behind you, or even just having

friends over for a warm meal.

It is in these moments that we should feel grateful. Not only to have a community around us, or a warm shelter where we can retreat, but Wiking notes that “this might be as good as it gets.” Practicing daily gratitude

can open your eyes to the joy in the world, and it is as easy as writing five things you are grateful for each day.

Harmony and truce

This pillar is about acknowledging that the people around you already

like you. Engage in harmony by leaving out conversations on finances, politics, or achievements. Just be yourself with the people you love. There is magic in that.

Comfort and togetherness

Though Hygge can be practiced alone, and time spent by yourself is not to be taken for granted, the true state of being comes out when surrounded by others. It is advised to make yourselves comfortable with blankets, pillows and warm drinks. Enjoy the time together by playing card games or trivia, or just having good conversation.

Typically, those who live by Hygge do not include substances in their routine. This means no alcohol or cannabis to unwind, but rather engaging in thoughtful and comforting rest. Since the globalization of the term, specific recipes, examples and routines of Hygge can be found with one Google search. While the internet can supply great ideas, the true nature of Hygge is not found online. Rather, it is found in your home, surrounded by loved ones with warm feet and full bellies.

samru

students' association
of mount royal university

SAMRU IS HIRING!

2025/26 REPRESENTATION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

APPLY NOW!

No Experience Necessary

Earn a \$49,500 salary during a 1-year term, PLUS tuition for one class per semester.

- ✓ 1-year terms starting Spring 2025
- ✓ Earn a full-time salary & benefits
- ✓ Gain real-world experience
- ✓ Professional training provided
- ✓ Easy application process



Questions?
Contact governance@samru.ca

Apply Now!

samru.ca/RECapPLY



Application
deadline:
Jan. 31, 2025



@samrubuzz

samru.ca

Game over: Unpacking sports injuries and grief

Bella Coco
News Editor

Whether it's running under bright court lights, or pursuing a goal on the green grass of a pitch, countless young athletes chase dreams of going pro. But for many, a single moment—a torn ligament, a fractured bone, or a head injury—can turn ambition into shaky uncertainty. Sports injuries are not just physical setbacks, but also mental barriers that can bench a career before it even begins.

For aspiring post-secondary athletes, the long journey of going pro is often chalked full of sacrifices: countless hours of training and practices, missed social opportunities, and the mental toll of balancing academics and sports. However, for athletes pursuing their passion, the balance is more than worth the time and effort.

Unfortunately, not even the most balanced and disciplined athlete can cheat the risks of injury. One wrong move, tackle, pivot, or stance can result in months of rehabilitation, lost opportunities and grief.

According to the Journal of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, 30 per cent of young athletes who undergo serious injuries, such as ACL tears, fail to return to their pre-injury performance levels.

Bodily betrayal

Alexandria Pickard, a student at Ambrose University, unfortunately, knows all too well the trauma of an ACL tear—an injury that stole her spot on the basketball court.

"It was during a practice.

We were scrimmaging, and I got caught between a girl's legs," Pickard says. "We both jumped in the air, and I pivoted. I heard a loud pop, and I fell to the ground. And in that moment, I knew something bad was gonna happen, because I couldn't straighten my leg."

Testimonies like Pickard's are usually a clear sign of a fractured ACL. Unable to stand on her leg, Pickard nearly fainted when trying to get up; she later learned that her ACL was fully torn and that her meniscus and MCL were partially torn, necessitating a full reconstruction of her knee.

The physical pain of the injury also brought a whirlwind of emotions for Pickard, including the loss of what once was her everything.

"[Basketball] was basically my identity. I grew up playing sports my whole life and in high school. And then in my third year, I played in university. Sports were definitely what made me who I was," she says.

For young athletes reeling from an injury, grief may be one of the most common and significant emotional responses. With a sense of purpose now severed from athletic involvement, it's common for student-athletes to grieve what could've been.

"I had to reevaluate my whole life because I couldn't just play basketball for the rest of my life now. There were a few days where I just didn't get out of bed or wanted to even take part in the practices or games anymore," Pickard says. "I was like, 'There's no point to



Alexandria Pickard, pictured, was robbed of her university basketball career after tearing her ACL, but maintains her passion for the game by playing at her local court with her fiancé. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@alex.pickard

me even being here since I'm never going to play again.' So there definitely was a lot of anger in my grief process, then more sadness, I guess. I thought, 'I did this to myself.'"

However, for Pickard, after the storm, the sun began to slowly shine again.

Pickard was supported by her team, coaches and family members during the recovery process, which eventually led to her finding comfort with basketball and playing other sports again.

"My coach knew at the time the extent of my injury and

he knew from the beginning that I probably wasn't going to go back to playing because of how intense the injury was. He was just more supportive than anything," Pickard says. "One of my other coaches, she was also there for me. And she tore her whole knee apart when she played basketball back in the day. So she just empathized with me. She made me feel very heard and very like, 'I'm okay to not be okay.'"

With the support Pickard received, she was able to embrace basketball within

the limitations of her injury.

"I live by a basketball court. So I'll go out and shoot hoops with my fiancé or I'll just stay active. So it's not like, 'oh, I hate basketball forever.' There's just a lot of trauma involved with that... It's just one hardship that makes you look at how beautiful the rest of your life is," she says. "I definitely found that this injury made me realize that there's more beauty to this life than just being a jock."

Continues on Pg. 14

#S

40 points scored by OG Anunoby in the NY Knicks' 145-118 victory over the Denver Nuggets

29 kills by Sydney Scatcherd in two games last weekend for the Cougars women's volleyball team

76 shots blocked this season by Calgary Flames defenceman Rasmus Andersson, who leads the NHL in that category

6 three-pointers swished by Avnoor Bhullar in two games last weekend for the Cougars men's basketball team

Continued from Pg.13

Persistence and determination

Like Pickard's experience with a traumatic sports injury, UBC Okanagan student Olivia Vanderwater also had her life turned upside down when she tore her ACL.

Vanderwater first tore her ACL when playing soccer at 14 years old, which changed her perspective on sports and recovery very early on.

"It was one of the most difficult things to hear at such a young age. It was the first time I experienced what depression was. But I knew how much soccer and my team meant to me so I made it my mission to come back from the injury stronger than I had been before," Vanderwater says.

However, disaster struck before Vanderwater's departure to university. She tore her knee a second time, which re-opened the wound of grief on a much larger scale.

"I had already been through this before but during this time I didn't really have a strong relationship with my team," Vanderwater says. "I was not signed to my university's team at the time and I did not have a plan for the next year."

The injury was no longer just physically impactful; for Vanderwater, the blow was mentally devastating.

"I got depressed again and to be honest, I did not cope with it in the best ways," Vanderwater says. "I partied a lot with friends, and I was drinking and using recreational drugs."

However, she did not stay down for long, picking herself back up and using her love of the game to propel herself forward.

"I managed to turn things around and set goals for myself to help keep me motivated," Vanderwater says. "I was not allowed to play soccer but I was allowed to workout and take care of my body, so that is what I did."

Vanderwater found resilience in recovery, and after seeing a sports psychologist, attending physiotherapy, receiving family love and undergoing surgery, she was able to get back on the soccer pitch and play for the University of British Columbia Okanagan Heat.

"University soccer is not what I expected. It has been extremely difficult to gain my confidence back, especially after two ACL



Despite tearing her ACL twice, Oliva Vanderwater, pictured, persevered through her physical and mental challenges, returning to the soccer field to play for the UBCO Heat. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@livvanderwater

surgeries," she says. "I am not the same player that I was prior to both of them, and that has been the most difficult thing to wrap my head around. I still show up everyday and try to be the best version of myself and am still working so hard to get to where I know I can be."

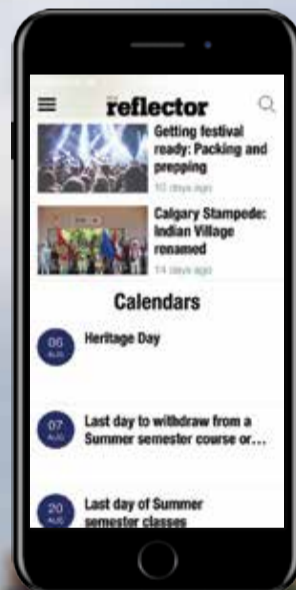
Despite the hardships of her two injuries and the journey to regain her confidence, Vanderwater continuously finds ways to stay involved and become the player she always envisioned.

"The program I am taking at UBCO is Health and Exercise Sciences. My goal is to become a physiotherapist and have a specialty in ACL prevention and rehabilitation. I want to make sure no one has to go through this level of difficulty in their life."

Almost all athletes have dreams of playing at the highest level of their sport, but only few reach the pinnacle of their respective disciplines.

Sports bring stories of achievement, but also injury, heartbreak, and struggle. However, the stories of redemption, reinvigoration and revitalization from those who come back from supposedly career-ending injuries cannot be understated in their impact, providing motivation and inspiration to all.

The Reflector Newspaper app available now in your favourite app store



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



View QR code in photo app



Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Photo graphic by Rafael Fernandez. Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/index.php?curid=5121606>

Calling in the Cavalry

Calgary's Canadian Premier League club wins first-ever North Star Cup after just 5 seasons

Zafir Nagji

Sports Editor

Calgary is once again a city of champions. Our last championship victory in a major professional sporting league as a city was in 2019, with the Calgary RATH winning the National Ringette League's Provan-Summons Trophy. This year, Calgary's Canadian Premier League (CPL) club, Cavalry FC, secured their first-ever North Star Cup, winning 2-1 at home on ATCO Field against Forge FC, who have won four championships since the league's first season in 2019.

The Cavalry vs the rest of the CPL

Since joining the CPL in 2019, Cavalry FC has always been a dominant force. The Calgary-based squad have been a top three club ever since the inception of the CPL, winning two CPL Shields for posting the best regular season records in 2019 and 2023.

The clear top dog in the league has always been Forge FC, who have won four North Star Cup championships and two CPL Shields. Based in Hamilton, O.N., Forge FC was the first CPL club to compete in the CONCACAF Champions League and the first to reach the finals of the Canadian Championship, taking on professional clubs from North America's top league, Major League Soccer (MLS), in both competitions.

Calgary finished their 2024 regular season with the second-best form in the CPL, posting a regular-season record of 12-12-5 and a playoff record of 2-0.

On offence, Cavalry FC was a nightmare for opposing defences every match, finishing first in shots attempted (304) and second in shots on target (138) on their way to ranking third in goals scored (42). Those shots came as a result of their brilliant playmaking—they led the league in successful crosses and corners (162) at the highest efficiency in the CPL (28.93 per cent success rate). Cavalry FC also played staunch defence, conceding

the fewest goals (28) and fewest goals per match (0.93).

Their club was full of talent from top to bottom, with Tobias Warschewski leading the league in goals (14) and shots attempted (69). Marco Christian Carducci finished the season third in the league in saves (61) and, with the help of his brilliant back line of defenders, led the CPL with nine clean sheets. Midfielder Diego Nicolás Gutiérrez Zúñiga ranked third in the league in tackles with 53 while defender Daan Klomp finished third in passes completed with 1694.

The road to victory

In their first semi-final match, Cavalry FC took on Forge FC at Tim Hortons Field in Hamilton and won 1-0; Warschewski secured the lone goal of the game in the 27th minute, streaking past the defence to catch up to a long pass from goalkeeper Carducci before nutmegging

Forge FC's keeper and scoring. That qualified Cavalry FC for the North Star Cup Final and sent Forge FC to the win-or-go-home semi-final match, where they beat Atlético Ottawa 1-0.

So, for Cavalry FC to win their first North Star Cup, they would have to beat the biggest kahuna in the league not once, but twice—and they did. With first-half goals from Warschewski and Sergio Andres Camargo Peñaranda, the club looked poised going into the second half. Even when Forge FC midfielder Alexander Achinioti-Jönsson scored in the 52nd minute, Calgary maintained their composure on their home field and brought home their first ever CPL Championship.

With their 2024 victory, Cavalry FC joins Forge FC and Victoria-based Pacific FC as the only clubs to win the CPL's North Star Cup.

MRU's role in the win

Cougars alumni Nikolas

Myroniuk and Justin Anderson-Louch, who played and coached at MRU, were both part of the championship run. When asked about the victory, Myroniuk referenced his time at MRU as a key period in his injury recovery that led to his big moment.

"My time at Mount Royal University played a crucial role in getting me to this point," Myroniuk said in an interview with the Cougars. "Going through my first major injury as a pro, I found that MRU was a great place for me to get back on my feet and get back to pro-level."

With their Canada West Gold Medal in 2023, back-to-back U SPORTS National Tournament visits in 2023 and 2024, and two alumni on Cavalry FC's first-ever North Star Cup victory, the MRU Cougars are quickly becoming one of the biggest names in Canadian soccer. Additionally, these successes are putting Calgary on the map as one of the premier

athletic cities in the country.

Calgary: City of champions

Calgary now has one National Hockey League Stanley Cup, eight Canadian Football League Grey Cups, three National Lacrosse League Cups, three National Ringette League Provan-Summons Trophies, and a Canadian Premier League North Star Cup.

The Surge, who have yet to win a Canadian Elite Basketball League championship but have played in the finals, and the Wranglers, who are still searching for their first American Hockey League championship but have only been in the league for two seasons, are next to join Calgary's championship row.

However, the Flames, Stampeders, Roughnecks, RATH, and Cavalry FC have all made it abundantly clear that Calgary is, without a doubt, a city of champions.



After securing MRU's first-ever Canada West Gold Medal, Nikolas Myroniuk, pictured, took his talents to the Calgary Cavalry FC and helped them secure their first CPL North Star Cup. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

Beyond the posts

Cougars goaltender reflects on time in U SPORTS as she prepares for potential PWHL career

Truman Bartman

Staff Writer

Five years have passed since Mount Royal University Cougars goaltender Kaitlyn Ross began her U SPORTS hockey career. It's been a long and rewarding journey for Ross, as earlier this week, she became the fastest goalie in Canada West history to reach 50 career wins, something that she is honoured to have achieved.

"It's very exciting, especially because it hadn't been done in Canada West before," Ross said. "It was nice to honestly get a little bit of recognition. But I give part of it to my team. They've been solid defensively in front of me for years, and they've been helping me backstop those wins."

As Ross's university career comes to a close, she reflects on her time with the Cougars, recalling Mount Royal's 2023 National Championship win, the standout moment of her tenure.

"Winning the National Championship and just that whole year in general was so special," Ross said. "We all got along so well, we were super close, and we had trust and confidence in each other... I've always thought when building a new team, or when we bring in new players, that we should strive to create an environment like the one on that team."

One player who has been by Ross's side both during the National Championship and for a large part of her hockey career is captain Lyndsey Janes. The two joined the Cougars back in 2019, coming over from the Notre Dame Hounds. They will end their collegiate careers together this year as all-time Cougar legends. Ross is thankful that she's had the chance to share the ice with Janes and appreciates the friendship that they have built away from the rink.

"We've been teammates forever," Ross said. "This is the ninth year, and I think it's helped us on and off the ice. We have a lot of chemistry and a strong bond. We've gone through a lot together, and I know, at the end of the day, no matter what, she's



Kaitlyn Ross, centre, has spent five years at MRU and was part of the U SPORTS National Championship run in 2023, leading the team from the goaltending position. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

somebody that will always be there for me."

After this season concludes, Ross will embark on a new journey within the hockey sphere. Although she isn't quite sure where she will end up, Ross has her sights set on playing professional hockey.

"I want to play in the PWHL," Ross said. "That's my ultimate goal. I know that coming from U SPORTS, it can be a little bit tricky... I'm going to play pro somewhere. I'm just not sure where yet, but playing in the PWHL remains at the top of my goals."

For most athletes, the ability to become a pro in one sport is impressive enough. In Ross's case, she is also a high-level baseball player who competed for Canada's Baseball World Cup team as their catcher. However, at this moment in time, Ross plans to keep hockey as her



Ross has maintained an unbelievable 93.8 per cent save percentage for her entire U SPORTS career, averaging over 21 saves per game in her quest to be the first Cougar to play in the PWHL. Photo courtesy of Adrian Shellard

first priority.

"I'd say hockey is still number one for me, but women's baseball just announced that in 2026 they're going to start a pro league," Ross said. "If I could do both, I would. The only thing that might prevent me from doing that is being tied into a contract in the future."

Ross has never questioned her abilities as a goalie, but she admitted that before high school she never thought that playing university hockey was a realistic goal, let alone having the chance to play pro someday.

"I honestly didn't even start thinking about playing college until I was playing midget at Notre Dame," Ross said. "Once I got to college, it was still a couple of years before I realized, 'Hey, girls go off to play in Europe.' Then the PWHL came along, and more girls are starting to play pro. It wasn't until recently that I thought this is something that I could do. Now, it's not just something I am thinking about, but something that I'm going to strive to accomplish."

Ross is well on her way to achieving exactly that, as she is already beginning to grow her personal brand away from the rink through brand deals and sponsorships. She hopes to continue to put herself out into the world, hoping opportunities within hockey will follow.

"I've gotten a couple of sponsorships with Perfect Sports and Rawlings, which has helped me to become more comfortable with being on social media and in building my personal brand," Ross said. "I am hoping that teams can see, 'Oh, this is somebody that we would want to bring on our team'"

Ross's time in college may be coming to a close, but that has opened a whole new set of potential opportunities that are just waiting to present themselves. As she stretches out beyond her posts in a quest to become a professional, the decorated moments that she has had as an MRU Cougar will forever make her a legend of the sport.