

the reflector

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**What is
skijoring?
(Pg. 6)**

**We have a
crossword!
(Pg. 14)**

Climate predictions for 2025

Experts forecast a colder year, but say global warming remains a scorching issue

Sarah Palmer

Staff Writer

Proclamations by meteorologists saying the year ahead will be ‘the hottest’ or ‘coldest’ on record seem to have become a 21st-century tradition for welcoming the new year.

But despite the bellows ringing like a nuisance of redundancy, temperatures are breaking records year after year—proving the statements truer, with every calendar replaced.

Despite the expectation of 2025 being colder than the last two years, The Met Office predicts that it will achieve third place behind 2023 and 2024—the current warmest year on record—on the list of the globe’s hottest years to date.

So, how did we get here?

An increase in temperature, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sea level was demonstrated in 2023 and 2024, all of which have contributed to a significant loss in glacial mass, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

According to Golden Gate Weather Services, the warming of the ocean’s surface temperature was partially caused by the El Niño weather pattern which dominated 2023 and the first half of 2024 at a “strong” level when measured using the Oceanic Niño Index.

Following the often 12 to 18-month-long heat anomaly comes the La Niña weather pattern, which gradually brought opposite, cooling qualities between June and November 2024.

Aligning with the Atlantic tropical storm season, data from the National Hurricane Center reveals how the somewhat recent category four Beryl and category five Milton hurricanes were rooted in the event of this shift.

What are the climate predictions for 2025?

In a report published Jan. 6, 2025, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said there is a 59 per cent chance of La Niña, or “ENSO-cool,” conditions persisting until the end of the month.

Assuming the odds are in favour of a continuing La Niña weather pattern, the NOAA explains that a “wave-like jet stream flow” across North America would cause the southern half of the United States to experience a warm climate with limited storms. Simultaneously, a colder than normal, more storm-abundant winter would start in the northern United States and blanket over western and central Canada.

Bringing drier conditions to the southwestern United States and wetter conditions to the Pacific Northwest, it’s not unlikely for flooding conditions to continue into the new year—events not dissimilar to Vancouver’s six inches of rainfall which overwhelmed drain systems and caused widespread flooding last October, according to NASA Earth Observatory.

Between March and May, the NOAA predicts a 61 per cent chance of “ENSO-neutral” conditions bringing the tropical Pacific’s temperature, wind, and rainfall levels near their long-term averages. This means the climate would essentially be free of the drastic positive or negative influences brought on by an El Niño or La Niña.

This neutral weather pattern would cause polar jet streams to shift southward from the Pacific, bringing warmth to regions that usually experience mild temperatures and cold to areas where freezing conditions are considered standard during the winter months.

That could result in colder probabilities in parts of Québec and Ontario, the northern prairies, and territories, while warmer probabilities would lend themselves to the southern United States along



Warnings of climate change are common in welcoming each new year, and for Calgarians, experts are forecasting extreme weather events to become more frequent in 2025. Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

the Mexican border.

What does this mean for Calgary?

Thankfully for Alberta, the recent shift to La Niña has improved the province’s drought conditions previously brought about by El Niño, as a result of the moisture experienced toward the end of the summer.

Trends of moisture materialized as heavy snowfall and colder than average temperatures are expected to continue in 2025, despite the balmy winter and short-lived negative temperatures thus far.

Anticipating extreme weather events to become more frequent in western Canada, climate journalist, Kyle Brittain told CBC Radio that Calgarians should expect more hail storms like the one on Aug. 5, 2024, which caused just over \$2.8 billion in insured losses—becoming the country’s most expensive weather event to date, according to the Government of Canada.

Mother Nature vs. human-kind: who’s to blame?

Since receiving its name

in the 1600s, the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) climate pattern has naturally explained instances of extreme weather, including dramatic spikes or drops in temperature—but it’s not the only factor contributing to global warming.

Marking the first time in history, the global average temperature between 2023 and 2024 reached 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels. Yet, the El Niño was found responsible for causing only 10 per cent of the warming experienced in 2023.

The primary cause, according to Hossein Bonakdari, associate professor of civil engineering at the University of Ottawa, was the impacts of deforestation and fossil fuel burning among other human activities—which amounted to “more than 90 per cent” of global warming in 2023.

According to the Government of Canada, global GHG emissions jumped by 24 per cent between 2005 and 2021 alone. Although not responsible for the entire sum of these emissions, the energy sector makes up 75 per cent of the world’s warmth-provoking activities and includes electricity, heat, and transportation—often

powered using elements of fossil fuels.

Signing the Paris Agreement in 2015 established Canada’s involvement in attempting to keep the global average temperature from exceeding pre-industrial levels.

As part of this, the recently resigned Prime Minister Justin Trudeau introduced a \$9.1 billion plan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030 by encouraging electric vehicle ownership and integrating clean technologies into the energy and construction industries.

Scheduled for this November in Brazil’s Amazon rainforest, world leaders of the 194 countries participating in the Paris Agreement are expected to re-communicate or update their climate-conscious plans at the COP30 conference—mere weeks after Canadians will have elected a new prime minister this year on Oct. 20.

Based on a vote projection model published Jan. 6, CBC reports a 98 per cent probability of the United Conservative Party winning a majority government in the next federal election, which would give party leader Pierre Poilievre—an avid campaigner against the Liberal’s carbon tax—title as prime minister.

Nominations for the Calgary Awards for Community Excellence are now open

Calgary Awards winners to be announced in June

Khaoula Choual

Staff Writer

The City of Calgary has officially opened nominations for the Calgary Awards, one of the city's most distinguished award events. These awards recognize the outstanding achievements of individuals, businesses, and organizations that help to make Calgary a lively and inclusive community. As the 2025 awards begin, people are encouraged to nominate individuals and groups that have made significant achievements in various categories.

The awards include arts and innovation, community service, and environmental stewardship. Every year, these awards recognize individuals, businesses, and organizations that significantly contribute to Calgary's vibrancy and quality of life. This annual event demonstrates the city's diverse skills and commitment to nurturing greatness in various fields.

A Calgary tradition

The Calgary Awards, founded in 1994, have grown into a symbol of civic pride, reflecting the bright spirit of the community. With over a dozen award categories, the program honours a wide range of accomplishments that contribute to Calgary's cultural, social and economic development. From unsung individuals quietly impacting their communities to high-profile visionaries redefining industries, the awards recognize a fair share of achievements.

Every year, Calgarians have the opportunity to nominate candidates, making the awards a truly community-driven project. This strategy ensures that the recipients represent the city's diverse population and highlight contributions that would otherwise go unreported. The awards also serve as a reminder of the collaborative work required to create a welcoming and prosperous community.

Award categories

The Calgary Awards consist of 13 categories, each concentrating on a unique area of excellence. Some of the more notable categories are:

The Citizen of the Year Award which recognizes an individual whose leadership and volunteer activities have had a significant impact on Calgary.

Community Advocate Awards honour individuals or groups who have made outstanding contributions to social, cultural or environmental problems.

The W.O. Mitchell Book Prize celebrates Calgary-based authors who have made important contributions to literature.

The Environmental Achievement Award recognizes projects that promote environmental stewardship and sustainability.

The Grant MacEwan Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a person's lifelong commitment to community service and development.

The Youth Awards recognize young Calgary residents who have displayed leadership, inventiveness and community service.

Additional categories include awards for corporate innovation, accessibility, culture and the arts.

The nominating process

The Calgary Awards prioritize community involvement at all stages, beginning with the nomination process. Citizens are urged to nominate individuals or organizations that they believe deserve attention. This grassroots method ensures that the awards are inclusive and reflective of the city's diverse population.

Once nominations are closed, a selection committee of experts and community leaders review the entries. The evaluation process includes a thorough examination of the



With 13 different categories, the Calgary Awards offer recognition to a wide variety of deserving candidates, who are nominated by city residents, and promote excellence at all levels of society. Photo by Bernard Spragg

nominee's accomplishments to ensure that recipients have truly made a difference in their field of expertise.

Beyond recognition

While the awards are a celebration, their significance goes far beyond the event. Recipients frequently indicate that the award motivates them to start new projects or expand on existing ones. The awards also provide grassroots organizations and young leaders attention and reputation, which leads to financing opportunities and partnerships.

The Calgary Awards also act as a catalyst for larger discussions regarding community building. By highlighting accomplishments in areas such as sustainability, diversity, and innovation, the program encourages individuals to consider how

they, too, can help build a stronger, more successful Calgary.

The City's role

The City of Calgary has a significant impact on the award's performance. By hosting the event, encouraging nominations and promoting its inhabitants' achievements, the city guarantees that the program remains an important part of its cultural fabric. The Calgary Awards demonstrate the city's dedication to recognizing and promoting excellence at all levels of society.

Looking forward

As Calgary grows and evolves, the Calgary Awards serve as a compelling reminder of the value of recognizing local achievements. They motivate individuals to set higher goals, think bigger and contribute to the greater good.

The awards promote community pride and unity by honouring those who set a good example. They remind Calgarians that their efforts, no matter how large or small, can have a lasting influence.

The Calgary awards provide a unique opportunity for Mount Royal University (MRU) students to celebrate their achievements or acknowledge the achievements of others. MRU students can showcase their academics, leadership, or community service by entering categories like Youth Awards, Citizen of the Year, and Environmental Achievement awards. Students play an important role in demonstrating Calgary's culture of innovation and compassion, whether they nominate themselves or celebrate loved ones such as mentors, family, and friends who make a difference.

The economic landscape of Canada in 2025

Amirmohammad Bagheri

Staff Writer

As the weather gets colder the year of 2024 stays buried under a blanket of snow. As 2025 announces its arrival, Canadians will be navigating a new variety of tax rules and economic policy updates that could affect their finances. Here's a brief overview of all these changes.

Increased taxes on capital gains

Capital gains, the profit from selling assets like stocks or real estate, are an important source of income for many Canadians. In 2025, capital gains tax will undergo a significant adjustment. The income tax rate (percentage of capital gain) has been increased from 50 per cent to 66 per cent for people with earnings of over \$250,000 a year. This change also extends to corporations and trusts, resulting in a two-thirds higher ratio.

While this update has been provisionally enforced since mid-2024, it still awaits full approval in Parliament. For taxpayers, the increased inclusion rate adds complexity to financial planning and investment strategies.

Carbon tax increases

April 2025 marks another step forward in carbon pricing, with the federal carbon tax increasing from \$80 to \$95 per tonne. For provinces under federal protection, this means higher

fuel prices. Gasoline prices will increase by three cents per litre, and propane by two cents.

Despite these price increases, most Canadians will receive refunds to offset the impact. 90 per cent of the tax revenue is redistributed to households, while the remaining 10 per cent goes to helping communities and businesses adopt more environmentally friendly practices. Studies show that for many families, these rebates outweigh their direct and indirect carbon tax costs.

Increased income tax brackets

Personal income tax brackets will also be changing for the incoming tax season. These brackets will be increasing by 2.7 per cent from the previous year's tax brackets to account for inflation. Inevitably, citizens are also required to pay for any provincial or territorial taxes depending on where they are.

With the failure to file taxes any later than April 30, the CRA will increase the balance owed by five per cent as well as one per cent for each passing month that a balance remains unpaid.

Helping small business owners

On the other hand, the government has introduced a new incentive for small business owners. The Canadian Entrepreneur

Incentive lowers the inclusion rate for capital gains to 33 per cent on a lifetime maximum of \$2 million, specifically for Canadian Controlled Private Corporations.

Starting this year, the program will be gradually phased in, offering \$400,000 in reduced-rate gains annually until the full \$2 million is reached in 2029. While the incentive provides some relief, the overlapping tax measures are expected to complicate financial management for small businesses.

Increased CPP payments

Changes to Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions continue in 2025, with two thresholds determining contribution levels.

The first earnings ceiling rises to \$71,300, with employees contributing 5.95 per cent of their income up to that amount, after a \$3,500 exemption. This brings the maximum annual contribution to \$4,034.10 per employee, matched by employers for a total of \$8,068.20.

A second earnings ceiling, introduced in recent years, increases to \$81,200. Contributions on income between the two ceilings are taxed at 4 per cent, adding another \$396 per employee and employer.

Alcohol tax

On April 1, 2025, taxes on alcohol will rise by 2 per cent. Although recent years have seen the government reduce inflation-linked hikes on beer and wine, this increase is estimated to cost Canadians \$40.8 million, according to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Other than the changes mentioned, the province of Alberta itself will also introduce a wide variety of taxes and adjustments that may or may not impact your wallet. Let's take a closer look at what they are.

Vaping tax

On Jan. 1, 2025, Alberta introduced a provincial vaping tax that will be added on top of the existing federal

tax on these products. This change is expected to increase the cost of vaping products by approximately 20 per cent, according to Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Canada. The provincial government estimates that the tax will generate \$18 million in revenue for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Les Hagen, executive director of ASH Canada, believes the tax could significantly reduce vaping rates among youth, a demographic particularly sensitive to price increases.

"We know from tobacco taxes that higher prices are one of the most effective ways to reduce usage, especially among young people with limited disposable income," Hagen said. "We expect similar results with vaping."

Despite this move, ASH continues to advocate for a federal ban on flavoured vaping products to further reduce youth interest in vaping.

Electric vehicle tax

Electric vehicle (EV) owners in Alberta will soon face a new \$200 provincial tax when registering their vehicles. While the exact implementation date hasn't been announced, the finance ministry expects the tax to roll out in early 2025. Hybrid vehicles will be exempt from this fee.

The Alberta government justifies the tax by claiming EVs contribute to wear and tear on provincial roads without paying fuel taxes. However, critics, such as the Electric Vehicle Association of Alberta (EVAA), argue that this reasoning is flawed.

"Many EVs weigh less than gas-powered vehicles, so this flat fee unfairly penalizes smaller or low-mileage EV drivers," said William York, president of the EVAA. "This tax feels more ideological than practical, especially when other jurisdictions are offering incentives for EV ownership."

This tax is expected to bring in \$5 million in revenue for 2025-26, growing to \$8 million by 2026-27.

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EDITORIAL STAFF:

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Managing Editor: Ivar Bergs

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Photo Editor: Aiden Johner

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Web Editor: Arroy (AJ) Jacob

CONTRIBUTORS: Hunter Pratt

STAFF WRITERS: Khaoula Choual, Amirmohammad Bagheri, Sarah Palmer, Rylie Perry, Brennen French, Daria Orth, Mia Smith, Truman Bartman, Naomi Campbell

COVER: Brennen French

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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



A plethora of tax increases are on the financial agenda for 2025, while new taxes, like the vaping and electric vehicle taxes, are being introduced. Photo courtesy of Freepik

Aliens on Mars: it's more than just possible now

Arroy (AJ) Jacob
Web Editor



Aliens may be closer than we think. According to NASA, microscopic life forms may exist on Martian ice, using cryoconite holes as a source of sunlight to conduct photosynthesis. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The “red planet,” better known as Mars, has plagued astronomers, space engineers, and children with their father’s telescope alike with the same question: “Are there aliens on Mars?”

Now NASA says yes.

Not really. But NASA is coming forward with discoveries that hypothesize that Martians exist(ed) and are no longer the villain in a sci-fi horror blockbuster.

But the Martians NASA is referring to are not what movie lovers expect them to be. They don’t believe they have beady eyes, or giant heads, or numerous tentacles. Instead, researchers theorize them to be much more familiar to our world: they are microorganisms—which on paper sounds less interesting but, if proven true, would still be considered “aliens,” which is an excellent reframer.

Their existence came into public view with a recent publication in October 2024 of dusty ice existing within gullies on the Martian surface, a humble and resourceful ecosystem hidden beneath the red rock on Mars.

To fully understand the potential inhabitants of the red planet, it is important to fully explain the history and implications of our potential interplanetary neighbours

living under the ice.

Did Mars once sustain life?

Approximately 4 billion years ago, Mars was thought to have looked and functioned as Earth does today. Oceans and land mass spanned and collided with wind and ice in a dance called evolution, forming a roughly habitable world that could have sustained life. This period in Mars’ history was known as the Noachian Period and was instrumental in establishing the elementary evidence that extraterrestrial life can exist.

And as all dances must come to an end, so did life on Mars, as the disappearance of its magnetic field had rendered the planet prone to the Sun’s radiation. Atmospheric escape had allowed the oceans to dry out and asteroids to destroy its surface, carving out numerous craters that likely rendered the planet sterile for over 2 billion years.

When the Mars Perseverance Rover landed on its surface in 2020, scientists had hoped to find any remnants of ancient life off the ruined rocks. Very briefly, it had appeared desolate, dry and lonely for Mr. Perseverance.

Until 2021, from the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, when Aditya Khuller and

Phil Christensen had gotten a closer look at the rock and published their discovery of a potential home that would have harboured ancient microbial life—dusty ice in gullies

Enter the dusty gullies

On Earth, gullies, rocks, and land physically morph into deep ravine channels due to erosion via consistent running water. These gullies can also house solid ice, which is crucial because it has a scientific characteristic essential to the Martian life theory.

“Dusty ice” refers to windblown particles that attach to ice blocks. When stuck, the particles absorb the sunlight and melt into the ice, seeping through and leaving holes across the ice surface known as “cryoconite” holes. The particles can stay dormant in the ice for generations, and during that time, its leftover heat leaves a still pocket of meltwater in the hole.

The conditions in these microscopic pockets are bountiful for microorganisms to grow, especially with liquid meltwater present, thus laying a foundational ecosystem for bacteria, fungi, algae, and other simple lifeforms to reproduce and colonize.

“This is a common phenomenon on Earth,” said Christensen in an interview with the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

If these tiny ecosystems are known to sustain millions of microorganisms on Earth, imagine Khuller and Christensen’s surprise to find similar cryoconite holes in the dusty ice gullies of Mars.

Photosynthesis is the cellular process between microorganisms that kickstarted all of natural, animal, and human evolution as we know it. And in October 2024, Khuller and Christensen co-authored a paper on how photosynthesis could be taking place under the Martian ice.

“If we’re trying to find life anywhere in the universe today, Martian ice exposures are probably one of the most accessible places we should be looking,” said Khuller in the same interview with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Can microscopic Martians exist in these holes?

Khuller and Christensen say that it is possible. Their research emphasizes the potential for habitable zones for life within the Martian ice despite the planet’s harsh

radiation environment. On Earth, sunlight penetrates several metres into ice, providing energy for organisms while shielding them from UV radiation. In contrast, Mars receives more harmful UV radiation due to its lack of an ozone layer.

However, the researchers’ models indicate that habitable zones could still exist within Martian ice, depending on the ice dust content it stuck to, a few centimetres to metres below the surface. Their statistical models predicted that there is a possibility of small amounts of liquid water present beneath the dense surface of dusty snow.

If proven true, they will enormously enhance the probability of microorganisms growing under the ice as we know it (or have once before). As Khuller and Christensen summarized in their interview, these locations are the first on the list of places to find aliens.

Despite our yearnings, further research is required as it is difficult to pinpoint any conclusions that aliens exist on Mars without any physical analyses.

For now though, we can keep looking through our fathers’ telescopes, hoping that one day, our question will be answered.

REFLECTOR RAMBLERS

Daytime TV for Gen Z

Zafir Nagji

Sports Editor



Kai Cenat's Mafiathon 2 stream attracted 50 million viewers. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@kaicentat

On Nov. 1, 2024, famous Twitch streamer Kai Cenat set out on a mission to set the platform's subscription record. With the previous record set at 326,252 subscribers by IronMouse, Cenat vowed to stream for the entire month and took the record 30 consecutive days of streaming

later. By Nov. 30, 2024, Cenat had amassed a peak of 728,535 subscribers, more than double IronMouse's total count.

Titled Mafiathon 2, Cenat's stream featured a variety of A-list guests and absurd activities, all within his new \$55 million USD mansion

in California. Athletes like Serena Williams, Kyrie Irving and Andre Iguodala made appearances on the stream, as did popular video game voice actor Shawn Darnell Fonteno, who played Franklin from Grand Theft Auto V. Snoop Dogg, Miranda Cosgrove, Kodak Black, GloRilla, Quavo, and the cast from Good Luck Charlie were also featured on the stream, as many other people of interest were.

As for absurd activities, Cenat's stream featured groovy dance parties, live music performances, a fake wedding, and many other attention-grabbing activities. While Cenat slept, the stream carried on with creator NPC Miles Morales reading Twitch donations and interacting with viewers.

While Mafiathon 2 was interesting on its own, the 30-day stream was indicative of something much larger: streaming has taken over the internet. According to a Statista report, 28.3 per cent of internet users reported watching a live stream weekly

in 2023, the highest number since the pandemic. During Q2 of 2024, 8.5 billion hours of live stream content was being consumed and on average, 43 years' worth of live stream content is watched every minute.

Streaming was once almost exclusively used for content within the gaming space, but it has now become the main form of created content consumed by Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

According to a Statista survey, 42.8 per cent of Gen Z social media users reported watching live streams, whereas 40 per cent of US adults aged 55 plus say they've never watched a live stream and 17 per cent of those aged 34-54 reported similarly.

Video game streaming is still extremely popular, but many streams, like Mafiathon 2, are known as IRL (in real life) streams; in these, creators interact more with their viewers, carry out specific activities, interview persons of interest, and/or walk in public while recording themselves.

The authenticity and variety that streaming presents, with content being filmed live and unfiltered, have shifted the market wholesale and have become for Gen Z what daytime TV was for older generations.

Instead of watching a television show while studying, eating, or doing other activities, the modern young internet user chooses to watch their favourite "comfort streamer" and even donates money to the streamer as a method of interacting with them.

If you haven't already, head to any streaming platform on the internet and find a comfort streamer of your own. Twitch is the most popular live streaming platform with a 60.3 per cent market share, but YouTube, Kick, Rumble, and even Facebook have gotten involved in the streaming space as well.

With an estimated 12.3 million (and counting) active live streamers across all platforms, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Horsin' around: the history of skijoring

Brennen French

Staff Writer

You may be asking: What is skijoring? Is that a real word?

Well, I recommend you tighten your saddle as we set on a wild ride.

The history

The sport of skijoring joins two very different sports, skiing and equestrian riding, to create a wild almost dogsledding-like sport filled with thrills, spills, and lots of chills. Skijoring is defined by the International Olympic Committee as a sport in which competitors wear skis and clutch reins attached to a wooden harness fitted onto one or more horses, ponies or dogs, originating from Scandinavia. The name itself is derivative of a Norwegian word meaning "ski driving."

The appeal for many spectators is the high speeds and maneuverability that are required by both parties (on horseback and skis) to avoid obstacles and compete in races depending on the event.

In 1928, the Olympics introduced it as an exhibition sport at St. Moritz in Switzerland where teams

competed against each other while being pulled across a frozen lake.

Although skijoring never became televised or stayed in the Olympics, the world was opened up to this beautiful display of fun and bond between rider, horse, and skier.

Modern day

Do not fret—this display of sport and competition has become very popular as a winter sport/activity around the world. Just approximately 145 kilometres west of Calgary, Banff National Park hosts a snow festival called SnowDays, which holds all kinds of winter fun.

At this festival, there are many things to see and do while exploring the beautiful town of Banff, and the main attraction is the free public display of local skijoring talent on the main street that runs from Jan. 18-19 at 2-3:15 p.m. (event is subject to changes if needed).

The track is set up with bleachers and wheelchair-accessible ramps for everyone

to watch. Spectators are allowed along the barricades which safely contain the event and give everyone an opportunity for the best seats/standing room in the house.

Along the entire street, there are lots of venues to sit inside and grab a beverage and food to watch while in the warmth sheltered from the elements. Given that this event is outside in the breathtaking Rocky Mountains of Alberta, spectators are advised to dress warmly as the weather can be unpredictable.

All things considered, the safety of everyone is the highest priority of the competitors and the staff of Banff SnowDays event to ensure everyone has an excellent experience.

Please feel free to speak with the riders after they are done competing if you would like to see some of the beautiful horses that love to compete in the spotlight.

Cameras are more than welcome and even encouraged to share the beautiful scenery and atmosphere that comes with the SnowDays Skijoring

event.

Other activities

While attending the festival there are many other attractions, such as people ice sculpting, performing different talents at specific venues, and a public ice skating rink.

All events at the SnowDays festival are free to check out.

Home to Banff National Park is some of the best world-

class skiing and snowboarding which makes the trek very worthwhile. For those who are not interested in skiing or snowboarding, hills such as Norquay or Lake Louise have inflatable tube sled parks for safe family fun at a much more affordable cost.

The winter activities that take place in Banff are truly a real demonstration of what it means to be Canadian.



Skijoring in action at the 2023. Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

From baking prodigy to burnout: Recovering from an amazing childhood

Hunter Pratt

Contributor

Growing up, if there was anything that I wanted to try I had an unlimited opportunity to do so. My mother, the most creative person I know, really pushed me to channel my creativity through crafting—but most notably—baking. I'm not sure exactly when the obsession started but I remember being 10 years-old with my fresh iPad Mini exploring YouTube and stumbling across a video on how to make French macarons. As soon as I saw the thumbnail I was immediately fascinated by these pink hamburger-looking desserts.

It wasn't long after watching that video that I decided to get groceries with my mom where I could handpick all the ingredients I needed to put these macarons together. I would wake up at 6 a.m. on Saturday eager to get started on these desserts, excited to see what would come from them. But anyone who bakes can attest to how difficult French macarons are to perfect.

So the first time I made the dessert, it didn't turn out at all like the YouTube video suggested. For some reason, that never deterred me from trying again, and again, and again, until I finally got it right.

I'll never forget the sound of the KitchenAid whisking egg whites for hours on end, likely causing a massive headache for my family. Nevertheless, I was having so much fun creating and trying different flavours to present to my classmates and family.

This obsession with perfecting my macaron recipe quickly escalated into me baking any pastry my YouTube feed would suggest. From eclairs to danishes I had already taken this baking hobby way past the realm of the chocolate chip cookie. Every day, I would get home from school and go straight to the kitchen where I would try a new recipe to impress my family with. (Sidenote:



A once beloved passion for baking came to an end when age and burnout took over.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

when I say I was a chubby kid growing up, this is why.) Anyway, it was when I began cake decorating that I really started to gain traction for my baking hobby.

Any chance I got, I would bake a cake for any celebration in my community and I started to get paid for doing so.

It was the summer of 2014 when my mom asked me if I wanted to start selling my baking at farmer's markets. Of course, I couldn't say no to any opportunity to share my creations. Thus, began the start of the best three summers I've ever had.

My mom knew I couldn't do all of the baking alone, so we asked my neighbour, Rikki, an extremely shy and polite girl from the grade above me.

I heard rumours that she liked to bake as much as me so we got along fairly quickly over the shared passion and found shared interests in Gilmore Girls and RuPaul's Drag Race.

I'll never forget the first

time she came over to have our first official 'business meeting.' Seeing her walk up the driveway, notebook in hand, she didn't know it, but I was just as scared as she was to start this venture.

The first time we ever baked together, she quickly took her veil of shyness down as soon as I dropped a whole carton of eggs on the floor and we laughed while cleaning it up trying to get the shells off the floor before my mom would see and get mad at us.

We made a single batch of cookies the first time, sat down on the couch and praised ourselves for what we thought was hard work. To say we were humbled is an understatement, as the amount of product we actually had to bake led to some very long days in the +30 heat baking in a kitchen with no A/C. We called ourselves Sweet Treats By Hunter and Rikki.

Once you start selling at farmers markets, you learn pretty quickly about

how to deal with people (maybe that's why I'm in communications). Through our experiences at these markets, we gained a lot of supporters and customers who loved what we were selling. On the other hand, we also got the odd sexist comment on how we would make great future wives because we could bake. How weird for a little kid to get comments like that.

In the three summers of doing these markets, I didn't know it, but my biggest enemy was puberty. When you start doing markets at 11 years old, everyone wants to support you because they think you are the cutest little button, but as soon as you grow a foot and learn how to put on makeup, those same customers that bought from you the summer before now see you in a different light. Soon, my fun little hobby would turn into something a bit more serious than fourteen-year-old me was ready for.

I'm not sure if it was the high demand of sales or because I got boobs, but I suddenly became disinterested in this high volume, high sugar route I was going down. I had changed from spending all of my time perfecting my tiramisu recipe to memorizing Twenty One Pilots lyrics.

It was clear my priorities had changed. Eventually, I got tired of being asked to take cake orders and Sweet Treats By Hunter And Rikki fizzled out.

Sometimes I get sad looking back at who I was when I was doing this all, but I have to remind myself that I was just a kid with a hyperfixation. As kids, we all go through phases we eventually grow out of, mine just happened to include a plethora of recipes and extravagant treats that I was adept at.

As I was well known for this hobby, my extended family would ask me for years if I had baked anything lately, when in reality, I hadn't touched a baking bowl in years.

Although there was a lot of pressure to continue my baking venture, I compare it to any baking recipe done correctly; in order to become the most evolved version of yourself, you must be able to rise under the heat of people's perceptions of you.

To some, I will still be known as the child baking prodigy (I like to coin this term). Nowadays, I am a go-to expert whenever my mom or my sisters have a question that is baking-related.

I still remember all of the terms, all of the pastries, all of the ups and downs when I messed up a recipe but most importantly, I remember the smiles on people's faces when I'd bring them something I made, that was the best part. Nowadays, whenever I see one of those pink hamburgers I am reminded of who I once was, a curious and always ambitious little girl.

Those were the days that shaped who I am.

YOUR STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION



WYCKED BEACH Party
Tropic like it's hot

samru  students' association of mount royal university

THURSDAY JANUARY 30
WYCKHAM HOUSE
DOORS 8 PM

samru.ca/events
18+ gov-issued photo ID required for bar service.
Don't drink and drive.



mobile grocery store

samru  students' association of mount royal university

fresh routes

samru.ca/FoodSupport

Buy fresh, low-cost produce on campus!

🕒 Thursdays, 11 am - 1 pm*

📍 Wyckham House Main Floor

*No markets during Reading Break, exams, or holidays.

Bring your own bag!



HUNGRY?

Wyckham House Food Court
MRU West Gate

SUBWAY **DQ Grill & Chill**

WORLD KOREAN GRILL **cultures.**

MR SOUVLAKI **Thai express**

Booster Juice **edo japan**

Mucho burrito **ZEN VIETNAMESE GRILL**

Chatime **INS**

Fashion forecast

Building the perfect winter wardrobe

Daria Orth

Staff Writer

The appeal to lounge around in sweatpants and hoodies during the cold season is hard to deny. Dressing in style throughout winter can feel like there are limited options to work with in order to stay warm. However, that doesn't mean it's impossible to dress cute and cozy at the same time.

As seen on various social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram, there are many classy trends to fend off the chills in style.

The boots

A winter classic you can't go wrong with are Ugg boots, being both chic and comfortable while keeping it casual. The brand has men's and women's shoes, but they are especially trendy with the ladies. Recently the Bailey Bow boots, TerreTrail Cozy Lace boots, and Classic Mini TrailGazer boots have become quite popular. For a more affordable alternative, Marshalls has a large selection of shoes including dupes for Uggs that will stay in shape for a good portion of the season.

Outer shell layers

The puffer winter coats are perfect for a modern look, but if the old-money aesthetic calls to you, winter trench coats are the way to go. For women's clothes, you can find both of these styles at Aritzia and Zara. For men's clothes, fleece-lined leather jackets and winter trench coats have been trending online, and Simons has great options. If you're an online shopper, Amazon also has

great winter coats perfect for your Instagram feed.

Additionally, faux fur coats seem to be a main attraction in the world of winter styles. They hold a timeless, expensive look that's difficult to ignore. With the softness of the fur and the confidence it projects, these coats set the stage for a catwalk in the snow.

What about skirts and dresses?

Fleece-lined leggings, another item to add to your Amazon cart, are the solution to wearing dresses in the winter safely while keeping it cute. There are different nude shades that mimic skin tones, giving the illusion of bare legs under skirts. Others resemble regular sheer black tights over a nude base, and this way you can wear your mini skirts without freezing the moment you step outside. These are a game changer for those who want to serve ultra-feminine.

Another item to add to your winter wardrobe are sweater dresses, which have been trending a lot coming into the new year. Short sweater dresses with frilly skirts that cinch around the waist have been appearing continuously on social media, leaving pencil skirt sweater dresses in the past—for now.

Pant options

Baggy cargo pants and oversized sweaters seem to be becoming more and more apparent in outfit-of-the-day videos you see online. In a lot of women's fashion, of course, there's



The popular multipurpose boot, The Ugg Australia Mini Bailey Bow II boots. Photo courtesy of SPERA

the regular flared jeans and off-the-shoulder tight-fitting sweaters, that give a daintier and soft feminine look. A sophisticated fashion trend that has come up a lot this winter is dress pants and tucked-in sweaters, topped off with belts and trench coats—coming back to the old-school elegance of the 80s.

Accessories

Scarves never really went out of style. If anything, they are being worn more. There seems to be more of a desire for scarves to tuck into jackets or be used like cardigans, beyond its purpose of giving you an extra layer of warmth from biting winter breezes.

Earmuffs are also in style, to the point where more than a few female content creators on TikTok and Pinterest are wearing earmuffs over traditional hats. Earmuffs give the opportunity for hair to be styled more easily and put on display beneath the cushioned pillows that protect your ears. Serving a preppy look, earmuffs substitute a regular headband for something a little more extra.

Flared leg warmers, common in fall fashion, are a charming way to enhance an outfit. They are usually worn with a sweater dress or skirt and layer beautifully over some simple boots.

Leg warmers and scarves

are easy to find at thrift stores like Value Village, Goodwill and even consignment stores for a heavier price. So, winter fashion isn't as difficult to work around as some might think.

While there is always the option of keeping it simple with a hoodie and some jeans, there are always loopholes to be fashionable in the coldest times of the year. Like most forms of art, fashion is subjective, but these 2024-2025 winter trends will definitely be making an appearance in my wardrobe.

Fashion trends are fleeting, so you might as well enjoy these ones while they are still in style.

OUT'N ABOUT

Develled Legs Drag Brunch

On Sunday, Jan. 19, The Attic Bar & Stage hosts a drag brunch with popular drag queen Carly York Jones. Enjoy cheap mimosas, plant-based options, and rowdy entertainment. Doors open at 10:45 a.m., and the event begins at noon. Tickets start at \$20 on Eventbrite.

The Barn Artisan Market

The Barn Artisan Market returns on Jan. 26 for their first market of the new year. From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., The Shawnessy Barn will transform into a two-floor stop for handmade jewelry, baked goods, and everything in between. The event is suitable for all ages and has free parking and admission.

Job hunting

Career Fair Canada is bringing back the Calgary Career Fair and Training Expo on Jan. 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. With a wide range of employers, this event helps those seeking employment to gain exposure, make connections, and find opportunities. Located at the BMO Centre, the expo requires guests to RSVP to attend this free event. RSVP on their website.

Mac and Cheese galore

Calgary is hosting its first-ever Mac and Cheese Festival from Jan. 19 to 31. Restaurants compete for the title of "Calgary's Best Mac and Cheese," and it's all based on guests' votes. Visit the Mac and Cheese Festival website for a list of competing restaurants and to vote. Voters can also enter to win a \$100 Springbank Cheese gift card.

Unwind this winter with campus events and activities

Rylie Perry

Staff Writer



Campus social events, such as Tuesday Trivia held at West Gate Social, are a fun and casual way for students to get together. Photo by Bella Coco

The winter semester has begun and many of us are recovering from fall semester burnout. While January does not bring the same kind of back-to-school buzz as September, there is no reason you shouldn't enjoy the winter semester all the same.

With the help of the Student's Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) and Cougars Athletics, the MRU campus hosts student-led clubs, initiatives, events and athletics dedicated to enhancing the university experience.

Fortunately for us, MRU is home to a slew of events to spark connection and campus-pride in these cold months.

Campus events and extracurriculars allow students to contribute to the university community in a meaningful and impactful way. To continue to make these opportunities possible, MRU is reliant on student engagement and participation.

It is through student involvement that every student is guaranteed

access to information and opportunities regarding an extracurricular that interests them.

Therefore, it is essential to support MRU, SAMRU, and Cougars Athletics this winter semester and indulge in the packed schedule they have provided. Offering a full overview of upcoming events on each of their websites, there is no shortage of opportunities available to get involved.

Cougars Athletics

A celebration of sports and community in Calgary, the Crowchild Classic is set to return for its 11th year.

The Crowchild Classic marks the rivalry between the MRU Cougars and the University of Calgary Dinos in all regular season Canada West games, which includes basketball, hockey, soccer and volleyball.

Among receiving bragging rights for the year, the winner of the Crowchild Classic is awarded a medal in the form of a City of Calgary manhole cover.

The hockey doubleheader

is the biggest game of the season, with students from both universities packing the Saddledome in blue and red, thanks to the support of the Calgary Flames Foundation.

It should be noted that the Scotiabank Saddledome is a cashless venue, and parking is available at cost with public transit available as an alternative.

Puck drop is at 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 31 with tickets available online only. All proceeds go towards campus initiatives and athletics.

Alongside this highly-anticipated event, the Cougars also have a full line-up of volleyball, basketball and hockey games for students to attend this semester.

SAMRU

Back for another year, is the Wycked Beach Party.

Since its inaugural debut, the Wycked Beach Party encourages students to celebrate the start of the semester with lively DJs and a tropical theme that is sure to melt the snow.

While this is an all-ages

event, students that are 18+ and would like to be served alcohol must bring one piece of government-issued I.D. Alcohol will be served by West Gate Social.

The party is free to attend and will transform Wyckham House from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Jan. 30.

West Gate Social

Looking to unwind between classes or grab a drink at the end of a long school day? West Gate Social has students covered this semester with weekly events and activities.

Starting off the week is Trivia Tuesday, which includes prizes for each round and a new theme every week. Upcoming themes include Marvel, Disney and Pixar, Calgary Flames, Retro gaming, and more.

Trivia is hosted from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., making it the perfect pick-me-up between classes. It is free to attend but a mobile device is needed to participate.

In collaboration with MRU Residence, West Gate Social is also hosting Karaoke Night every month.

Free to attend and open to students not in residence, Karaoke Night is the perfect opportunity to take the stage with a group of friends and relax after a long day.

Karaoke is from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month with the only requirement being to bring your favourite song.

Clubs

Student-led clubs and initiatives are a pillar of the university experience.

Clubs are a unique and diverse way to pursue an interest, whether it is academic, social, representational, or cultural, as well as meet new people and develop new skills.

The MRU Ski Club encourages students to embrace the winter weather and enjoy the mountains with a community of fellow ski and board enthusiasts.

They organize and run events around the Calgary area which includes single and multi-day trips. Any skill level is welcome, and financial contributions are necessary for certain activities.

The MRU Ski Club can be easily contacted through the club's directory on the SAMRU website. They can also be found at the Clubs Expo on Jan. 21 and 22 in Wyckham House from 10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The MRU book club—A Novel Bunch—encourages students to embrace the cold weather by cozying up with a good book.

The book club meets for weekly discussions based on books voted on by club members. They hope to reignite a love of recreational reading and create a friendly community of inclusive conversation.

They can be contacted through the clubs directory on the SAMRU website and found at the Clubs Expo alongside the Ski Club.

When students are committed to getting involved, there is no shortage of events and activities available at MRU. Whether it is athletics, events, or student-led initiatives, there is something for everyone this winter semester.

Woman of the Hour

review

This review contains spoilers about the film 'Woman of the Hour.' Some content may be disturbing and include themes of violence and crime. Reader discretion is advised

Mia Smith
Staff Writer

The Netflix premiere of *Woman of the Hour* has just arrived, so true crime fans, get ready because I was completely blown away with Anna Kendrick's 2023 directorial debut.

The movie sheds much-needed light on systemic sexism and violence against women by following the stories of numerous victims of American serial killer, Rodney Alcala, in the 1970s.

Rodney Alcala was an American serial killer who was convicted for killing and sexually assaulting seven women. Investigators say the actual number may never be known, but estimate it could be as high as 130. The movie follows the true story of Alcala participating as a contestant on a popular 1978 dating TV show, which led him to be nicknamed the Dating Game Killer.

Bouncing between various victims' storylines, the film's split narrative heightens the feeling of danger and uncertainty that Kendrick intended to convey for this subject.

Kendrick's directional decisions created a stark environment that helped this movie stand out among other true crime thrillers. Her decisions as a filmmaker, from the choice of actors to the absence of background music, produce the ideal ambiance for viewers to respect the victims and view the movie with the appropriate sense of gravity.

The choice of Daniel Zovatto to play the vicious Rodney Alcala is brilliant. Too many times in recent years we have seen either highly known or stereotypically good-looking actors playing these sickening killers. Hollywood casting their hottest actors to depict criminals often leads fans to romanticize the killer, ultimately taking away from the experiences of victims and their families.

Take Zac Efron in the role of the infamous Ted Bundy in the 2019 *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile* as an example. Efron's A-list, High School Musical repertoire takes away from the raw intimidation that is Ted Bundy. He played a great role, but his family-friendly familiarity prohibited him from really encompassing the 'charming stranger, dangerous man' archetype.

Kendrick, however, choosing Zovatto was a home run. Having starred in popular horror films like *It Follows* and *Don't Breathe*, Zovatto is no stranger to playing unappealing roles and is not often seen on billboards. I would like to note, also, that Zovatto and the makeup team did a fantastic job making the character downright creepy.

Many times while watching him on screen, I would feel my bones chill and arm hairs raise as he stared into the camera, allowing all of us at home to feel the sense of predatory yearning that his countless victims did. This made for an on-edge feeling throughout the duration of the film. A few times I had to check myself because I was white-knuckling the ends of the sofa.

Nightmare worthy performance

Though this film is a depiction of the real-life events of Alcala's murder spree throughout the '70s, all of the victims, dialogue, and storylines are imagined. Because Alcala preyed on young women and children, as young as 12-years-old, airing these horrors on screen may be considered disrespectful to the families.

There is a pivotal victim, played by young actress Autumn Best, who is the 'runaway' in the film and an essential character in the story.

In the film, she is the one who escapes and ends Alcala's reign of terror.

Best's performance truly shook me. Her acting was spine-chilling and gave an inside look into what the victim was feeling in that moment.

"It's amazing how one selfish asshole can fuck up your entire life," says Best in as her character, Amy, speaks to Alcala about how both of their fathers abandoned them at a young age.

This foreshadowing Best portrays is exactly why you fall in love with her character, Amy. While watching, it is evident that the fiery victim comes from a rough background which is why she is no stranger to sticking up for herself.

The horrific tale of Alcala and his crimes is effectively concluded at the end of the movie when Amy's character escapes from him and alerts the police, resulting in his capture and a sentence of 25 years to life in jail. In real life, the story of Alcala's arrest has a few differences but the movie's storyline of runaway Amy acting embarrassed about her attack, making it seem as though it was consensual and manipulating him into sparing her life is accurate.

Giving victims more than just a name

Kendrick, who plays Sheryl Bradshaw, uses Bradshaw to show the aspects a lot of viewers overlook when looking at true crime, giving a genuine persona to the victims at hand.

While witnessing the tragic fates of Alcala's victims, the film also follows Bradshaw throughout, as we witness her hardships and daily activities prior to Alcala's entrance in her life while on the popular

Continues on Pg. 12



Trill Bill
Kodak Black
Vulture Love/
Capitol Records -
UMG Recordings
Score: C-

South Florida rapper Kodak Black released *Trill Bill* on Nov. 29, marking his second post-incarceration album.

His music often mirrors his current headspace, with his prime being the untouchable-attitude in *Project Baby 2* and *Dying to Live*.

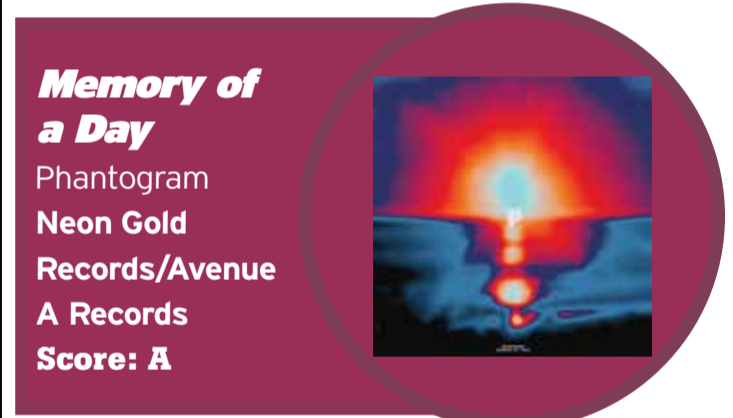
His latest release, *Trill Bill*, is unremarkable, and presumably indicative of a man with broken confidence. Bringing back the energy from hit songs like "Super Gremlin" and "Roll in Peace," listeners hear Black's attempt to reconnect with his drill roots. Though he carries unique vocals and flow through each of his tracks, Black arguably misses the mark when it comes to lyricism. The song "Cyber Truck" stands out in regard to messy lyrics, with Black rapping, "Got a toilet in the trunk of a Cyber Truck, get too close I'm dumping."

Black is one of those artists that is either loved or hated, and I am one of the fans who respects his distinctive and powerful sound.

When Black takes his music seriously, he transcends a musical line which combines wit, flow, and strength. Unfortunately, it does not sound like much of this album was taken seriously by him.

The album is worth a listen, but it won't be finding its way into my rap rotation.

— Emma Marshall



Memory of a Day
Phantogram
Neon Gold
Records/Avenue
A Records
Score: A

Phantogram, the new wave alternative duo, released their latest album, *Memory of a Day*, on Oct. 18. Having been on the map for over ten years, they are known for their electro-pop hits like "Black out Days" and "When I'm Small."

The song "Attaway" crept its way onto the artists' top songs. With a catchy chorus and beautiful vocals, this song combines everything good with 2010 alternative rock and today's electronic music. It seems to follow a wave, bringing listeners up and down alongside the melody. The album's other two hit songs, "It Wasn't Meant to Be" and "Come Alive" are distinctive in their own way. The first emulates a bouncy summertime vibe, with an energetic and fast-paced melody.

The other is best described as darkwave - think Daft Punk meets The Weeknd.

The album is not without its weaknesses. Though the

shortcomings are far and few between, some of the tracks could definitely give me a headache. Specifically "Feeling Invisible" and "Running Through Colours" fell short for me.

Both songs feel like byproducts of "It Wasn't Meant to Be," and they don't quite live up to the expectations set.

Overall, Phantogram has done an outstanding job at maintaining relevance and adapting with the times.

The duo even remixed "Black Ice," an electronic collaboration between two of today's hottest DJs - Rezz and Subtronics.

Whether it's a night drive with the windows down, or the melodramatic walk to your 8 a.m. classes, this album can be enjoyed in many different ways and that is what makes it so special.

— Emma Marshall

Continued from Pg. 11

1970s television series “The Dating Game.” This portrayal gives Bradshaw a compelling sense of humanity, serving to humanize not only her but all of Alcalá’s victims. It delivers a powerful message to viewers, urging them to reflect deeply on the gravity of such serious topics.

The film delves into the toxic, exploitative relationships many women had with the entertainment industry, highlighting how societal structures repeatedly failed to protect them. These systemic failures created opportunities for predators like Alcalá to exploit women in even more insidious ways.

“Which one of you will hurt me?” asks Denalda Williams, portraying Marilyn, a makeup artist on “The Dating Game.”

This brief but poignant line captures the film’s central theme. It underscores the grim reality that women often make choices based not on their desires, but on their best chance of survival—a deeply unsettling truth the film forces viewers to confront.

Although I would like to hope that things have improved for women since the 1970s, I don’t think that’s the case. Even though times have



Tony Hale (left), Anna Kendrick (middle), and Daniel Zovatto (right) all star in *Woman of the Hour*, pictured above in a scene from the reimagined “Dating Game.” Photo Courtesy of VVS Films

shifted, there will always be men like Alcalá. It is on us as women to raise awareness for the victims who have suffered and continue to suffer at the hands of predators.

A chilling line that Zovatto delivers in the movie while in character on “The Dating Game” is, “I always get the girl,” to his fellow contestant. What this does is subtly foreshadow and set the tone for his sinister intentions with Kendrick’s

character, Sheryl Bradshaw. After the game show comes to an end, Bradshaw is asked to pick her date from the three contestants on the other side of the curtain.

At this point, we as an audience know all of the heinous acts Alcalá has committed and since we’ve followed Bradshaw’s storyline, we’ve grown a connection to her character. Bradshaw chooses Alcalá as the “lucky

contestant” and they end up going for drinks after the production wraps up. Immediately, Bradshaw starts picking up on red flags and tries to escape the situation, invoking a sense of anxiety and suspense. She ultimately manages to get to her car and flee, but this leaves both Bradshaw and the audience with a terrifying sense of “what-if?”

Kendrick donated all of

her earnings from the film to two charities supporting survivors. She stated in a press interview that she would have felt ‘gross’ profiting from such a topic. This action as a first-time director is empowering and even more of a reason to watch the movie.

Overall, this film is a must-see. When you hit play on this one, though, be ready for a stressful and heavily intense ride.

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Coming of age in the AHL

How a young Flames prospect is adjusting to life as a pro

Truman Bartman

Staff Writer

At the midway point of Samuel Honzek's first season in the American Hockey League (AHL) with the Calgary Wranglers organization, his potential is beginning to shine through. The power winger, who has already had a two-game taste of the NHL, looks to leave his mark with the Wranglers this year and hopefully with the Calgary Flames whenever the opportunity presents itself. At just 20-years-old, Honzek is just starting to discover what life as a full-time professional hockey player is like.

"It all started this year," Honzek said. "I got into a couple of NHL games to start the season. It's definitely a lot harder and way quicker than Junior. Guys are always right on you and you don't have that much space. You have to be quick and be aware of what's around you at all times. I always try to stay focused and that has helped me a lot in my game."

Playing for the Wranglers has been an adjustment for Honzek. Nevertheless, he is finding ways to stand out and make his impact felt every shift. His 6'4 frame has allowed him to use his stature to his advantage and play with a physical presence.

"Using my size has helped me a lot. That's one of the reasons I got drafted so high was because I have good size, I'm tall and I can skate well," Honzek said. "That can help me become an NHL player and develop through to the top level, but I also want to do everything more consistently, that's the main thing."

Building competitive stamina and finding consistency within one's game begins when no one else is watching. Honzek's



Samuel Honzek, pictured, is projected to score 36 points in his first AHL season with the Calgary Wranglers.

Photo courtesy of Instagram/@honzo_29_

preparation takes place during the Wrangler's morning skates and off-day practices. His practice habits have been honed beginning with his time back home in Slovakia.

"I've been doing that for a long time because when I played pro as a Junior, in Slovakia, I was the youngest guy on the team," Honzek said. "All of the older guys were professionals already and I learned from them. So I would stay and work on the ice longer, and do extra. It became a thing for me, and I kind of enjoyed it."

Former Wranglers head coach, now turned Flames

assistant coach, Trent Cull had high praise for the young forward and appreciated Honzek's willingness to play in a variety of different roles. He emphasized how impressed he is with Honzek's skill set already, but also noted that he is still adding to his game.

"He's getting a lot thrown at him, that's for sure, so he's doing a really good job with it," Cull said. "He's a young guy. I've played him at center and we're trying to look at some different options for him and his growth. Whether that's playing him on the power play or playing on the penalty kill, he's getting a lot

of minutes. He's doing a good job with it all."

However, Cull emphasized the importance of balancing Honzek's workload to maximize his development without compromising his health and longevity in the sport.

"I just have to make sure I'm not giving too many minutes. When he's on, he's a dynamic guy. But he's still learning how to check and play away from the puck. Overall, I've been really happy with his growth."

As Honzek heads into the second half of his inaugural season with the Calgary Wranglers, he recognizes

there is still lots of work ahead before he reaches his ultimate goal of becoming a full-time NHL-er. However, he is appreciative of the organization's belief in him and the opportunities that they have provided him this far into his career.

"I'm thankful for everything that this organization has given me," Honzek said. "They have continued to believe in me and I am thankful for that. Their belief in me makes me want to fulfill their expectations of me."

For Honzek and the Flames organization, there is mutual belief that these expectations are becoming closer to reality.

#S

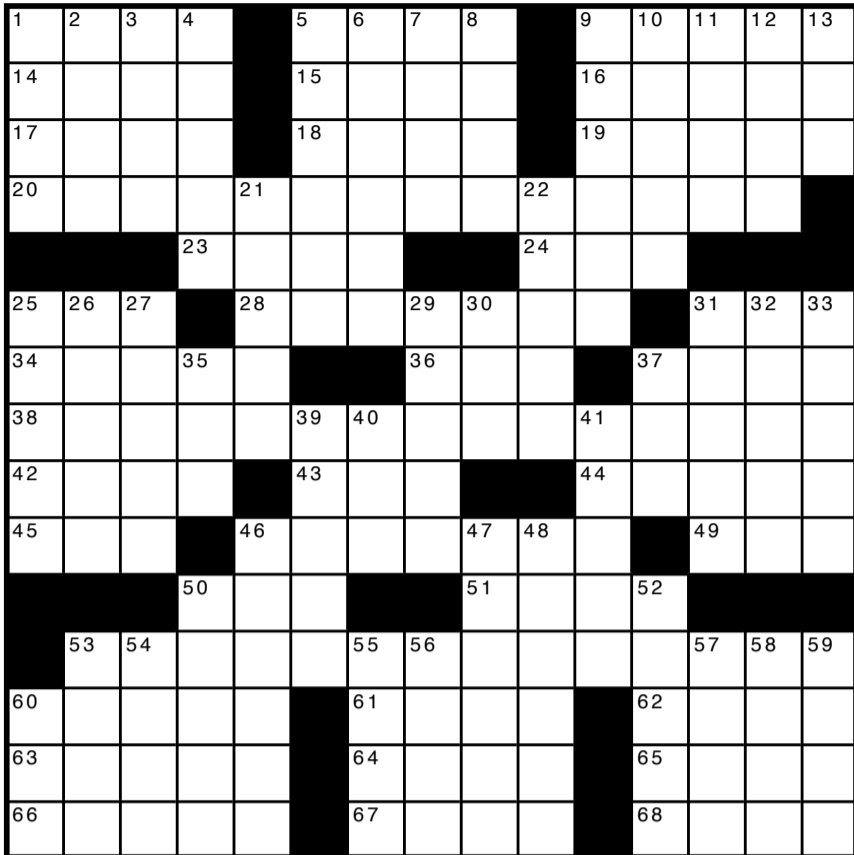
18 goals scored by Jonathan Huberdeau this season, the most he's scored in a season since joining the Calgary Flames

\$175M contract signed by Juan Soto, who left the Yankees to join the Mets this off-season

52 points scored by Keivonte Watts in the MRU Cougars' last two games against Saskatchewan

1883 fans attended the Cougars' Friday afternoon game against the Brandon Bobcats, a record-high

THE REFLECTOR CROSSWORD



- 28 Hell
 - 31 The middle of summer?
 - 34 Diarist Nin
 - 36 Composer Delibes
 - 37 Work with needles
 - 38 Rossini opera, with "The"
 - 42 Nettle
 - 43 ___-Wan Kenobi was a character in "Star Wars"
 - 44 Cockamamie
 - 45 Altar in the sky
 - 46 Starters
 - 49 Suffix with cloth
 - 50 Is for you?
 - 51 Nevada senator Harry
 - 53 Permeate
 - 60 Historian Durant
 - 61 Evangelist Roberts
 - 62 Asian inland sea
 - 63 Gather
 - 64 Prefix with present
 - 65 Hurler Hideo
 - 66 Waste maker
 - 67 Pour
 - 68 Singer Stefani
- 9 Body art
 - 10 Capital of South Korea
 - 11 Lab culture
 - 12 Get up
 - 13 Concorde, e.g.
 - 21 Poker play
 - 22 Paddled boat
 - 25 Native Israeli
 - 26 Broadcasting
 - 27 "Our Gang" girl
 - 29 Pixyish
 - 30 Legal thing
 - 31 Zhou ___
 - 32 Pooh's creator
 - 33 Point in the desired direction
 - 35 When Will ___ Loved?
 - 37 Reunion attendees
 - 39 Rodeo performer
 - 40 UK honor
 - 41 Be a guest
 - 46 Threatening words
 - 47 Verdi title bandit
 - 48 Land, as a fish
 - 50 Bikini blast
 - 52 Sturm und ___
 - 53 Cookbook writer Rombauer
 - 54 Long and Peeples
 - 55 Wanting
 - 56 Ms. Bombeck
 - 57 Lined up
 - 58 Domesticate
 - 59 North Carolina college
 - 60 Exclamation of relief

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com (<https://www.bestcrosswords.com>). Used with permission.

ACROSS

- 1 Cornerstone abbr.
- 5 Grasp
- 9 Autocratic Russian rulers
- 14 Grub
- 15 Corrida cheers
- 16 Sponsorship
- 17 Travel on
- 18 Mrs. Dithers, in "Blondie"
- 19 Raise a glass to
- 20 Foundation
- 23 Scott of "Charles in Charge"
- 24 Popular ISP
- 25 Turf

DOWN

- 1 Beige
 - 2 Leg part
 - 3 Sweeney ___
 - 4 Nerd
 - 5 Bell used to sound an alarm
 - 6 Many
 - 7 Actress Deborah
 - 8 Biblical birthright seller
- See answer grid at bottom of page*

WATCH THE COUGARS

WOMENS VOLLEYBALL

Next home game: MRU Cougars vs MacEwan University Griffins - Jan. 31 at 8 p.m.

MENS VOLLEYBALL

Next home game: MRU Cougars vs MacEwan University Griffins - Jan. 31 at 6 p.m.

WOMENS VOLLEYBALL

Next home game: MRU Cougars vs University of Calgary Dinos - Jan. 31 at 6 p.m.

MENS BASKETBALL

Next home game: MRU Cougars vs University of Calgary Dinos - Jan. 31 at 8 p.m.

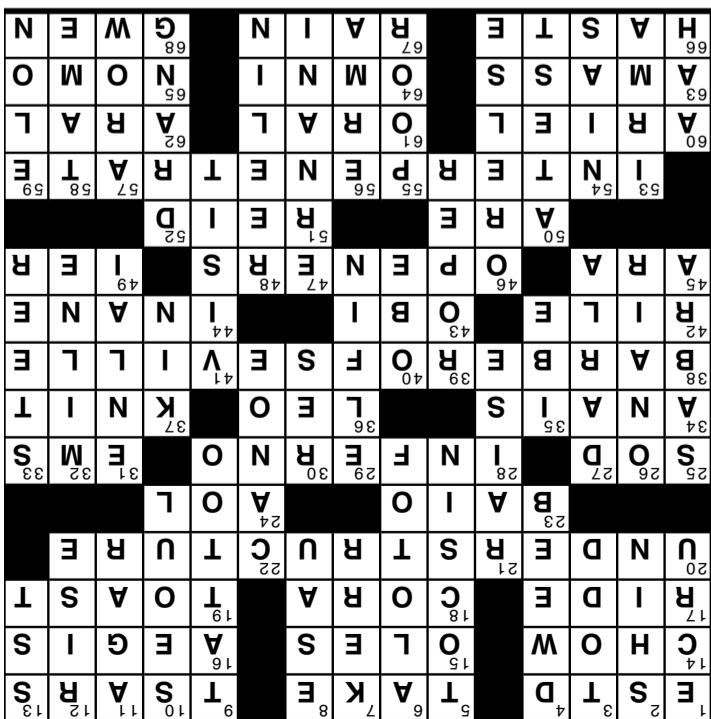
WOMENS HOCKEY

Next home game: MRU Cougars vs MacEwan University Griffins - Jan. 17 at 3:30 p.m.

MENS HOCKEY

Next home game: MRU Cougars vs MacEwan University Griffins - Jan. 17 at 7 p.m.

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Canada falls from grace in 2025 IIHF World Juniors

Naomi Campbell

Staff Writer

While the NHL took its annual winter break, hockey fans were treated to the annual IIHF World Junior Championship, beginning on Dec. 26th, 2024. Over the next nine days, 10 teams and over 200 players prepared to compete in one of the biggest tournaments of their careers. The tournament took place in Ottawa and lasted 11 days, with the final games being played on Jan. 5th, 2025. Over 200 NHL prospects and young professional players hailing from the USA, Canada, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Czechia, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Sweden, and Switzerland competed in this year's tournament in Ottawa, but only one nation came out on top.

Preliminary

The first six days of the tournament, known as the preliminary round, consisted of five teams in Group A (Canada, Finland, Germany, Latvia, USA), and five in Group B (Czechia, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland) playing the teams within their respective groups to determine rankings.

Day one started out with four games, with Canada beating Finland 4-0, Czechia winning 5-1 against Switzerland, Slovakia falling short to Sweden 5-2, and the biggest game of them all with the United States dominating Germany 10-4.

These four games set the bar for the rest of the tournament, providing high-octane, competitive action on the ice. Over the six days of intense hockey, teams such as Czechia, Finland, USA, and Canada made their presence felt, while Sweden established themselves as early favourites as they posted a perfect 4-0 record through the first stage, beating Slovakia, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, and Czechia.

Quarterfinals/Relegation

As the preliminary round ended, the top four teams in each group were given two rest days before having to go head-to-head in the quarterfinals, where the consequence for losing

was elimination from the tournament. As the eight teams prepared for battle, knowing only the top four teams would advance, the games became increasingly intense. The bottom two teams would have to fight for their spot in next year's World Juniors, with the losing team being eliminated from the 2026 tournament. This is called the relegation game, which included Germany and Kazakhstan this year. Germany was once a consistent performer in the tournament, making this an unusual appearance for their squad.

Entering the match as heavy favourites, Germany came out on top, winning 4-3 and securing their spot in next year's tournament. In the quarterfinal matchups, Sweden knocked out Latvia 3-2, the USA defeated Switzerland 7-2 and Finland outshined Slovakia 5-3. Despite hosting the tournament, Canada could not capitalize on their home ice advantage, losing to Czechia in the quarterfinals for a second consecutive year in a close matchup ending 4-3.

Semifinals

Moving onto the semifinals, Finland and Sweden went head-to-head in an intensely fought game.

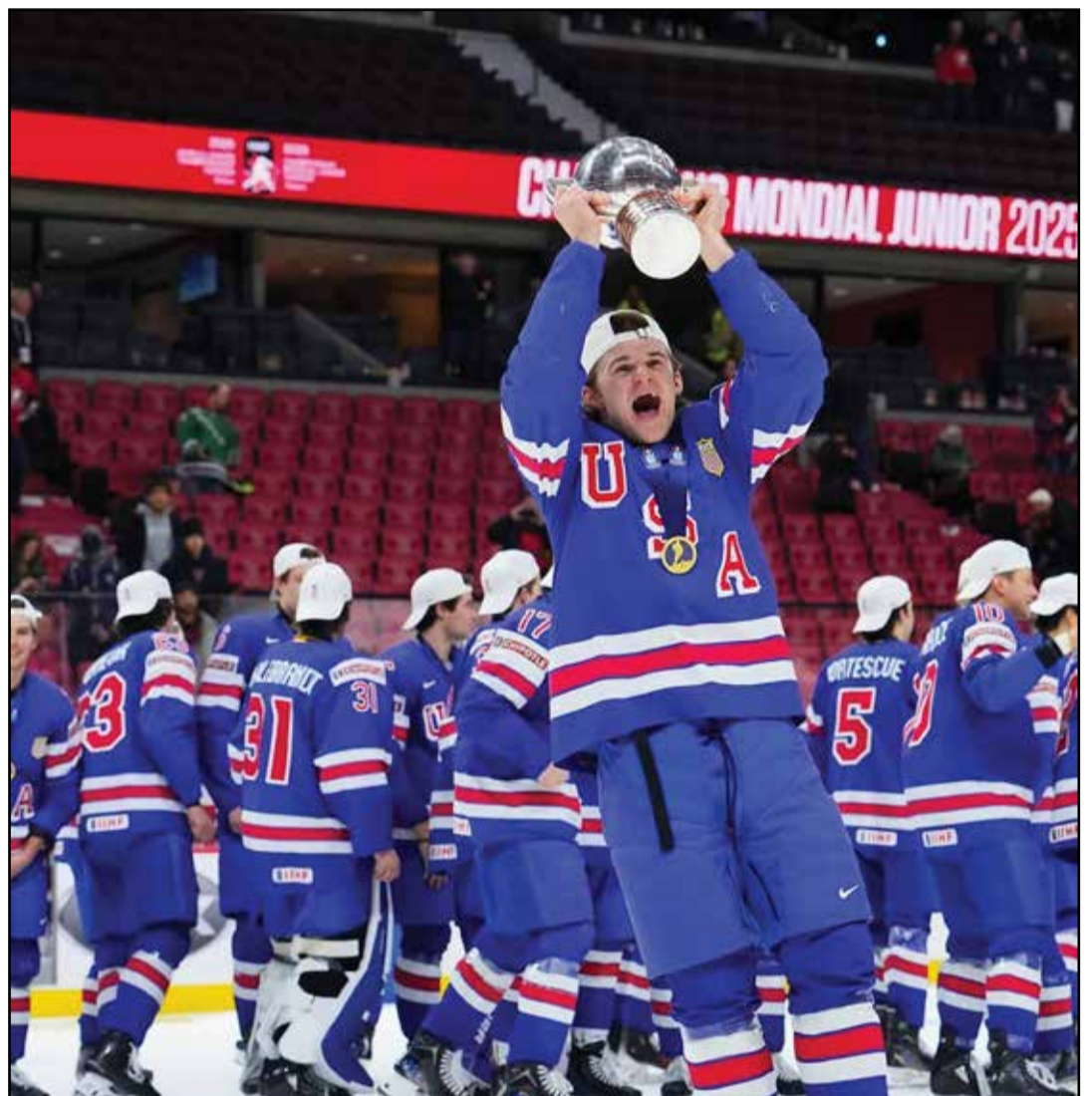
Sweden was the favourable team and despite trailing 3-2 after the second period, they came back in the third with a beautiful goal to tie it up and force the game into overtime.

However, the Finnish underdogs came out on top and won 4-3, setting them up to go for gold and forcing the Swedes to play for the bronze medal against the losing team in the match between Team USA and Czechia.

Despite knocking Canada out of the tournament, Czechia was blown off the ice by the American team.

The USA dominated the ice for the entire 60 minutes of play, allowing Czechia to score only one goal in the first period.

Team USA won 4-1, leading them one step closer to gold and dropping Czechia down to play for bronze.



USA team captain Ryan Leonard was named MVP at the 2025 IIHF World Juniors after racking up five goals and five assists for the tournament champions. Photo courtesy of Instagram/ @iihfhockey

Bronze/gold games

The final stage of the 2025 IIHF World Junior Ice Hockey Championship took place on Jan. 5th, 2025 and began with the bronze medal game between Czechia and Sweden. Having posted incredible performances throughout the tournament, both sides showed that they were not going to be defeated easily. After two hard-fought periods of play, the score was tied 2-2 going into the 3rd period. However, the final period of regulation was all about the goaltending as both netminders remained perfect, forcing the game into overtime.

Neither team found the back of the net in the extra period either, so the game advanced into a high-stakes shootout. As the stress levels reached a tournament high, Czechia kept their composure and came out on top, winning 3-2, and were awarded that

glorious bronze medal.

That set the standard for the gold-medal match between Finland and the USA extremely high, but luckily, the two sides put on a show in front of the Ottawa crowd. Starting out the gate, Finland led the game 2-1 with an unstoppable offence and strong defensive performance. In the second period, though, the Finns lost focus and allowed the US to tie up the game 3-3, conceding two goals but scoring one of their own.

The United States has always proved to be one of the toughest teams to beat, alongside Canada, and entered the tournament as a betting favourite, thanks to their lineup of powerful players. Still, they could not shake the Finnish team and as both teams left the third period scoreless, the game advanced into overtime.

Despite Finland's best efforts, though, Team USA rallied together and scored a clutch goal to win 4-3,

earning themselves the title of World Junior Champions and taking home their gold medals. Finland played tough and even though they came up short, they still managed to earn themselves silver medals and establish themselves as powerhouses in future tournaments.

Where Team Canada goes from here

Despite entering this year's tournament as favourites to win gold, Canada failed to medal in back-to-back IIHF World Juniors for the first time in their history. Canada struggled to score consistently in this year's tournament but remained a force thanks to their suffocating defence, which only allowed 11 goals. Notable absences from this year's roster such as Carter Yakemchuk, Beckett Sennecke, Michael Misa, and others may be the key in 2026 to re-establish Canada as a gold medal contender.

Cougars catchup: 2025

Which Cougars can create chaos in this year's Canada West playoffs?

Zafir Nagji

Sports Editor

Winter break has come and gone, and with the arrival of the new year comes the continuation of the U SPORTS basketball, volleyball and hockey seasons. So, as you return to your classes, catch up on where the MRU Cougars stand in their respective sports within Canada West.

Women's volleyball

Currently sitting at 5-5 and ranking eighth in the conference, MRU's women's volleyball team looks to qualify for this year's Canada West playoffs and advance past the first round for the first time since the 2022-23 season.

The Cougars retained most of their veteran talent from last season, like Mya Morgan, Bronwynn Davies-Neira, and Lexi Herrod. Plus, with contributions from new players like Grace Coulter and Awien Ngor, the team has a tangible energy about them every time they step on the court.

However, while the Cougars have found ways to beat other teams in tough matches, their biggest issue has been their error rate. Currently ranked third in the conference in total errors (212), MRU has proven to be their own worst enemy.

Still, with their ability to keep their energy levels high and compete in long matches, the Cougars will be a tough matchup against any team in the conference in this year's Canada West playoffs.

Men's volleyball

The Cougars men's volleyball team currently occupy the final playoff spot in the conference, sitting in 10th place with a 3-8 record. Canada West has proven to be a tough conference this year, with the top four teams losing a combined total of seven games.

Despite ranking sixth in total errors (178), the Cougars have stayed close in games thanks to their nuclear offence. With their daunting size on the front line, MRU ranks ninth in kills (401). Their height and length also helps on the defensive end, where they rank seventh in total blocks (76).

Overall, the Cougars have shown plenty of potential and promise, projecting to make



Whether on Kenyon Court or at Flames Community Arena, the MRU Cougars bring high-octane action to every game they play and are hoping to see more fans at games with playoffs just around the corner. Photos by Adrian Shellard (left, middle) and Ethan Bomhof (right)

a playoff push this season. Their chances against the upper echelon of Canada West are slim, but an appearance in the first round of this year's playoffs would provide valuable experience for their young core and prepare them for future championship runs.

Women's basketball

After being ranked eighth in the Canada West preseason coaches poll, the Cougars women's basketball team hold the second most wins in the conference and fifth best winning percentage in their division at 7-3.

The Cougars play at a torrid pace, leading the conference in field goal attempts per game (71.9) and scoring the fourth-most points per game (71.8). Their defence has also seen significant improvement, which head coach Robyn Fleckenstein stressed as a point of emphasis before the season started. The Cougars grab the second-most rebounds per game in the conference (47.5), rank third in steals per game (14.4) and block the fifth-most shots per game (3.4).

With their stellar play this season, the Cougars women's basketball team have the chance to make a serious splash in this year's Canada West playoffs. The universities of British Columbia, Regina and Alberta have all proven themselves as contenders

in the conference, but MRU brings their own offensive skill and defensive dominance to the hardwood and will be a tough out when the postseason rolls around.

Men's basketball

After starting their season with a four-game win streak, the MRU Cougars men's basketball team have posted a 2-4 record in their last six games. That being said, they still rank fifth in the Prairie Division with a 6-4 overall record, which would qualify them for this year's Canada West playoffs.

With athletic players like Keivonte Watts, the Cougars love to run in the open court and play with pace, averaging the third-most field goals per game in the conference (68.4). However, while the team excels in transition situations, new head coach Josh Mullen has yet to figure out how to maximize MRU's half-court offence. The Cougars rank 13th in three-pointers made per game (7.2) and shoot the 12th-best percentage from that range (30.9).

MRU will likely sneak into this year's Canada West playoffs as plucky underdogs, but without sharpening up their shooting abilities, the Cougars will struggle to beat the best teams in the conference. Their defence will become more impactful as the pace of play slows down in the postseason, but that

could be offset by a reduction in transition opportunities on offence. Still, keep an eye on MRU as a dark-horse contender to make an impact this postseason.

Women's hockey

The MRU Cougars women's hockey program has established itself as a contending force in the Canada West conference and nationally in U SPORTS rankings. Currently standing at second in Canada West and fourth in national rankings, MRU has posted a 13-2-3 record so far, only trailing UBC in their conference standings.

Cougars goaltender Kaitlyn Ross has arguably been the best netminder in U SPORTS this year, posting a 0.944 save percentage, good for fourth in the conference and sixth in the country. Ross is only allowing 1.21 goals per game, which is the third-best goals-against-average in the country. As a result of their stellar defence, the Cougars have the third fewest goals against in the conference, only having conceded 26 goals in 18 games. MRU's defence is supplemented by the second-most productive offence in the conference, which has scored 48 goals this season.

With their combination of suffocating defence, relentless offence, and near-flawless goaltending, the Cougars look like a clear contender to win their first Canada

West Women's Hockey Championship and their second U SPORTS gold medal.

Men's hockey

After consistently being eliminated from the Canada West playoffs in the second round and failing to qualify for the U SPORTS National Tournament in recent years, MRU has played with a chip on their shoulders all season long, tying with the University of Alberta Golden Bears for the best record in the conference at 14-4-0.

The Cougars' offence ranks third in the conference with 72 goals and leads Canada West in powerplay goals with 24. They also lead the conference in shorthanded goals, scoring four times in those situations. However, the MRU Cougars men's hockey team have had issues on the defensive end, conceding 50 goals in 18 games and ranking fifth in goals against. As a result, many of the Cougars' wins have come in dramatic, high-scoring affairs.

The Cougars' offence is lethal, but without improving their fatal flaws on defence, the team will remain on the outside looking in when it comes to this year's U SPORTS National Tournament in March.

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