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the puck  
drops:**



**The Crowchild  
Classic 2025  
(Pg. 16)**





## OPINION: Trudeau, adieu

*Prime minister resigns amid party revolt*

**Ryan Montgomery**

Staff Writer

Few events in recent political memory have been so anticipated and so long coming. Few events have had such unanimous support. Few events have united East and West, rich and poor, liberal and conservative. Few events have been like the resignation of Justin Trudeau.

Many years ago, when the economy was good, Obama was president and the summer was going to last forever, a young, charismatic, well-pedigreed liberal came onto the scene. Son of the illustrious Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the man who wrote the Charter and moulded modern Canada, Trudeau the younger was sure to usher in a new age of Canadian progressivism.

He campaigned on a whirl of new popular progressive ideas that had long been the darling of the Canadian left—marijuana legalization, sweeping electoral reform, improved pharmacare, and more government transparency.

The buzz and blur of these early Trudeau years can best be summed up by his smug retort to a journalist's question at a press conference as to why gender parity in his cabinet mattered: "Because it's 2015."

But alas, 2015 could not last forever. Over time, many of these illustrious promises began to be unceremoniously brought behind the barn and quietly done away with. Electoral reform and an elected senate were both ditched by the prime minister.

His credibility took its first of many large hits with the SNC Lavalin affair, in which the large Quebec construction company allegedly provided prostitutes and millions of dollars to the son of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in exchange for construction contracts.

Trudeau allegedly ordered his attorney general to interfere in the case on behalf of the company. Discoveries of multiple photos of Trudeau

sporting blackface killed any moral high ground he could have once claimed. Gradually the straws built up and the Liberal camel began to feel the weight mount.

Despite what your neighbour's F\*ck Trudeau bumper sticker will tell you, the Trudeau government did have several legislative wins throughout its reign—legalized cannabis, the championing of Indigenous reconciliation, the Canada Childcare Benefit, mild senate reform and a decisive response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately for the prime minister, the only of God's creatures more forgetful than the humble goldfish is the Canadian voter. Many, if not most, aspects of Canadian life began to slip under the Liberal's watch. Rising inflation and cost of living made every working man and woman his enemy. Ballooning housing prices earned him the ire of the young. A decaying armed forces won him the opposition of both our own military and that of our NATO allies.

After a decade of decline, you'll be hard-pressed to find a living person who will utter the accursed words: "I'm with Justin."

Trudeau faced a coterie of conservative leaders over his three elections. The old and battered Stephen Harper, the beige and boring Andrew Scheer, and the eminently forgettable Erin O'Toole.

Be honest, if I hadn't written his name, would you have remembered who it was?

After these three musketeers of conservative failure went by the wayside, Trudeau finally met his political match, one Pierre Poilievre.

Poilievre has seemingly based his political world around being the anti-Trudeau. Whereas Trudeau built his image on a wave of legislative promises doomed to be unfulfilled, Poilievre has largely avoided talking policy

in his campaign.

Where Trudeau was Canada's popular new golden child coming down from the ivory towers of the Laurentian elite, Poilievre has built his support among the populist movement of the trucker convoy and fringe thinkers like Jordan Peterson.

However, the most impactful way that he's made himself the opposite of Trudeau is in his popularity. While Trudeau seemed to be in a competition with himself to see how unpopular a prime minister could really become, Poilievre's approval among the public soared in the months after his becoming Conservative leader.

Both leaders sat around a 30 per cent approval rating until the summer of 2023, during which Poilievre began to rise and Trudeau began to fall. According to the CBC, in the three months between July and October 2023, Poilievre's probability of winning skyrocketed from just around 45 per cent to a staggering 99 per cent.

Discussions of popularity and unpopularity raise the question, who really likes politicians? Cockroaches? Satan and his legions? Pundits? My answer would be, probably no one. But rarely are politicians truly hated with the vitriol Trudeau elicited. What caused the meteoric decline of the man who was once Canada's Dauphin, the prince, the boy who would be king? The answer is: a lot.

The aforementioned broken electoral promises and political scandals were just the first shovelfuls of dirt out of the prime minister's grave. The final nails in the coffin were the many mounting calls for resignation from within his own party. First, it was just a few wayward MPs, no doubt unhappy with the many displeased calls to their offices from their constituents.

Then on Dec. 16, the ice cracked and the avalanche finally went sliding with the



**After being in office as prime minister since 2015, Justin Trudeau has stepped down as leader of the Liberal Party and as prime minister of Canada. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons**

resignation of Trudeau's right-hand woman and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. Freeland resigned after the Trudeau government's haphazard attempt at vote-buying with the holiday GST rebate. Freeland cited Trudeau's "political gimmicks which we can ill afford" as her reason for her resignation.

At this point for the prime minister, his conclusion was forgone and it seemed everyone in the country could see it but him. First came the Ontarians, with their Liberal Caucus calling for Trudeau's resignation on Dec. 21. Then the Atlantic Caucus came sailing in on Dec. 23 with calls to resign. Finally, the prime minister had the joy of starting his new year with a resignation demand from the Quebec Liberal Caucus, his home province and the centre of his support base. This proved to be the silver bullet.

On Jan. 6, Trudeau, alone, out in the cold, poetically and literally, announced his intention to step down from the Liberal leadership and after a three-month leadership race, the Premiership.

At least for the moment, the politics of post-Trudeau Canada are shaping up to be those of Poilievre. His campaign based around

what he isn't as opposed to what he is may have paid off when he was facing the most unpopular prime minister of the 21st century. However, it remains to be seen what kind of candidate he will be when he doesn't have the living embodiment of Canadian decline as an opponent.

Trudeau's resignation has quickly turned a campaign of slogans into a campaign of substance. With the fear brought on by an alarmingly imperialist Trump presidency itching for some more destiny to manifest, Canadians very well may be scared by a populist whose main campaign slogan has been "everything feels broken." Poilievre's much-requested "carbon tax election" may have been usurped by a '51st state election.'

Currently, a high-stakes Liberal leadership duel rages in the halls of Ottawa. The two front runners are Freeland and former governor of both the Bank of Canada and England, Mark Carney.

At the moment Carney seems to be the Liberal favourite to square up against Poilievre. With Carney being from Edmonton and Poilievre being Calgarian, it's looking like the Battle of Alberta means more than just hockey now.

# The liberation of Syria from the Assadist dynasty

*Bashar al-Assad flees to Moscow*

**Amirmohammad Bagheri**

Staff Writer

The date is March 12, 1971. After a series of coups due to political turmoil, a presidential election is being held in Syria. Who are the candidates? There is only one.

Voters are faced with the option to either approve or reject the candidacy of the Minister of Defence, Lieutenant General, and Prime Minister of Syria, Hafez al-Assad. With 99.20 per cent of the votes, the military strongman became the 18th president of Syria, ruling from 1971 until his death from a heart attack in June 2000, at the age of 69.

Under al-Assad, the Assadist dynasty was born. He ruled over the country with an iron fist, silencing those who opposed him. His massacre of over 25,000 people in the city of Hama, due to an uprising in February 1982, proved to be a template that would be commonly used by him and his successor.

Bassel al-Assad, the first son of the al-Assad family and the initial heir to the throne, died in a car accident on Jan. 21, 1994. This sudden passing forced the second son, Bashar al-Assad, to start preparing himself to succeed his father.

Originally studying ophthalmology in London, Bashar had little interest in ruling. He gave up his dreams and entered the military academy in Homs.

Following Hafez's death, the Syrian parliament lowered the minimum presidential age in the constitution from 40 to 34, which was Bashar's age at that time. With 97 per cent of the votes, Bashar succeeded his father, taking the mantle of dictatorship and ruling over Syria with an iron fist.

By following in his father's footsteps, Bashar suppressed all threats to his position by means of murder, torture and imprisonment. Over the years, the Syrian population continued to suffer from a lack of political freedom, high unemployment rates

and extreme corruption all over the country.

In March 2011, in the rural province of Daraa, a group of children were arrested and tortured by the police for displaying anti-regime graffiti. This demonstration of brutal force angered the local people, who took to the streets in protest.

The swift use of deadly force against peaceful protesters was the tipping point for the pain and suffering of the population. What followed was an all-out civil war that would mark the country's history for the next 14 years.

The uprising soon transformed from peaceful protests into a militarized rebellion. While smaller local militias were forming across the country, a group of defectors from the Syrian army created a rebel organization called the "Free Syrian Army (FSA)."

Severely outgunned by the regime and often incapable of properly coordinating operations, the FSA was given shelter in Turkey and received funding from neighbouring Gulf donors such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

On the other side, the Syrian government received continued support in the form of weapons and fighters from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Faced with heightened opposition, Bashar al-Assad's brutal countermeasures were labelled as violations of human rights and crimes against humanity by the U.N.

The use of starvation as a weapon of war, enforced disappearances, executions of protestors in detention facilities, deliberate bombings of civilian buildings such as schools and hospitals, as well as chemical warfare, were all part of these countermeasures.

Bashar's regime did not shy away from using weaponized sieges and aerial bombardment against civilians. These acts

usually served as a form of punishment to the resistance, warning them about the cost of their uprising.

Such ruthless measures resulted in over 500,000 deaths overall as well as 14 million Syrians seeking refuge abroad. By 2018, the U.N. humanitarian agency reported that more than a million Syrians were living in besieged areas or places far from the reach of any aid.

A dynasty that forcefully reigned supreme for 54 years fell in only 12 days. With Hezbollah significantly weakened, Russia preoccupied with the war in Ukraine and Iran dealing with internal and external struggles, Bashar found himself empty-handed in the face of the rebellion's strictly organized movement.

On Nov. 27, 2024, Syrian rebel forces attacked the regime forces in western Aleppo in response to previous artillery shelling that killed civilians. With 37 people killed on both sides and 13 villages liberated, the rebellion swiftly moved toward its next target.

Three days later, Aleppo, the second largest city in Syria, was taken over before the government forces could even rise to their feet.

It was the first time in eight years that rebel groups had stepped foot in the city. However, they did not stop to celebrate.

On Dec. 5, the strategically important city of Hama, located at a crossroads in western-central Syria, was liberated from regime forces. For the first time in a decade, the rebel forces broke through several parts of the city, forcing the Syrian military to withdraw.

The next day, the city of Daraa, the birthplace of the Syrian uprising, was liberated as opposition forces pushed toward the capital of Syria, Damascus.

On Dec. 7, the rebellion scored another victory as the city of Homs fell into their hands, marking the fourth city they had taken over within 24 hours.

Dec. 8 marked the day when everything changed for Syrian people all over the world. In the early morning, with very little resistance from the Syrian military, the rebels declared the capital of Damascus liberated.

"This victory, my brothers, is a victory for the entire Islamic nation. This new triumph, my brothers, marks a new chapter in the history of the region," said Abu

Mohammed al-Jolani, leader of the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). "My heart longed for this moment. There is not a single household in Syria that the war has not touched," said al-Jolani, leader of one of the main rebel groups—while addressing the population from the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

Bashar al-Assad was later confirmed by the Russian state media to have fled to Moscow, where he was granted asylum. Following the fall of his regime, the original red, white and black flag of Syria has been officially changed by the Syrian parliament, the transitional government and all Syrian embassies abroad.

The independence flag now flies high, with the pan-Arab colours of green, white and black, featuring three red stars in the middle.

As millions of refugees reclaim their besieged homes that once stood tall, as displaced Syrians reunite with their loved ones for the first time in years, and as they celebrate their freedom from half a century of dictatorship, they are well aware that they still have much to rebuild. Yet, they smile as the sun shines brightly, promising a brighter future ahead.



The Syrian people celebrate the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime with their flag of independence. Photo courtesy of 5pillars



# Fascism is a total drag!

*Following the inauguration of Donald Trump, one queen looks at how and why we got here*

**Acacia Carol**

Contributor

Neo-nazis, Pizzagate, and beanie babies, oh my! What do all of these things have in common? You'd be right if you guessed the rise of neofascism and even more right if you thought they were topics that Karla Marx focused on during her *History with a Drag Queen* show at Mount Royal University's (MRU) student bar, West Gate Social.

Hosted by QriTical, *The Neo-Fascist Electric Boogaloo: Part Two* kicked off on Thursday with a performance by Marx herself to Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time" and a brief introduction to the lecture's rules of engagement.

This show is Marx's second edition of *History with a Drag Queen*, presented at MRU, where her blend of humour, history, and activism took centre stage. Karla Marx, is the drag persona created and performed by MRU history professor, Victoria Bucholtz.

Bucholtz uses this performance as a way to engage the audience in serious discussions about neofascism, authoritarianism, and the state of politics today while entertaining with the vibrant energy of drag.

Her unique approach doesn't just educate but challenges attendees to think critically about the historical forces shaping our society.

Sounds different, right? Well, that's the point.

Mixing humour and intention is the pinnacle of what makes Marx's talks so engaging, and it's clear that each detail is specifically chosen to entertain and educate the audience simultaneously. She explains that even the title refers to the Boogaloo Boys, a group that participated in the January 6th insurrection while wearing Hawaiian shirts and tactical gear.

This marriage of absurdity and commentary is precisely why Marx got into drag initially.

"As queerness is being criticized, deemed controversial, controlled, packaged and squished away, building spaces for queer people to have regular social interactions and spaces where they can hold their partner's

hand and it's never a big deal... That's something that has always been important to my drag," Marx told The Reflector.

In short, Marx examined the period between the Cold War and the beginning of Donald Trump's second presidency to provide a sense of 'how did we get here?'

More importantly, she highlighted the ever-present question of 'where do we go next?'

## She said what? About who?

Beginning in the Cold War, Marx first outlined that by having a clear enemy, this was a time when social, economic and political rules were stabilized. She outlined that this would decline after the Cold War and into the 90s.

From the Pax Americana, a time post-Cold War that sought peace for the Western hemisphere, to the War on Terror filling the void left behind by the clear-cut threat of the Soviet Union and Communism, Marx laid a clear foundation for what has become modern-day fascism.

Sounds heavy? Fear not—it was time for some entertainment.

Surprise performer Ashtray Williams took to the stage for Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit." His mohawk, makeup and show provided a perfect segue into the second portion of the lecture, which examined counterculture and its effects on the era of radicalization.

The penultimate section of the lecture covered the rise in questioning experts and the rise of the anti-vax movement, the militarization of police forces following 9/11, and the war on terror.

Zoomers can take great comfort in knowing that the memes of their early adolescence, from Pepe the Frog to Pizzagate, are just a few steps along the path to creating acceptance for the alt-right among young men.

Marx highlighted that the rise in these memes and their corresponding dog whistles was motivated by the apparent threat to masculinity from the push for more inclusion in the workplace and other social



**At her show, *History with a Drag Queen: The Neo-Fascist Electric Boogaloo: Part Two*, Karla Marx dives into the series of historical events that have led to today's political climate. Photo by Aiden Johner**

spaces.

In examining this underbelly, Marx calls attention to the paradox of intolerance laid bare by the Obama administration. In an attempt to reach across the aisle, the Obama presidency did not achieve the radical change many hoped for.

"We must be intolerant of intolerance," Marx concluded.

Sounds like it's time for another song—it is a drag show, after all.

Holta Soli, their face painted white and accompanied by a limp doll, performed to Green Day's "American Idiot." The number closed out with a custom verse highlighting Danielle Smith's "fascist Alberta."

With that, the stage was set for the final portion of the lecture, the modern-day neo-fascist era. Marx focused on more specifics here, like Operation REDMAP and the impact of gerrymandering on democratic leadership capabilities, Kamala Harris' run and why it failed to connect with American voters.

But the most prominent aspect of this section was trying to answer the question the audience was silently asking—what happens now?

"If you are worried, if you are anxious, you should be. I'm so sorry because I really want to sell you hope... But it's not going to be good, and we need

to get our head in the game," Marx exclaimed during the show. "Canada is not immune to this."

This is not to say that Marx left the audience in abject despondence and sent them home wallowing in sadness, as she gave specific ways for everyone in attendance to fight back.

She asked the crowd to seek out education as one way to push against neo-fascism, like reading the 97 calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada or the Gerasimov Doctrine to call out the warfare fascists employ against American democracy more easily.

Marx closed the night out with a promise of hope. She highlighted that times were just as tumultuous for the activists that came before, and that if they could do it, so can the people of today.

"They fought for the things we are seeing eroded right now, and it is our generation's Stonewall. It is our generation's AIDS crisis. It is our generation's time to stand up and say 'we are going to honour the sacrifices and fights [of] the people who came before,'" Marx concluded at the show. "We're gonna have to fight for this future because if we don't do it, do we think someone else is going to do it for us?"

## THE REFLECTOR

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## the reflector

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## The (potential) destruction of all life on Earth

*Scientists call for a ban on “mirror-life” research before it is too late*

**Arroy (AJ) Jacob**

Web Editor

Cellular biologists don't get enough credit for their work. It's a privilege to witness the creation of life at its original size—microscopic, a size everyone still only attempts to comprehend. However, many questions remain regarding the potential of biology at the cellular level.

Synthetic biologists, however, attempt to answer these questions, especially those at Stanford University, by explaining theoretically that it is possible to create artificial organisms at the molecular level and “mirror life.”

Until one day, they stopped dead in their tracks and realized that further research on creating these synthetic organisms would threaten to overturn all life on Earth.

Kate Adamala, a synthetic biologist and genetics professor at the University of Minnesota, sat on an interview with CBC Radio to explain why she and her team had called for an immediate and global ban on further research on “mirror-life.”

### What is “mirror life”?

All living organisms on Earth are comprised of molecules, particularly DNA and amino acids. These elongated chains of molecules make proteins, including leaf stems, fingernails, and the blood-brain barrier.

For billions of years of evolution, as if life has a mind of its own, it had decided that there are two ways for sugars and amino acids to exist: sugars are right-handed, or “points to the right,” and amino acids are left-handed, or “points to the left.” In biochemistry, these are called the “right conformations” and “left conformations” respectively.

All living organisms exist because these molecules choose to only exist in these



**New advancements in science can have lasting benefits, but also incredible consequences. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia**

conformations. These sugars and amino acids are the basic building blocks for cells, tissues, organs and all living life known to Earth. It is infrequent for left-handed sugars and right-handed amino acids to exist in nature, which are considered anomalies.

Until this year, when synthetic biologists revealed that it's entirely plausible to create our own molecules that “mirror” those that exist in nature.

“Life is very particular about what direction all our molecules point. And it is possible to imagine making a cell where all molecules point exactly the opposite direction. That's why we call it ‘mirror-life,’” Adamala told CBC.

Once a collection of “mirror molecules” is synthesized, they can function within a mirror image of a bacterial cell, such as within *E. coli* or *Bacillus subtilis*, and adapt,

grow and colonize into a new, unpredictable chain of evolution.

Adamala recounts with CBC News that mirror life would be a scientific breakthrough. “We thought that it would be a great medicine. We thought we would be able to make cell-based therapeutics. And we could use it for bio-manufacturing; we could use it to make molecules in bioreactors that are not susceptible to external contaminations.”

“It would be one of the biggest scientific discoveries you could think of; it's creating another life form.”

Mirror life is a fascinating hypothesis that would put the premise of Jurassic Park to shame. But Adamala highlights scientists' fears more than their fascinations.

### The risk to all life on Earth

Recall that all of life has

your receptors on your cells has to be of the [correct] confirmation and has to point the [correct] way to be detected.”

Stanford University says that pathogens such as the common cold and the flu would suddenly become dangerous bioweapons if created using mirror molecules.

Their other concerns are that similar to how our bodies would not be able to fight off these foreign invaders, beings in nature would not be better at controlling them.

Adamala says that “it would grow uncontrollably, it would grow persistently and we would have no way of eating it, fighting it in the environment so the consequences for the environment could be catastrophic. And that's why we think this should not happen, this should not be made.”

### Are we doomed?

No, because Adamala and numerous other scientists headlined a biosecurity policy forum through Science in conjunction with a technical report through Stanford University calling for a global ban of mirror life research and to facilitate a new conversation in bioethics between biologists, policy-makers, and the general public.

When asked in her interview with CBC News whether a rogue scientist would study mirror life secretly, she says, “that's the advantage of us talking about it early right now, as the technology is not there yet for one person to go and make a mirror cell.

“We are obviously driven by curiosity, we obviously want to do the cool things, but we also want to do it safely. That's the main driving force of science, to make people's lives better, not worse.”

set out its own rules for how molecules must exist in nature, either in the right conformation or the left conformation. For trillions of years, it has only been known that these molecules could exist in this way.

If humans were to synthesize “mirror molecules,” there would be devastating consequences, according to a report by Stanford University.

Their first concern is that the human immune system would be incredibly vulnerable to an outbreak of mirror molecules in a pathogenic cell.

Your immune system has only ever known to search for either the left or right conformations of specific pathogens to fight it. If that same pathogen were synthesized in the “opposite” direction, your body would not be able to recognize it.

“Everything you sense with your molecular sensors with



# REFLECTOR RAMBLERS

## Above and abroad: Facing culture shock

**Brennen French**

Staff Writer

Some people travel more than others, for different reasons and periods of time, but one common thing shared amongst even the most experienced traveller is culture shock.

Culture shock is a real thing—when an individual leaves their home country to gain experience, knowledge, or simply for leisure, they are met with different societal expectations and rules. Because of this, it is necessary to prepare for each adventure.

Travelling and living in a new country are two very different things. Students like Morgan Abell are always looking for an authentic experience and try to integrate their lives into another country or culture.

Abell is a young and ambitious Mount Royal University Public Relations student who is completing a six-month exchange student program in Vic, Spain where she will learn to integrate into the culture while continuing her degree.

Lucky for you, Abell has some advice on how she prepared for this new adventure and how you should too.

“I planned about a year in advance and then just saved up what I would want for travel,” Abell says. “Once I hit my goal, I just kept saving just in case.”

Saving money is one thing, but learning to budget and being able to allocate funds for other expenses efficiently is even more important. Abell’s system involved building up her bank account to keep her money neatly organized for her trip.

“I’ve got my living expenses in one area, and then I’ve got my travel expenses,” Abell explains.

Moving to a new country for an extended period of time can be very daunting and sometimes lonely. But it is important to remember other people are, more often than not, experiencing the same thing. While abroad and studying—in Abell’s case—the citizens are more than happy

to help someone new learn how life works there.

“People have just been so amazing and patient and so sweet with me and I know that it can be a little frustrating right now because I don’t know the ropes yet,” she says. “It’s definitely something I’m grateful for.”

Living the life of a new citizen for an extended period of time is a difficult and large task as it requires some pretty life-altering changes. Most people never have the opportunity to leave the safety of their country to explore a different life.

The late Anthony Bourdain was a huge advocate for breaking the stigmas attached to different cultures. He created a special connection with his own culture while learning how he could share the adventurous life most people aspire to lead.

Bourdain’s most famous show, *Parts Unknown*, promoted travel and the search for good foods that are unique

to the countries he visited.

One of a human’s biggest limitations is fear. Learning to control and persevere through the struggles and hardships that present themselves are the keys to beating culture shock and expanding into a

world barely explored.

Abell says, “no experience that’s resulted in growth has ever felt comfortable... whether it’s positive or negative, it’s still an experience, so you need to embrace it.”



**Morgan Abell studies in Spain and is a role model to any student looking to venture into the great unknown. Photo courtesy of Morgan Abell**

## TikTok on the clock

**Karra Smith**

Staff Writer

In July 2020, during Donald Trump’s first term as U.S. president, he proposed the idea of banning TikTok. At the time, Trump suggested that it would be a potential means of retaliation against the Chinese government for their alleged misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Later that year, Trump began pushing for TikTok’s parent company ByteDance to sell their U.S. assets to an American Company. ByteDance quickly snapped back with a lawsuit.

In January 2021, Joe Biden was sworn in as president and postponed all legal proceedings in regard to the banning of TikTok.

During March, April, and May of 2024, the U.S. Congress and the Senate started pushing the bill forward once again to ban TikTok. This situation gained traction across all social media platforms and started the first wave of TikTokers in the states calling politicians in their districts in hopes of

stopping the potential ban. In May, Biden signed the bill enforcing the ban and once again ByteDance sued the U.S. government.

In early December, the U.S. federal appeals court denied any wrongdoing by the American government in regard to ByteDance’s lawsuit and gave the green light for the banning of TikTok.

Later that month, Trump began advocating for the ban to be postponed so his administration could come up with a resolution. This was ignored by literally everyone.

### Fast forward to now

On Jan. 17, 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court officially ruled in favour of the TikTok ban. The general reasoning behind this ban concluded that the company’s ties to China pose a threat to national security. The ban was set to take place on Jan. 19, prior to Trump’s

presidential inauguration.

The glory of the TikTok ban was short-lived for U.S. officials. Only 12 hours after the ban took effect, Trump signed an executive order that would once again postpone the ban. This move by Trump has sparked new debates as to whether the signing of this order was even legal.

### What is TikTok’s future in the U.S.?

At the time of writing this article, the future of TikTok is still unknown. With the ban against TikTok initially going into effect on Jan. 19, the order signed by Trump may not be legally binding. In an interview with CBC, Sarah Kreps, the director of Cornell University’s Tech Policy Institute, stated “executive orders cannot override existing laws.”

### What does this mean for Canadians?



**The highly anticipated U.S. TikTok ban lasted only a short 12 hours before users could access the app again. Photo created by Aiden Johner**

Although the ban doesn’t directly affect Canadians’ ability to use the app, it does vaffect how often Canadians will get to see some of their favourite creators. With the potential loss of the app, many U.S. TikTokers have decided to move their content to alternative platforms making it less convenient and more

confusing to find our most beloved social stars.

As for the future of the app in Canada, we cannot be certain of anything. While there is no current public discussion of a potential ban, it is not out of the ordinary for the Canadian government to follow the actions of the U.S. administration.

# Tenure turmoil

## *How tenure and contracts shape the faculty experience at MRU*

**Manveet Kaur Waraich**

Staff Writer

Students spend thousands of dollars and years of their lives learning from professors who are experts in their fields. These educators carry the immense responsibility of equipping the next generation of leaders and innovators, serving as the forefront of societal education. Yet, not one of the 21 students I recently surveyed could explain what tenure is or why it matters. It's time to take a peek behind the blackboard and uncover the roles, challenges and experiences of the faculty that students encounter every day.

The first week of each semester is always a blur of finding classrooms, reviewing course outlines and praying that there are no required textbooks that would shamelessly empty our pockets. In that hectic readjustment phase, many fail to notice the slight difference in each professor's introduction. Although it may seem like each professor has similar standing and experiences, there can be major differences among the educators at a post-secondary institution.

To simplify it, a university structure is just like any workplace. There is an employer (MRU), employees (faculty and staff), an employee union (Mount Royal Faculty Association/Staff Association; MRFA/MRSA), customers (students) and customer service (Student's Association of Mount Royal University; SAMRU).

MRU's faculty positions consist of two broad categories; part-time (contract) and full-time (permanent and tenure). Although the collective job of all employees is to teach excellence, each position has distinct roles and challenges. Just like any workplace, job security, benefits, pay and responsibilities increase along that sequence, but the devil is in the details.

### Part-time faculty

Formally, all part-time faculty follow the Teaching-Service (TS) work pattern; they focus on teaching and have minimal expectations for research or service. These positions have no pathway to tenure.

### Contract faculty

Contract faculty are

regarded as the backbone of universities and teach more than 60 per cent of courses at MRU on average, but they have dangerously low job security. Falling into this category are sessional instructors, year-long contract holders and two-year contract holders. Sessional instructors teach on a per-course basis, with no guarantee of courses in subsequent semesters. Their workload is highly variable.

Year-long contracts offer slightly more stability by offering course assignments for the year.

Continuing appointments offer two-year contracts that provide benefits and a guaranteed minimum of five courses. Instructors are able to take on more courses if available.

Many contract faculty are still engaged in scholarly activity regardless of it being an expectation from the university, especially because of its importance for career advancement. Those hours often go unsupported financially. Additionally, The Canadian Association of University Teachers report that "as a sessional you often have to work at multiple universities to earn enough money to support yourself and your family." The report also found that 59 per cent of respondents had been teaching on contract at a post-secondary education level for over five years and are highly invested in their workplace.

### Permanent faculty

Permanent faculty, such as senior lecturers, have more stability than contract positions but lack the pay scale and certain benefits of tenure faculty.

Senior lecturers enter through internal competition and face a two-year probationary period—reduced to one year with prior experience. They have full benefits but are not eligible for sabbaticals and face a capped payscale.

Permanent lab instructors are similar to senior lecturers but focus on lab-based teaching.

### Tenured faculty

Tenured faculty represent the most stable and secure academic positions.

Assistant professors begin their careers with a five-year



The path to a professors tenure is often unknown to the average student. Photo by Manveet Kaur Waraich.

probationary period. Associate professors achieve tenure after demonstrating excellence in teaching, research, and service. Full professors attain this rank through further promotion, resulting in a higher pay scale.

Many are led to believe that achieving tenure guarantees a job for life. Although it is arguably the most secure and stable academic position at universities—this picture is incomplete. Lee Easton is the current president of the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA), a professor of multimedia/film studies, and has been at MRU since 1996. Somewhere along the eight rounds of negotiations between MRFA and the university that he's experienced, Easton came to understand that tenure represents a major commitment between the institution and the employee, carrying with it a significant responsibility to continue to perform at a high level.

"[Tenure] is not a permanent job; it holds termination to a higher standard than we would find in a [regular] workplace, and associated to that is academic freedom...[which] allows you to research, to teach, to criticize, without fear," Easton explains. "My employer can't get rid of me because they don't like my research. They can get you if you don't teach. Otherwise, the university has to say its existence is in peril [financially]."

To academics, that's heaven. However, the staircase to heaven is long and winding. Firstly, a candidate must be hired into a 'tenure-track' position. These are an open call and thus have immense competition with upwards of 400 applicants for one job.

Once hired, the title of assistant professor is awarded, alongside a host of demanding expectations. Full-time faculty must keep a balance of Teaching, Scholarship and Service (TSS).

Being in the classroom, advancing their research, and serving on university committees to contribute towards a stronger campus and environment are the three essential pillars of evaluation—of which they must face multiple rounds. Their peers, the dean and chair and a university-level committee all consistently review the assistant professor.

This continues for a lengthy probationary period of five years in which they collect incredibly detailed evidence of their work non-stop before finally attaining tenure and 'graduating' to the title of associate professor. Although this is a gruelling process, Easton emphasizes that "we have a really good system that's really supportive." Still, the tenure track remains high risk. "If you don't get tenure... it will be very hard to convince another university to take a chance on you [because] it was peer-reviewed at multiple different levels."

### The current state

For students, more full-time tenured faculty translates to greater mentorship opportunities and a higher quality of education. Well-compensated instructors would produce a higher degree of scholarly work—including teaching materials and advancements, which are highly valued at Mount Royal—and advanced curriculum. The peer evaluation bit is especially note-worthy.

"[It's] great because everyone here values teaching and you can choose a colleague who does too so there's a culture that values teaching and a shared commitment to students... Basically, our professoriate should look a lot like our students. If we're not looking like our students then you know we're just perpetuating things that need to be changed."

Easton believes that, alongside improvements in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), there have been important changes to support faculty. These include implementing full-year scheduling, establishing continuing contracts, and creating permanent senior lecturer positions. Additionally, contract faculty who participate in service activities are eligible for honorariums to acknowledge their contributions. Employee benefits have also been enhanced, now covering 80 per cent.

Although these improvements are commendable and show adaptability, the over-reliance on contract faculty, and the absence of pathways to tenure are still blaring.

Every year, more students fill the halls of MRU. "We need more full time faculty. We're on a growth path here at Mount Royal and according to the annual report, it's sustainable growth.

If we don't get full-time positions to support that growth, then we will expand the number of contract faculty," comments Easton.

However, tenured positions are an immense financial investment and although these solutions sound great on paper, are very complicated practically.



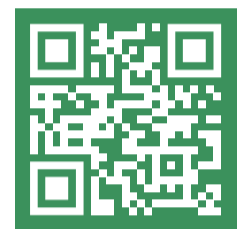
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## Reclaiming space

*How a local Filipino artist uses art to tell his story*

**Janine De Castro**

Contributor

A local multimedia artist, Harvey Nichol, presents his newest sculpture, “Biringan, A Myth Reimagined.” The sculpture stands tall and mighty, as an instrument of creativity, culture, and community.

Nichol has established himself in Calgary’s art scene through his public murals, multimedia installations, clothing and sculptures. His work often reflects his Filipino heritage by exploring themes of identity and resilience.

His newest piece is being displayed across Brookfield Properties’ buildings, as part of his participation in the 315 Artist in Residence Program.

Calgary Arts Development has partnered with Brookfield Properties to help bring the spotlight to local artists and connect with the community. The 315 Artist Residency Program uses underutilized retail space and transforms it into a maker space where artists have the freedom to create and showcase their work.

Since May 2024, Nichol has dedicated himself to his residency and has transformed the provided space into a 4,400-square-foot lively creative studio for his work.

Over the past few months, he has been able to host workshops and organize collaborative events, all while celebrating his Filipino heritage and advocating for Filipino culture in Calgary.

“Art is not just about the artist, it’s about how it interacts with people and the space it occupies,” said Nichol.

The highlighted piece during his residency, Biringan, embodies Nichol’s journey as an artist and the stories he wishes to share through his art. The sculpture uses elements of organic and industrial design, highlighting the tension between nature and the synthetic world. The use of wood and metal draws on the balance between tradition and innovation—an ongoing theme in Nichol’s work.

“Biringan is about reclaiming space, telling our stories, and bringing culture into the public eye,” Nichol said.

Nichol draws inspiration from Filipino folklore and mythology, particularly the mythical city of Biringan, which is said to exist in a magical realm. He focuses on the connection of the past with the future and aims to create a narrative that represents the resilience of his Filipino roots alongside the evolution of culture in a rapidly changing world.

“I wanted to blend the mysticism of Filipino mythology with a futuristic vision, exploring how culture evolves and endures in a changing world.”

By hosting workshops with youth, and working with other artists to organize events during his residency, community members have been able to contribute to his creative process.

### Passion to purpose

From what started as a personal hobby, a creative form of self-expression has evolved and deepened as

Nichol began to see art as a medium for storytelling.

As a Filo-Canadian, his career as an artist has shifted towards exploring the complex ideas of identity, culture, and societal issues and has grown a passion for representing under-represented communities.

“I want people to look at this piece and see not just a sculpture but a narrative that reflects resilience, identity, and the intersection of cultures,” he said.

Nichol hopes to spark a bigger conversation about the importance of representation in public art and how powerful art can be to bridge cultural divides. His residency with Brookfield Properties has given him the opportunity to showcase his vision to the general public.

### Looking forward

Nichol has plans for future projects, which include a children’s book inspired by the themes presented in Biringan, as well as other creative projects that will continue to push the boundaries of art and culture.

“This sculpture is just the beginning of a larger conversation,” Nichol says. “I want to create more work that encourages people to question, reflect, and celebrate what makes us unique.”

Biringan has made a lasting impact on Calgary’s public art scene. Nichol encourages the next wave of artists to share their stories.

### How to get involved in the 315



Harvey Nichol stands in front of his sculpture Biringan: A Myth Reimagined. Photo by Janine De Castro

### Artist Residency Program

The 315 Artist Residency Program is open to new and established artists. The residency offers support in the form of a \$33,000 artist fee, access to professional resources, and opportunities for commercialization. The artists are expected to create large-scale exhibitions, host community workshops, and engage in a year-long

exhibition tour across Brookfield Properties buildings in Calgary.

Artists who wish to apply can submit a proposal which should include their vision, materials needed, and plans for the residency.

The application also requires a portfolio, CV and a media kit representing their brand.

The application deadline for the next residency cycle is Feb. 20.

## OUT'N ABOUT

### Photography Exhibit

Exposure Photography Festival has partnered with cSPACE Marda Loop to present work from Canadian photographers. Attracting over 900,000 visits in recent years, the festival serves as a cornerstone for Calgary’s art scene. Taking place from Feb. 3 to March 1, the exhibit is free to the public during their regular hours of operation—8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### HSCA Flea Market

A free admission flea market located at the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association is open every Sunday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Showcasing crafts, antiques, vinyl, and household items, this market is a goldmine for thrifters and shoppers alike. There is also a concession stand so visitors can try out new food while browsing the vendor stands.

### Pulitzer-Prize Winning Play

The classic tale, A Streetcar Named Desire, is taking the Max Bell Theatre stage from Jan. 28 to Feb. 23. The play touches on themes of travel, power dynamics, thrill, and desire, and viewer discretion is advised for younger audiences. Tickets start at \$44 and are available on theatrecalgary.com.

### Winter Edition Tattoo Festival

The Calgary Tattoo and Arts Festival returns to the Big Four Roadhouse from Feb. 7 to Feb. 9, showcasing local talent, throw contests, and host exhibitions. Adult only night is on Friday while the rest of the weekend is open to everyone, and tickets can be purchased for single-day or weekend-passes on showpass.com.



# OPINION: The BookTok sensation

*The fast-fashion of the publishing market*

**Ava Putszai**

Staff Writer

BookTok is a fast growing community of TikTok users centred around the love of reading. Over the past five years, it has become a sensational social media movement introducing audiences to books they otherwise would never read. Further, it has encouraged people to read in a generation gone digital in which dopamine is available at the swipe of a screen.

However, the mass effect of BookTok has led to a notable decline in the quality of books being published. It is more common now to find typos in published works that fall under the category of “BookTok Romance” as well as a general lack of originality.

The “Trending on BookTok” table at Indigo is littered with books of the same colour scheme, art design and plotlines. We see people casting judgment over other readers’ book choices, something that can be attributed to the passionate and tight-knit world of BookTok. Now, more than ever, reading is about the consumption of products as opposed to enjoyment.

Books for young adult and teen audiences frequently act as forms of unofficial sex education. Within this comes a distorted view of romance and relationships as the popularity of the “bad boy” trope has gone completely off the rails in these novels. Themes of unhealthy relationships including power dynamics, mistreatment and violence are now a favoured trope in fiction for young adults. As such, most ideas surrounding sex are founded through the consumption of media—such as romance novels.

The pre-BookTok era of the Twilight series carries an inherent purist view of sexuality. Think of how the characters Edward and Bella are unable to have any form of sexual contact before marriage and when they do, Bella gets pregnant immediately. The sole reason for Bella and Edward to have sex was to produce children as opposed to any other form of intimacy. Having this be read



**BookTok, one of the niche communities on the popular app TikTok, is bringing readers together, but the impact is affecting book trends, sales, and content. Photo by Aiden Johner**

and consumed by a young audience who is beginning to experience sexuality teaches them that sex is meant for copulation and nothing else.

Now, sexuality in new-age romance novels has gone in the other direction entirely.

What is causing most books on BookTok to peak interest is what the audience and influencers refer to as “spice rating.” Meaning, that the amount of sexual content in the piece directly increases the rating, resulting in the read being more favourable.

The expressions of sexuality in novels for young audiences have become dangerous in which romance tropes are beginning to be centred around abuse or a romanticization of threatening behaviour. The demand for novels that exhibit almost exuberant amounts of sex has led to an extreme downplay, and almost a sense of shame, regarding what is referred to as “vanilla sex.” The shock

value of the intimacy is what is drawing these readers in. The more brutal or violent the sex written about is, the more people wish to read it.

Some romantic tropes even involve stalking, possessiveness to a fault, and in some cases, breaking and entering. This has happened before BookTok with television series such as *You* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*, where we see pop culture romanticizing danger. BookTok knows this, and is capitalizing on it at a rate faster than television or film can produce.

And it continues to sell.

Books specifically associated with BookTok are being released at an uncommonly quick pace. A couple of years ago, it was common to have to wait a year at the absolute least for a sequel to a novel.

Now they come in the span of months.

Author Ali Hazelwood,

best known for her Kylo Ren and Rey fanfiction published under the title *The Love Hypothesis* has released a total of 12 books since her earliest publication in 2021. That means that over the last five years, Hazelwood has written, edited, published, and marketed at least two books a year. She released four books in the year 2022 alone.

A quick glance at the covers explains that they are not exactly original or different from what she has previously written. They follow roughly the same romance plot, just in different environments and slightly different characters.

Similar notions are seen through romance writer Emily Henry whose romcom novels have continued to take TikTok by storm since the viral reaction to her earlier novels *Beach Read* and *People We Meet on Vacation*. Since the publication of *Beach Read* in 2020, Henry has had five books released, and promises

of another one in April 2025. This does not mean that the books are only being written at uncommonly quick paces, it also means that everything else that is required to sell a book (specifically pitching and editing) is occurring quickly. The consumption and selling of books have become more relevant than the book itself—often when a book strays from the BookTok formula, it is deemed to be slow and boring.

Despite this, BookTok has reaped some positives. The tech generation has begun to read again, and they read for personal reasons as opposed to academic necessity.

The elitist mentality BookTok can adopt regarding classical works of literature is just as harmful to the community and discouraging to readers. People are not meant to feel better or worse because of what books they choose to read.

The important thing is this—people are reading. The world is a cruel and dark place at times and the escapism provided by these novels is what helps them sell. The romance trope is nothing new, it just comes in phases. In the digital era, these phases just happen to align with media trends.

Harlequin novels on a shelf frequently adorn the same framework and cover style, this has now shifted into cartoon boy-meets-girl fantasies and that is perfectly fine. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the books that are popularized by BookTok—they are popular for a reason.

Readers should be wary of the content they consume, however, because these books often don’t display healthy relationship dynamics.

Reading is an activity that people are meant to enjoy and look forward to, and BookTok has provided this sanctuary for readers, bringing light to the hobby of reading in a world completely dominated by screens and quick dopamine rushes. It’s good that people are reading, but remember that the worlds inside of these books are not real, and therefore not realistic to idealize.



# Where to wing night

*Best wings in Calgary on a budget*

**Sierra Kaliel**

Contributor

The holiday season has come and gone once again, and your wallet may feel empty after the celebrations.

If you feel like you have a wing-shaped hole in your heart (and stomach), these Calgary spots have the remedy. With their mouth-watering prices, wing nights are an integral part of Calgary nightlife.

According to the National Chicken Council, wings are believed to have originated in Buffalo, New York at Anchor Bar. The dish quickly became a staple in North American pubs and has been the star of the potluck at many sports celebrations.

You can find a wing-night deal in countless places across the city. These deals are found most commonly on Mondays or Wednesdays, but you can find savings on these delicious chicken bites almost any day of the week.

The most common deal you can find for wings is 50 per cent off the regular price. Whether you like the classics, or you crave something a little more creative, there is a flavour for every palate.

These five spots are serving up good deals and good times. Each of these Calgarian classics offer up something

unique which is sure to cure the winter blues.

## Whiskey Rose

**The deal:** 29 cent wings.

**When:** All Wednesday long.

**Why is it special?** The price!

Since opening its doors in 2021, Whiskey Rose has been a little taste of country on the red mile.

This restaurant is home to one of the best wing night deals in YYC. The wings come in seven flavours: hot, Memphis BBQ, Carolina honey mustard, lemon pepper, Alberta rub, honey garlic, or salt and pepper.

You can wash down your feast with their house draft which is on special for \$5.75. If beer is not your speed, they also offer shots of Jameson for \$5.

This pub has a welcoming southwestern charm that adds to the exciting culture of 17th Ave. On the weekends, they have live music and regularly feature local talent.

## Ranchman's

**The deal:** 50 cent wings.

**When:** Wednesday.

**What is special about it?** Free dancing lessons.

This Calgarian classic is known for country vibes and free dancing lessons. Even though you may be tempted to dance the funky chicken after chowing down on some 50 cent wings, you can learn three different styles of country dancing on Wednesday night—line dance, two-step, and country swing.

Feeling thirsty after tearing up on the dance floor? Their Wednesday drink special—\$5.50 bottles of Corona—can help.

Ranchman's is also home to the only mechanical bull in Calgary. You can step up to the eight-second challenge Thursday through Saturday.

## Bottlescrew Bill's

**The deal:** Half-priced wings, and cauliflower bites for \$9.48.

**When?** Wednesday.

**Why is it special?** Vegetarian friendly!

While you may be able to find a wing deal at most Calgarian pubs, finding vegetarian options—especially discounts—is much more rare.

**Continues on Pg.12**



Chicken wings are a staple in Western Canadian culture, popularized by their wide variety and affordability. Photo by Larry Hoffman, courtesy of Flickr



GNX confirms that which we all know to be true, Kendrick Lamar never misses the mark. After the introspectively soul-crushing *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers*, and winning what was possibly the most one-sided rap beef of the 21st century with Drake, Lamar comes back with what, in many ways, is a return to form with *GNX*.

Released on Nov. 22, 2024, three tracks made it to the hit list of Lamar's discography—"luther," "tv off" and "squabble up." Despite this album fitting firmly in the classic West Coast hip-hop canon, it still finds time to advance the genre.

An underdog of this album is track six—titled "reincarnated." The perfect microcosm of what this album is, we hear Lamar's playful yet concentrated flow remind listeners that his soul is in his music.

The first half of this album could have been ripped right out of a Tupac LP and everyone would've been none the wiser. However, the second half is full of the experimentation and borderline weirdness that Lamar has become synonymous with. All throughout the album, classic West Coast form is met with modern innovative function. The album also excels in its use of samples, from Latin singers to sombre Spanish guitar, *GNX* creates a wide sonic landscape despite only coming in at 44 minutes.

Overall, despite not reaching the level of some of his previous masterpieces, *GNX* is a more than solid album from the GOAT.

— Ryan Montgomery



Empire Of The Sun's 2025 electronic LP *Ask That God* provides a broadly unremarkable techno experience. This album has the vibe of a 2000s-era electronic track adapted for the contemporary listener. The album reaches its peak with its wavy synth baselines and punchy 808 backing tracks, however, the positives more or less end here.

The album can tend to feel one-note. Throughout the album the same Vocaloid filter is put overtop of all the vocals, which robs the songs of true uniqueness from one another and leans the album into feeling fairly monotone. On top of this, the lyrics are nothing to write home about.

While most songs fall into the category of general forgettable pop writing, there are a couple of songs that give me the feeling that they want to be smarter and more philosophical than they end up being. Two in particular that

swing way out of their league in terms of depth are the titular track "Ask That God" and "Dark Secrets." Looking solely at lyrics, much of this album might fit better in the genre of teenage angst punk—if they weren't written by two men in their mid-forties.

The dichotomy of lyricism and mismatched upbeat musicality does not complement as well as intended.

Overall, *Ask That God* is nothing special, it is a run-of-the-mill techno album, missing both the experimentation key to the genre and the solid songwriting key to all music.

— Ryan Montgomery



**Continued from Pg.11**

Bottlescrew Bill's offers half-priced wings every Wednesday, and cauliflower bites—a popular wing alternative—in multiple flavours for \$9.48.

This iconic Calgary pub has been around for more than four decades. Formerly known as Buzzards, this place is known for its "Around The World in 80 Beers" passport. Customers have one year to complete the passport, and those who are successful will have their names displayed in the pub.

**Bank and Baron P.U.B**

**The deal:** 75 per cent off of wings.

**When?** After 3 p.m. on Mondays.

**Why is it Special?** The price!

The wing-night deal is only one of the special things about this spot.

This pub found its home in an unlikely place. It used to be home to The Bank of Nova Scotia, which opened its doors in 1930. You can still find the original lettering at the top of the building.

Now, in place of bank tellers, you can find bartenders

serving craft beer, and classic pub grub.

You can pair your wings with one of their happy-hour drinks, which are offered from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

Bank and Baron P.U.B is located on Stephen Ave, which is a hub for shopping, dining, and socializing all year round.

**Mug Shotz Bar and Grill**

**The deal:** \$13 per pound of wings.

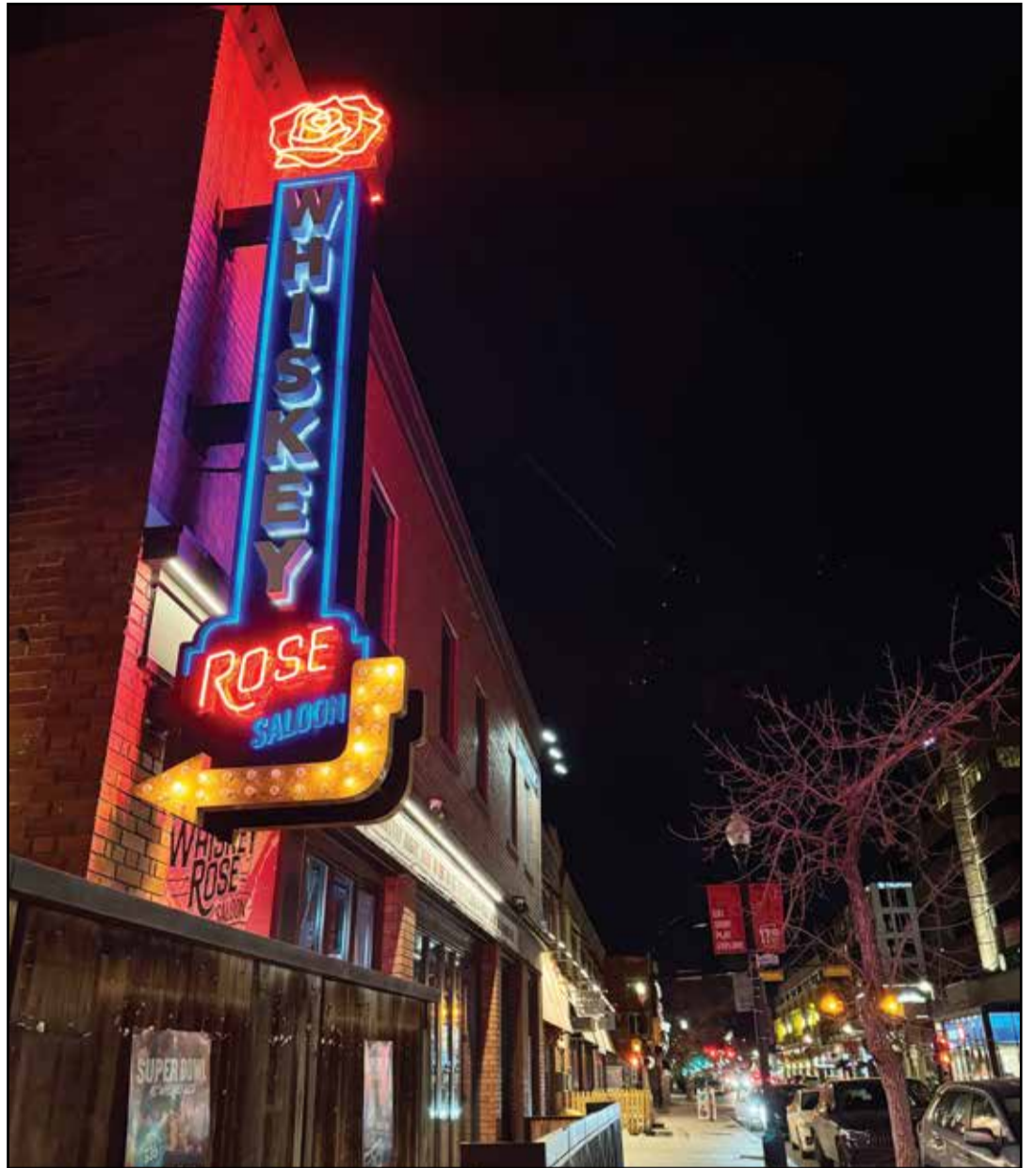
**When?** Wednesdays.

**Why is it special?** Almost 50 different flavours.

Mug Shotz Bar and Grill is a beloved neighbourhood pub that offers its wings in an impressive 50 flavours.

At this joint, there is a flavour for every taste, ranging from the classic salt and pepper to raspberry chipotle, tequila lime, sour cream and onion, and many more.

Their tasty menu and friendly service have customers coming back to try new flavours regularly. The spot has also caught the attention of outlets such as Avenue Magazine and Daily Hive. The casual atmosphere makes this the perfect place to kick back and watch a game, or catch up with friends.



Whiskey Rose is a Western-themed bar located on 17th Avenue, Calgary. They sell some of the cheapest wings in town on Wednesdays. Photo by Emma Marshall

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# The death of sports broadcasting

*Latest statistics show dramatic decline in legal sports viewership*

**Zafir Nagji**  
Sports Editor

Sports have become a mainstay in the entertainment industry. From ball sports to motorsports to combat sports, there has never been a more plentiful selection of competitive athletics for fans to enjoy. However, many leagues are experiencing massive declines in viewership, including the NBA, NHL, MLS, and the NFL.

This comes as a massive surprise, as streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Tubi and others have begun broadcasting sports on their platforms. So, if more sports are available on more platforms than ever before, why are the viewership numbers declining so drastically?

## The numbers

According to Sports Media Watch, NBA games on NBA TV, ABC, ESPN and TNT have seen a 25 per cent decline in TV viewership this season compared to last year. Compared to the ratings in 2012, the association has seen a 48 per cent decline and ESPN alone has seen a reduction in viewership of 28 per cent, according to Front Office Sports.

The NBA is not alone in this, as the NFL averaged 17.5 million viewers per game during the regular season, a two per cent decline compared to 2023. Even the wild-card playoff round, which featured six of the most exciting games of the season that determined playoff seeding, averaged 28.3 million viewers per game, a 9.3 per cent decline compared to the 31.2 million viewers last year.

Despite excitement building around Lionel Messi joining the MLS and Apple TV signing

on as a media partner, the North American league saw a whopping 47 per cent decrease in TV viewership for the Cup final compared to last year. Apple TV does not release their viewership numbers, but, according to The Athletic, “a source briefed on the numbers said overall viewership including streaming was down—though not by 47 per cent.”

The NHL has seen an even more drastic reduction in viewership; this year’s Frozen Frenzy Whip-Around Show, which featured all 32 teams playing in one night, averaged 57 per cent less viewers than last year.

## How did we get here?

Streaming services have all but replaced television networks. According to a study by Nielsen, an online analytics site, almost 42 per cent of all TV viewing in November 2024 was on streaming services. Many leagues, like the World Wrestling Entertainment, All Elite Wrestling, NFL, NHL, MLS, and even the NBA’s developmental G-League have all moved onto streaming services.

Additionally, many TV stations, like Sportsnet, TSN, DAZN, and others have made their channel subscriptions available for purchase on Prime Video and other services. Netflix hosted the infamous boxing match between Jake Paul and Mike Tyson as well as the full slate of Christmas Day NFL games, while Prime Video shows a selection of NHL games every Monday for all subscribers.

On those streaming services, the numbers look

much better for most of these sports. According to PwC, “the number of US viewers who stream a sports event at least once a month is projected to rise to over 90 million” in 2025. Compared to the 57 million in 2021, that growth is exponential.

However, not all the streaming service users follow their favourite sports legally. Fans have resorted to illegal streaming services in droves, citing rising costs and regional blackouts as influential factors in their decisions.

According to a Synamedia and Ampere Analysis report from March 2021, sports piracy is costing the industry over \$28 billion USD. The same report found that, “74 per cent of those who currently illegally stream would be willing to switch to a legal source if one was readily available.”

In 2016, the McGregor-Mayweather boxing match saw 239 illegal streams steal three million views, according to Business Wire, with one of those streams alone amassing over 900,000 active users at the same time. That equates to around \$100 million USD in lost revenue for Showtime, the broadcaster for the event. Also, 445,000 users downloaded the fight after it concluded, dealing even more damage to the broadcasting company and reducing post-event views and revenue.

## Why does this even matter?

All of these leagues churn billions of dollars of revenue every single year, and the giant national media networks that broadcast their games earn even more. The move to streaming also gives more



**Canadian NBA fans love their Toronto Raptors, but must pay a hefty premium of \$79.99 per month to watch all of their games. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@raptors**

money to streaming services and some teams, like the Las Vegas Golden Knights, are even offering their own direct-to-consumer streaming platforms to capitalize on this new form of engagement.

As a result, to the average fan, the widespread decline in paid viewership of sporting events may not seem like a cause worth worrying about. However, the rise of streaming services, legal and illegal, is causing a meltdown of regional sports networks. This could result in massive job losses for local sports broadcasters and huge cost increases for consumers, who will have to flock to paid streaming services to legally watch their favourite leagues.

Some might argue that, with the improvement in illegal streaming services, watching sports for free has never been easier. For students and other young adults, this has become the only way to affordably keep up with professional sports. According to Queen’s

Business Review, “30 per cent of respondents in a survey aged 18 to 24 admitted to regularly watching sports illegally, compared to only 4 per cent of those over 35.”

If you’re looking to watch games legally, consider subscribing to your favourite sports’ respective streaming services. Some services, like Prime Video, offer student discounts and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) provides Hockey Night in Canada as well as numerous other sporting events to Canadian viewers for free through their CBC Gem streaming platform and CBC Sports website.

Bars, pubs and restaurants are another great way to tune in to games, especially if you enjoy watching your local teams around similarly-minded fans, and provide a great way to support local businesses. For the full article, check out TheReflector.ca or download our free app.

# #S

**50** points scored by Cougars guard Keivonte Watts in two losses against the U of C Dinos last weekend

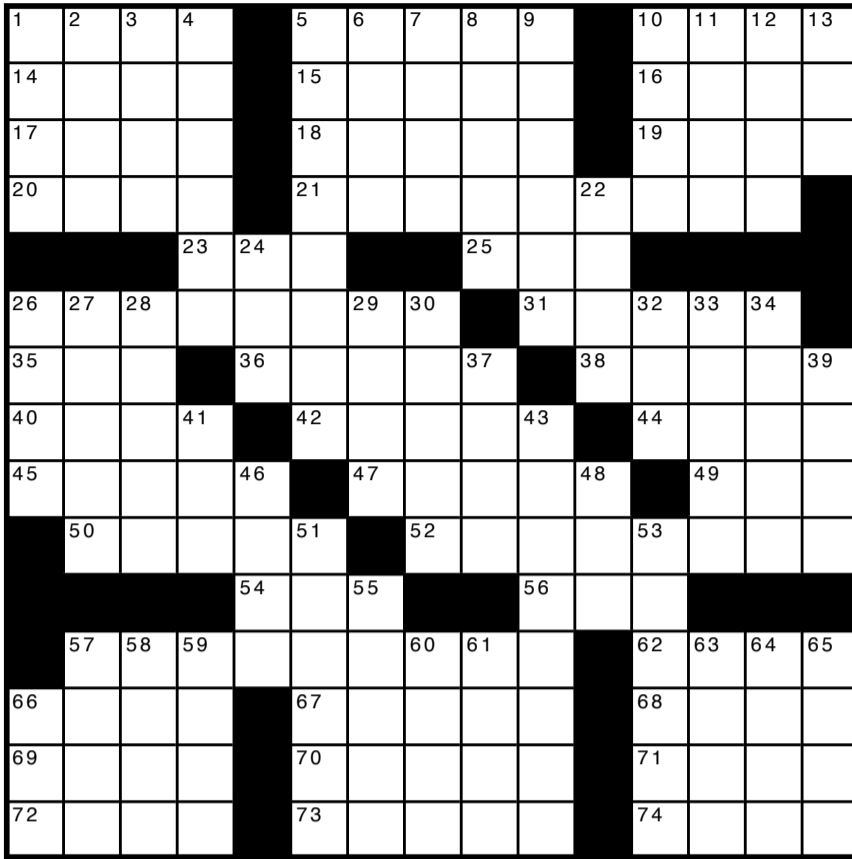
**3** consecutive Super Bowl appearances by the Kansas City Chiefs, who will take on the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday, Feb. 9 to decide Super Bowl LIX

**58** assists from Cougars setter Grant Hill in two losses against the UBCO Heat last weekend

**18** 30-goal seasons for Alexander Ovechkin, passing Mike Gartner’s all-time record of 17 such seasons



# THE REFLECTOR CROSSWORD



- 31. Forbidden
  - 35. Doc bloc
  - 36. Back in
  - 38. Poisonous
  - 40. Torn clothing
  - 42. Fear greatly
  - 44. Granary
  - 45. Snapshot
  - 47. Bony prefix
  - 49. Actress Sandra
  - 50. Blood line
  - 52. Person who tends sheep
  - 54. Gerund maker
  - 56. 1 or 66: Abbr.
  - 57. Pertaining to a barber
  - 62. Racetrack fence
  - 66. Gaelic
  - 67. Big name in vermouth
  - 68. Scandinavian capital
  - 69. Saudi king
  - 70. More or less vertical
  - 71. Electric fish
  - 72. Body shops?
  - 73. New Hampshire city
  - 74. Freelancer's encl.
- 9. Leave
  - 10. Traditional passed-down knowledge
  - 11. Smell \_\_\_\_
  - 12. Gumshoes
  - 13. Weed whacker
  - 22. Peachy-keen
  - 24. Neighbor of Isr.
  - 26. Diamond cover
  - 27. Mutual of \_\_\_\_
  - 28. Myopic Mr.
  - 29. Other, in Oaxaca
  - 30. Head lock
  - 32. Diddley and Derek
  - 33. Rust, e.g.
  - 34. Exxon Valdez, e.g.
  - 37. Pledge
  - 39. Like some dorms
  - 41. Orch. section
  - 43. Cervine
  - 46. Redding of R&B
  - 48. Decide
  - 51. Hooded jacket
  - 53. People of courage
  - 55. Search blindly
  - 57. Snare
  - 58. Dept. of Labor div.
  - 59. Sparks and Beatty
  - 60. Got it
  - 61. Slippery \_\_\_\_ eel
  - 63. On the ocean
  - 64. Woes
  - 65. Misplace
  - 66. Abysmal grades

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

**ACROSS**

- 1. Hostile to
- 5. Mountain nymph of Greek mythology
- 10. Slat
- 14. Shower
- 15. Shouldered
- 16. Popular cookie
- 17. Salt Lake City students
- 18. Piece of bacon
- 19. Contest, ethnicity
- 20. Got ripped
- 21. Musical clickers
- 23. Sun Devils' sch.
- 25. 100 square meters
- 26. Nonsense

**DOWN**

- 1. Stuck, after "in"
  - 2. Western pact
  - 3. Wedding cake feature
  - 4. Trousers measurement
  - 5. Hidden
  - 6. Roster used to assign duties
  - 7. Drops the ball
  - 8. Ekberg of "La Dolce Vita"
  - 9. Dept. of Labor div.
  - 59. Sparks and Beatty
  - 60. Got it
  - 61. Slippery \_\_\_\_ eel
  - 63. On the ocean
  - 64. Woes
  - 65. Misplace
  - 66. Abysmal grades
- See answer grid at bottom of page*

## WATCH THE COUGARS

**WOMENS VOLLEYBALL**

Next home game: Friday, Jan. 31 vs MacEwan University Griffins at 8 p.m.

**MENS VOLLEYBALL**

Next home game: Friday, Jan. 31 vs MacEwan University Griffins at 6 p.m.

**WOMENS BASKETBALL**

Next home game: Friday, Feb. 7 vs University of Alberta Pandas at 6 p.m.

**MENS BASKETBALL**

Next home game: Friday, Feb. 7 vs University of Alberta Golden Bears at 8 p.m.

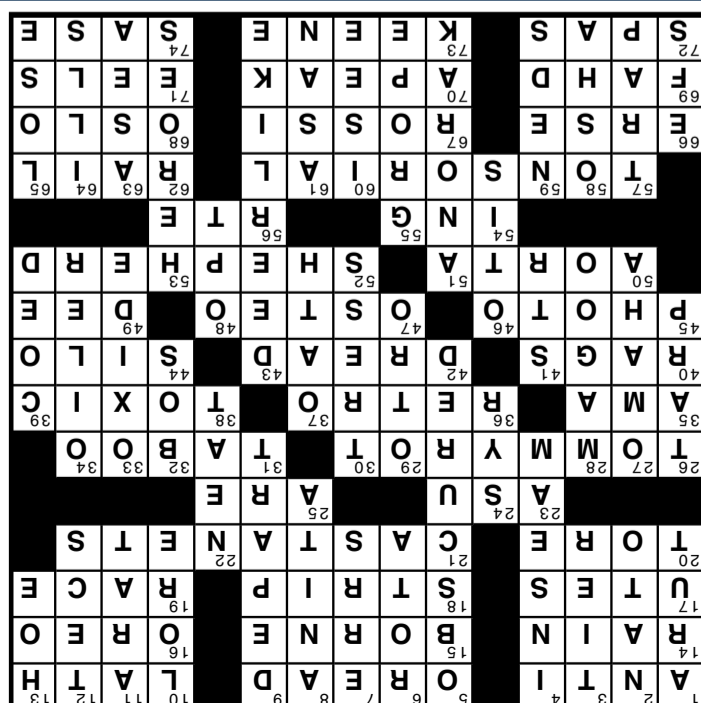
**WOMENS HOCKEY**

Next home game: Friday, Jan. 31 vs University of Calgary Dinos at 4:30 p.m. (Saddledome)

**MENS HOCKEY**

Next home game: Friday, Jan. 31 vs University of Calgary Dinos at 7:30 p.m. (Saddledome)

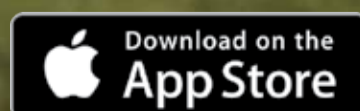
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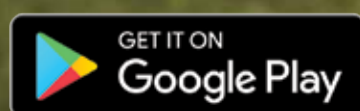


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# Defining a path to the pros

*An inside look at life in the front office of a pro sports franchise*

## Truman Bartman

Staff Writer

The life of an American Hockey League (AHL) player involves a rigorous lifestyle with a heavy dose of travelling and training, being away from loved ones, and solely focusing on hockey. That lifestyle stretches beyond those who play in the AHL to all of the staff members of each team who mirror the same schedule. Henderson Silver Knights general manager (GM) Tim Speltz has not only lived this life for decades, but he has also embraced it.

His career in hockey is one that has spanned multiple generations and several roles. Driven by his love for the game and his enjoyment of working in it, Speltz has found himself working professionally in the game since 1990. However, unlike so many people currently in pro hockey, Speltz's path to the professional ranks didn't begin as a player. Not necessarily being the strongest player growing up, Speltz found his role working within the hockey world off the ice. From there, his passion for the sport blossomed.

"It was a really good friend of mine who got me involved. He was the head coach of the Midget AAA Tigers in Medicine Hat, Alberta, then the main affiliate to the Medicine Hat Tigers, and he needed somebody to be the manager and to look after all the details of the team," Speltz said. "I wasn't sure about it at first, and I knew I wasn't going to do it unless I was all in on doing it. When I started out doing it, I still had a full-time business to run."

However, the time that Speltz spent with the AAA Tigers spawned future opportunities to work in the WHL, NHL, and now in the AHL with the Silver Knights in Nevada. One thing that has remained throughout Speltz's time in all three leagues is his belief in never taking his role for granted.

"If I'm involved, I'll always love it, and if I don't love it, or if I wake up ever saying I have to go to work today, it's over," Speltz said. "It's never



**The Henderson Silver Knights' stellar player development has been key in helping the Vegas Golden Knights compete for the top spot in the Pacific Division of the NHL.**

Photo courtesy of Instagram/@hendersonsilverknights

happened, and I enjoy it every day. I love going to the rink. I love watching practice. I love working with coaches, trainers, and equipment managers; really, with every part, I just love it."

Loving your job is one thing but being able to last in a variety of high-end roles and find success within each of them is another. Speltz was general manager for the Spokane Chiefs for 26 years, capturing success at the highest peak when he helped orchestrate the Chiefs to two Memorial Cup victories in 1991 and 2008. Beyond that, Speltz has managed the Canadian World Junior team, worked with the NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs as a leader in their scouting ranks, won the prestigious WHL Governors Award for his lifetime contribution to growth and development in the WHL, and most recently, was part of the management team of the 2023 Stanley Cup winning Vegas Golden Knights.

Despite his many successes, Speltz says there isn't a singular moment that stands out where he felt he had

"made it." He attributes a large amount of his success to being "process driven" and sticking to the steps that he knows can help him do his best.

"For me, experience and a proper foundation are both such important things," Speltz said. "There are certain steps you have to take with anything, and I don't think hockey is any different. If you've got a proper process, you're going to get results."

The fruits of those labours don't always show up right away, but Speltz believes in the importance of remaining patient and staying focused.

"I think patience is another one of the things you have to have," Speltz said. "I've learned that through experience. As importantly, you don't know when it happens, but you just know that you're more confident with what you believe in the longer you do it."

There is a lot of correlation between the development that Speltz has experienced throughout his years working as a GM and what young hockey players go through in their careers. Speltz takes

pride in being able to help put his team's young players in the best possible places so that they themselves can flourish in their roles just as he has done in his.

The AHL is one place where the growth of young players is always a priority. Speltz believes that helping the young men on his teams take the next step is what makes the AHL such an important place.

"When you look at junior hockey, you need to have competitive teams, but the only way you're going to have competitive teams is if you do a good job developing your young players," Speltz said. "You have to look at development as the first step, and the only way you're going to develop is with opportunity. You have to give those young players opportunities. And sometimes that's not the easiest thing to do, because you can have some hard nights doing that."

Beyond the confines of his work, Speltz is just as devoted to his family. Although Speltz has spent many nights away from home during the season, he credits his wife for the

partnership and foundation that they have built together, along with the commitment that she and the rest of his family have made to support his hockey journey.

"When we moved from Medicine Hat in 1990, my wife questioned the hockey thing," Speltz said. "We went to Spokane, and we had some success right away, which made it easier. She had a little more confidence. I was able to be in one spot for 26 years, which was great for my family."

"You have to have a good support system, you can't be in sports without a supportive spouse. You just can't be. That part of it was great because she stayed home and raised our girls. I was on the road a lot doing the hockey thing. So you need a strong partnership with your spouse for sure."

When his current role with the Henderson Silver Knights came about, his family played a major role in his decision to accept it. As Speltz describes it, most other opportunities within the AHL wouldn't have been fit, but being in Henderson made the most sense for him and the rest of the Speltz clan.

"I've often said that if this opportunity was at a lot of other American League cities, I could probably look at that and say it wouldn't have worked," Speltz said. "I know my daughters are going to get down to see me. My wife loves to be there in the wintertime. So it's been a perfect fit that way. I've been fortunate with the opportunities I've had."

Like so many others in the hockey world, Speltz's path has been somewhat unconventional. Certainly, having a strong support system has been critical. Moreover, perseverance, having a passion for his role, and maintaining personal convictions for growth and development are central to what has led to his achievements.

As the leader of the Henderson Silver Knights, Speltz continues to model the essentials for players as they pave their own path to the pros.



# The greatest show on ice

## Everything you need to know about the 2025 Crowchild Classic

### Naomi Campbell

Staff Writer

Come one, come all to the 11th annual Crowchild Classic hockey match between the Mount Royal University Cougars and the University of Calgary Dinos on Jan. 31 at 4:30 p.m. This cutthroat competition is the biggest hockey event of the season, featuring two of the fiercest rivals in all of U SPORTS.

### Setting the tone

The first-ever game was played on Feb. 7th, 2013 with 4,725 students rushing to the Scotiabank Saddledome to support their schools. That might sound like a small number, but every year, the Saddledome houses more and more fans, with the record being set at 12,859 back in 2016.

Ten Crowchild Classic games have been played since 2013, with the Cougars women's hockey team holding a 3-7 record in those games over the years and the men's squad posting an even 5-5 record.

The Cougars and Dinos face off numerous times throughout the year in sports like soccer, volleyball and basketball, but have held a special rivalry on the ice since MRU's first season in Canada West in 2012. After every regular season game has been completed across all of their sports, the team with the winning record receives a 68-kilogram cast-iron City of Calgary manhole cover that is designed to look like a giant gold medal. Currently, MRU holds the trophy and is on pace to win it for a third consecutive season.

### Now we got bad blood

The MRU women's hockey team has been a force to be reckoned with this season, with their amazing roster of forwards and defensemen, as well as their top-tier goaltending.

Rookie forward Lyvia Butz has been one of the most exciting players on the ice this season and will be competing in her first Crowchild Classic this week. With three goals and three assists on her ledger this season, Butz feels excited to make her own mark on the

biggest game of the year.

"My sister played for MRU, and I've gone and watched all the Crowchild Classics when she was here," Butz said. "The environment is so much fun, and I can't wait to be a part of it."

Fourth-year veteran and U SPORTS gold medal winner Sydney Benko touched on the anticipation surrounding the game, especially with playoffs on the horizon.

"There's a different vibe about [the Crowchild Classic]," Benko said. "We definitely get a lot more fans than any event I've ever played at, and it's nice to see the schools come together."

Currently, the Cougars have a 15-7-0 record on the season, with a record of 8-4-0 at home and 7-3-0 on the road, which places them third overall in the conference, and second in the west division. Heading into this game, both players provided insight on how the Crowchild Classic brings a playoff-like atmosphere.

"I'm obviously very excited and with every game, it does come with nerves, with every matchup, this league is close, so it could go either way any night, so obviously nervous but very excited," Butz said.

"I think it kind of prepares us for the playoffs," Benko said. "I know in the past, we've used this game to prepare for a playoff style

game."

Head coach Scott Rivett has been with the women's team since the 2012/2013 season and coached at MRU's first Crowchild Classic game.

"It is always fun getting to be part of such a big event," Rivett said. "It is the one event every year that seems to bring everyone together and the energy leading up to the event and atmosphere at it is just something we don't get to experience often enough. It is always a highlight of the season no matter what."

Rivett also touched on his favourite memory from MRU's third year in the league.

"We ended up setting the Dinos 3-2 the year we were loaded with [Hayley] Wickenheiser and some other Olympians," Rivett said. "To this day I don't remember the Saddledome being as loud even though we probably only had a third of the attendance that we typically have today."

### The boys are back in town

The MRU Cougars men's hockey team isn't just a team, but a unit of boys who live and breathe blue and white every time they step onto the ice. Heading into this year's Crowchild Classic, they hold a 17-5-0 record on the season so far, including 8-2-0 at home and a 9-3-0 on the road.

With Clay Hanus leading the conference with 33 points and reigning U SPORTS Goaltender of the Year Shane Farkas holding the second most wins in Canada West, MRU has been a nightmare for opposing teams to deal with all season long.

First-year forward Justin Lies has proven to be an impeccable addition to the roster this year, putting up 23 points on 14 goals and nine assists in his rookie campaign, and has been eagerly waiting to play in his first Crowchild Classic.

"I'm really looking forward to it, it's a big event for our team and it's something I've kind of looked forward to since committing here," Lies said. "It'll be a lot of fun playing in that big rink in front of that many fans, it's been a while since I've gotten that kind of opportunity."

Unlike Lies, team points-leader Hanus has played in a number of large-scale Crowchild Classic games and compared them to his WHL experiences, favouring the collegiate atmosphere much more.

"In the WHL you get a lot of fans as well, but they're not necessarily thousands of drunk students, so it gets pretty loud in there and it's a lot of fun," Hanus joked.

Head coach Bert Gilling also shed some light on leading this team since

joining MRU in the 2014/15 season. Gilling began his career playing in the NCAA with the Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs while obtaining his degree in arts before taking on the role of assistant coach at Bemidji State University in Minnesota.

As head coach of the Cougars, Gilling refuses to mention the Dinos by name and takes the yearly match more seriously than any fan or player in the stadium.

"Well, it's really a privilege to have that opportunity here," Gilling said. "To get to play in an NHL arena and to see the enthusiasm of most importantly, our students on campus, and then our faculty and alumni, and just how it brings the whole Mount Royal University community together. It's something that's not lost on me every year that we play that game."

Even though winning the annual showdown is important to him, Gilling's favourite part of the game is the fans, who create the special moments he cherishes most.

"When you do win, it's just having that whole sea of blue and white just stand and cheer, it feels like we are all just a big family celebrating," Gilling said. "So every time we do that, that's my favourite moment, is just when you're able to earn a victory, and just see the crowd behind us and in the pictures afterward, those are my favourite memories and moments from these games."

### When the puck drops

With plenty of captivating storylines and skilled players set to battle at the Scotiabank Saddledome, this year's Crowchild Classic has the potential to be the most exciting game of the season. The Cougars women's team are seeking revenge as they hope to pick up their fourth Crowchild Classic win while the men's team look to break the 5-5 tie and secure their sixth win.

Tickets are available for purchase online, with the women's game starting at 4:30 p.m. and the men's game beginning at 7:30 p.m.



Cougars forward Aliya Jomha, number 25, leads the team in goals scored (10) and points (18) in her fourth year of U SPORTS eligibility, making her the deadliest threat to the Dinos in this year's Crowchild Classic. Photo by Adrian Shellard