



the
reflector

FREE
December 4, 2025
www.TheReflector.ca

**Local vendors
spread
holiday cheer
(Pg. 11 & 12)**

Petition hopes to stop mining in the eastern Rockies

The Save Our Slopes petition now 5,000 signatures short of its 25,000 goal

Karra Smith

Staff Writer



The Save our Slopes defenders during a peaceful blockade in the Highwood River Valley. Photo courtesy of Save Our Slopes

Despite the provincial government's decision to reinstate coal mining in the eastern Rockies, individuals across the province have shown their support for the mountain terrain, with the petition "Save Our Slopes" reaching just over 20,500 signatures out of their 25,000-signature goal.

As Albertans continue to voice their concerns over Energy Minister Brian Jean's decision to lift the coal mining moratorium, a petition created by the Land Lovers Network has gained significant traction, sparking conversations about nature conservation efforts.

Save Our Slopes is an Alberta coalition focused on protecting the Rockies from the

potential harm caused by mining. The website for the cause states that damage done to the mountains and surrounding areas is irreversible, and the support of Albertans is necessary in stopping the mines from proceeding.

"The eastern slopes are Alberta's lifeline—once defaced and polluted, they're lost forever," the website says.

The concerns about mining outlined by Save Our Slopes include the health risks posed by air pollution and the economic decline in surrounding municipalities.

Another key concern being called out by the organisation is the aspect of water control and potential

contamination.

Dr. Jeff Pollock, professor and chair of the earth and environmental sciences department at Mount Royal University (MRU), says impacts on water cannot be fully predicted until the corporations overseeing these reserves release their environmental strategies.

"It's kind of impossible to fully know what that could be until the details of how the mining

company would approach those," Pollock says. "Do they have a plan for mitigating water contamination in runoff or to minimise any disruption to groundwater?"

However, it's not just the process of the coal mines that are being questioned, but also their relevance to the current economy.

While Pollock says mineral development is crucial for societal growth, Jared Blustein, executive director for Calgary Climate Hub, says the development of other energy sources makes the need for coal questionable.

"It's not going to compete with the advancements of renewables and the renewable revolution that's happening right now across our world,"

says Blustein.

As the Calgary Climate Hub works closely with the Land Lovers Network to support the petition, Blustein says now is the opportunity for Albertans to demand meaningful climate policies.

"We've had a government essentially be deaf to the wishes of the Albertan peoples for far too long," says Blustein. "I think this is in many ways one of the many straws that are breaking the camel's back, so to speak."

Blustein encourages anyone looking for more information on climate issues to check out the Calgary Climate Hub's website.

The Reflector reached out to Brian Jean's office three times, but did not receive a response.

Encirclement season on the eastern front

Ukrainian defences strain under Russian advances, causing diplomatic setbacks

Vlad Semeshko

Staff Writer



The eastern Ukraine front. Photo courtesy of Taras Gren, supplied by FLICKR

The December fog has settled on the Donbass frontlines, hinting at the steady transition of the Russo-Ukrainian war into its third winter since the start of the operation. The last few months have been highly eventful for the conflict in all of its dimensions.

Developments such as the leaked peace plan, encroaching Russian encirclement in Pokrovsk, and numerous corruption scandals from the government halls of Kiev may collectively suggest that the time to pay attention to the region is now.

As the year draws to a close, the battlefield conditions, infamously synonymous with Russian winters, indicate that the Russian army's offensive, which began in May, is coming to a halt.

Though the momentum accumulated throughout the summer has been fading, the overall effects on the Ukrainian front lines have been significant. The offensive pushed forward along six major axes advancing in the direction of Kupiansk, Seversk, Pokrovsk, Novopavlivka, Huliaipole, and Sumy, challenging Ukrainian control over eight strategically significant cities across the front.

As a result, the armed forces of Ukraine are facing growing defensive crises, scrambling to plug gaps with

increasingly scarce reserves and manpower shortages, all in the face of dwindling material support from the NATO member states.

The attention is centred on Pokrovsk, a city located in a cluster with two other towns, Mirnograd to the east and Rodinskoe to the north.

Pokrovsk has in the past been described as one of the few remaining significant strongholds in Donbass, keeping the Russian army away from capturing the rest of the region for the past year.

Despite most of Pokrovsk being held by the Russian forces, urban combat persists in the city. With Russian troops capturing a chunk of Rodinskoe in an encircling move north around Mirnograd, the city was put in a pocket and directly at risk of another potentially devastating encirclement for Ukraine.

Around 70 kilometres north-east of Pokrovsk lies the town of Konstantinovka. Now separated by Russian troops, Konstantinovka is characterised as the 'gateway' to Slovyansk and Kramatorsk, cities that are of high importance to Moscow.

Slovyansk and Kramatorsk are considered to be the "last jewels" of Donbass remaining under Ukrainian control. Kramatorsk is the de facto administrative centre of the Ukrainian-controlled Donetsk oblast, and Slovyansk

is of symbolic significance to the conflict, being the first location of open and armed confrontation between pro-Russian separatist forces and the Ukrainian government back in 2014.

While the Konstantinovka 'gateway' maintains its defences, the Russian Commander of the army group, Sergei Medvedev, said to Vladimir Putin in a briefing that the town would be captured by mid-December, with Putin urging caution and advising against rushing the operation.

Nevertheless, this

estimation is considered to be unrealistic by Western war analysts.

While Ukraine is facing frontline challenges and a deepening logistical nightmare, priorities in Kiev have shifted more towards negotiating a favourable diplomatic resolution. The leaked 28-point peace plan developed by both the United States and the Russian Federation revealed the ongoing divide between American and European NATO counterparts.

The initial peace plan included security guarantees for Ukraine along with territorial concessions favouring Russian demands, recognising Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as part of Russia. The plan additionally included several points unrelated to Ukraine surrounding direct agreements between the United States and Russia.

U.S. President Donald Trump made efforts to pressure Ukraine into signing the agreement, but the absence of consultation with Ukraine and the European allies during the plan's formulation caused a reaction from numerous NATO members, leading them to bring forward a proposal of their own.

Recently, there have been many changes to the points in the proposal from both the Trump administration and European allies. With the original 28-point plan now seemingly terminated, it is considered to be the starting framework for negotiating and finalising a peace agreement.

Ahead of further talks set to take place between the White House and Kremlin envoys, Putin doubled down on Russian demands, stating that a ceasefire is possible only if Kiev's troops withdraw from the territory claimed by Moscow.

An emphasis was made by Putin, proclaiming the inevitability of the return of Donbass into the Federation, highlighting that relinquishment of any territorial gains is out of the question for Moscow.

The prolonged war is nearing its fourth year mark of direct Russian military involvement since the invasion in February 2022. While increased dialogue brings hope for a settlement in the near future, lack of compromise and conflicting geopolitical realities continue to drive apart two not-so-long-ago brotherly nations.



Diplomatic tensions rise as Russia continues their advances in Ukraine. Photo courtesy of Canadian Affairs

Danielle Smith, Mark Carney collaborate to strengthen Canadian economy

An unexpected alliance unites to make Canada an energy and economic superpower

Zafir Nagji

Sports Editor

Prime Minister Mark Carney and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith convened in Calgary to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Nov. 27.

Despite their usual pattern of disagreements, the two politicians collaborated to strike a new deal as they look to strengthen the Canadian economy amid global trade disruptions, particularly by reducing its dependence on the U.S.

Carney and Smith plan to achieve this through a provincial-federal collaboration, with their MOU building a new framework to drive both of their shared ambitions. Those include achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, maximising the potential of Alberta's energy resources, and injecting the Canadian job market with hundreds of thousands of high-paying careers.

"In the face of global trade shifts and profound uncertainty, Canada and Alberta are striking a new partnership to build a stronger, more sustainable,

and more independent Albertan and Canadian economy," Carney said in a press release.

The MOU may have been a collaborative effort, but it was a seemingly obvious win for Smith, who finally received word on an approval process for her oil export pipeline project, which is planned to run from Alberta to the north coast of British Columbia.

The provincial government's application must be submitted for approval ahead of the newly set deadline of July 1, 2026.

Carney's federal government also got some victories through the memorandum, including the advancement of Pathways Plus — the world's largest carbon capture, utilisation and storage project.

The Pathways Alliance — a group of oilsands companies in Alberta that have all pledged to reach net-zero emissions — aims to capture emissions from 20 oilsands facilities in the province, then transport them 400 kilometres by pipeline to a terminal in Cold Lake, Alta., where they will be stored



Cold Lake Provincial Park. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

underground.

The construction of Pathways Plus is also set to strengthen the Canadian energy sector, as it reduces emissions while delivering economic benefits, such as a reported \$16 billion boost to GDP and over 40,000 jobs annually.

The MOU also included new plans for nuclear energy, as the provincial and federal governments will work together to develop a nuclear generation strategy. This sets the stage for the construction and operation of nuclear power generation in Alberta

and interconnected markets by 2050, with the strategy to be completed by Jan. 1, 2027.

Outside the energy sector, the MOU also set goals for the creation of new data centres, including those optimised for AI. That necessitates growth in Canadian electrical generation, albeit within the bounds of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for the electricity sector by 2050.

Additionally, the MOU outlines an offer of co-ownership of some projects with Indigenous communities in Alberta and B.C., including collaborating with the B.C. government and sharing Indigenous ownership of a bitumen pipeline focused on exports to Asia, as well as Pathways.

The MOU is a complex, all-encompassing agreement that features many goals and objectives, built on the unlikely collaboration between the Alberta provincial government and the Canadian federal government. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Tim Hodgson believes this will be a massive step for the province and the country as a whole.

"Canada is acting decisively to establish ourselves as a global energy superpower in the face of a changing world," Hodgson says.

THE REFLECTOR

Issue 7, Volume 65

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Publishing Editor: Emma Marshall
Managing Editor: Ivar Bergs
News Editor: Bella Coco
Features Editor: Sarah Palmer
Arts Editor: Rylie Perry
Sports Editor: Zafir Nagji
Photo Editor: Aiden Johner
Layout Editor: Acacia Carol
Web Editor: Mia Smith
COVER: Brooks Decillia

Contributors: Hannah Flammenspeck

Staff Writers: Vlad Semeshko, Karra Smith, Hunter Pratt, Katrina Ebuenga, Naomi Campbell, Manveet Kaur Waraich, Anais Loeppky, Amanpreet Kaur

The Reflector, with an on and off-campus circulation of 2,000, is the independent voice of the students of Mount Royal University. It is published fortnightly during the academic year (Sept. to April).

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

The Reflector welcomes newsworthy submissions from all students and community members.

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

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

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

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

Contents are copyright © 2025. No material may be reproduced without express written consent.

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

the reflector

Wyckham House
 Mount Royal University
 4825 Mount Royal Gate SW
 Calgary, AB T3E 6K6
 All depts.: 403.440.6268
 Fax: 403.440.6762
 TheReflector@TheReflector.ca



The federal government and provincial government of Alberta share an uncommon agreement with Pathways Plus, looking to strengthen the Canadian economy. Photo courtesy of Canadian Affairs

features

Sexism in the trades

Gender discrimination 'deeply ingrained' in Alberta's blue-collar industries

Karra Smith

Staff Writer



Woman climbs scaffolding at a construction site. Photo courtesy of Thomas Kinto / Unsplash

Given Alberta's status as Canada's largest oil and gas producer, the industry has provided thousands of careers for skilled tradespeople, yet the staggering male-to-female ratio has left blue-collar women underrepresented.

A lot has changed since 1914, when the province's first major oil field was found in Turner Valley, Alta. What has stayed the same, however, is that the energy industry remains heavily male-dominated.

In 2023, women made up almost 47 per cent of the employed population across all industries in the province. Despite this, women accounted for just 20 per cent of mining, oil and gas workers, according to the Government of Alberta.

Although most companies' codes of conduct outline gender diversity goals and zero-tolerance policies for harassment, women in the trades still experience sexism on the job.

Amber Cormier, a journeyman welder in Fort McMurray's oilsands, says one of the toughest parts of being the only female on the shop floor was the pressure to perform better than her male colleagues.

"To prove that I deserve to be there, but not so much so that I'm trying to rub that in their face," says Cormier.

Over the course of her welding career, she says that the larger companies handled gender discrimination the best.

"Syncrude, in general,

actually does really well when it comes to the sexism," says Cormier. "It was a lot of the smaller companies that weren't so great with it."

For Cormier, the pressure to demonstrate her worthiness of the job led her to think outside the box and find alternative solutions to problems.

"But the hardest part, too, was, naturally, I'm just not as strong as the guys, so I had to work smarter, not harder," she says.

Cormier is far from the only tradeswoman to have experienced sexism in the field. Electrical and instrumentation coordinator planner Jennifer Sweeney says the gender-based aggression she faced was more direct.

When she first started her career as an apprentice, Sweeney had a hard time completing hands-on work, as she was often told by male coworkers that she was "not allowed to do that because it wasn't a woman's work."

In her time as an electrical

coordinator, Sweeney says sometimes "your passion gets held against you," and in other cases is interpreted as aggression."

She says a recent example of this situation occurred when she questioned how her male colleagues were structuring a meeting.

"So then I got told that I was very smart, and I could do anything, but I could come off abrasive sometimes," says Sweeney.

Although sexism and gender discrimination remain prevalent issues in the extraction industry and other blue-collar fields, large

corporations such as Suncor and Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL) are setting goals to increase the number of female leadership positions.

For example, Suncor's board of directors has a goal of 30 per cent gender diversity for males and females, and highlights that the current number of women on the board is 36 per cent. Similarly, CNRL believes in a minimum female board composition of 40 per cent.

Many of these companies are dedicating time and resources to addressing these issues at a corporate level,

often with assistance from programs such as Employers of Choice run by Women Building Futures (WBF).

Tara Hoffmeier, the manager of the WBF's workforce inclusion programs, says gender roles are still "very deeply ingrained" in the trades and transportation industry.

"Our role is to really help folks understand that these deeply held thoughts and ideas of who belongs where are outdated, and we really want folks to see the value of diversifying our workforce," says Hoffmeier.

Through organisations such as this, women are provided support for the challenges that come with entering a male-dominated field, while corporations, through paid memberships, can access resources and courses necessary for building accessible, safe working conditions for new female trade graduates.

According to Hoffmeier, this process would not be sustained if not for the incoming tradeswomen and the companies participating in the programs.

"We're looking at creating systemic change, and that really takes everybody in the industry to do," she says.



Oil pump near Ponoka, Alta., in August 2010. Photo courtesy of Ken Eckert / Wikimedia Commons

Opinion: Why AI music isn't real art

AI artist charts for first time, ending rap's dominance on Billboard Hot 100

Zafir Nagji

Sports Editor

For the first time since 1990, no rap songs ranked in the top 40 of Billboard's industry-standard-setting Hot 100 list. Despite the genre experiencing its golden era, with a market share peak just five years ago, rap music was absent from the top two-fifths of the list, breaking a 35-year streak when Kendrick Lamar and SZA's "luther" fell from the top 40 on Oct. 25.

A week later, Xania Monet became the first AI-generated artist to debut on Billboard's Adult R&B Airplay chart with her song, "How Was I Supposed to Know?" It ranked in the top 10 of Billboard's R&B Digital Song Sales chart, the top 22 of their overall Digital Song Sales Chart, and appeared on the Hot R&B Songs chart in September.

With one long-standing precedent reaching its end and a concerning new one beginning, listeners, critics, and other artists are growing concerned as the AI revolution looks to claim music as its next casualty.

The blueprint

Inherently, art is meant to be a form of human expression, and music is no different. Hip-hop and rap originated from the struggles that people of colour endured in America. The term R&B, which stands for rhythm and blues, was coined by Billboard in 1948 to replace the offensive term "race music," which included all music by black artists.

Hip-hop, rap and R&B have stood the test of time and

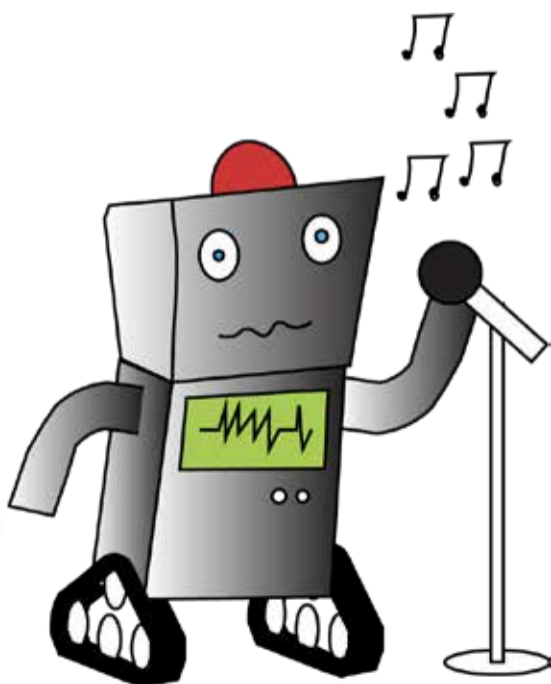
were a huge part of the Civil Rights movement, proudly unswayed by its lack of mainstream popularity. The Notorious B.I.G. and 2Pac revolutionised the industry in the 1990s, remaining authentically hip-hop while achieving legitimate sales for their records.

White rappers like Eminem diversified the game and added new dimensions, and artists like Ye (formerly known as Kanye West) and Drake incorporated elements from other genres, redefining expectations for a rapper's personality and the subject matter of their music. This helped the genre break into popular culture, with some tracks even starting to receive radio play, until hip-hop, rap, and R&B officially became mainstream. Today, the genre's influence on pop culture is undeniable.

Nothing was the same

On the one hand, this was a positive shift in the music industry. More people were made aware of Black culture than ever before, and the genre reached its peak in accessibility during the technological revolution.

On the other hand, rap became pop culture, industrialising a genre built on the struggle and the battles for equality that generations of Black people endured. Many artists have spoken on the commodification of Black struggle and culture, with more rappers growing in popularity by making music that affirms stereotypes



AI music production is involving less and less humans with each adaptation. Illustration courtesy of Aiden Johner



Person uses iPad equipped with AI technology. Photo courtesy of Jo Lin / Unsplash

and continues to oppress people of colour as a whole, betraying the same principles that hip-hop, rap and R&B flourished from.

So, when an AI-generated artist racks up 17 million streams in two months on her way to multiple Billboard charts and a multimillion-dollar record deal, the status of culture in music starts to look definitively worse.

Ctrl (alt, delete)

Let's make one thing clear—Xania Monet is not a sentient, self-producing artist. Telisha Jones, a 31-year-old Mississippi-based poet, is responsible for Monet's "birth," using her own poetry to write lyrics that she can prompt Suno, a musical ChatGPT of sorts, to synthesise into a song.

Despite the human songwriting, award-winning R&B artist Kehlani still doesn't see any validity in AI-generated music of any kind and spoke out against it on a now-deleted TikTok video:

"This is so beyond out of our control... nothing and no one on Earth will ever be able to justify AI to me."

Kehlani also took issue with the lack of attribution in AI art, as generative systems like Suno are trained on countless copyrighted creations. The Recording Industry Association of America spearheaded a massive copyright lawsuit in 2024 against the platform, bringing along Warner Music Group (WGM), Universal Music Group (UMG) and Sony Music as they sued Suno and a similar platform, Udio, for mass copyright infringement.

UMG and WGM settled their cases this year, and both launched joint ventures using the same AI programs they had sued just a year earlier. Both labels are now partnered with Udio, and Suno agreed to a settlement/joint agreement with WGM, which will let users create AI-generated music based on the names, images and likenesses of artists who opt in to the new program.

Collision course

To make a living from their music, most artists have to sign record deals with massive labels like UMG and WGM, which effectively transfer ownership of their music to those companies. Now, as those conglomerates partner with AI platforms, they could financially pressure artists to agree to give up their names, images, and likenesses to train those programs.

With Monet, the only saving grace is that a true human artist is writing the lyrics

and ideating through Suno, which some have argued is functionally identical to a singer employing a writer.

However, just listening to Monet "sing," an untrained ear can feel that something is missing. Yes, the vocals sound awful, and the mixing is less than ideal, but moreover, the very emotional subject matter of the music feels hollow and soulless in its delivery.

Additionally, while a singer may not always write their own lyrics, and a lyricist may not always sing their own songs, both impart their personal human touch to their art and use talents they've cultivated over time. No matter how sonically perfect an AI-generated song is, it will never feel as real as a sonically imperfect human-generated song.

Record labels and conglomerates will always chase the maximisation of their bottom line, and have historically not hesitated to do so against artists' wishes. This trend is no different, but as Grand View Research reports that AI now occupies almost 40 per cent of the North American music market share and continues to grow, artists will have an even harder time breaking into the industry to make a living from their art.

And if there are no humans in art, is there any art left?

The making of Mount Royal University

How a Methodist college became one of Alberta's most adaptable institutions

Manveet Kaur Waraich

Staff Writer



The original MRC building, nicknamed the 'Barn,' in downtown Calgary, in 1970.

Photo courtesy of MRU Archives and Special Collections

When Alberta became a province in 1905, it moved swiftly to establish public universities and shift control of higher education from churches to the government. But private religious institutions continued to shape the landscape, including Mount Royal College (MRC).

1911: Methodist beginnings

David Baker, a historian and MRC's former president, wrote in his book that this was a crucial period for the founding values to take shape. Although its Methodist origins emphasised religious education, the college was grounded in cultural literacy, practical training and service to the community.

"Methodists focused on niches not served or not served well by public systems," reads his book, titled *Catch the Gleam*. "Their colleges were dynamic institutions...adding career programs to prepare people for the workforce, and forging partnerships with public institutions where appropriate."

This early strategic vision ultimately defined Mount Royal, which was the only community college in Canada to operate for more than 40 years before becoming a university.

Under its first principal, Reverend George Kerby, the college took shape quickly after its legal establishment in 1910. It was personified as a three-storey L-shaped

building—nicknamed the 'Barn'—that rose at 1128 7th Ave. W, with nine classrooms and housing for 100 students.

The first student yearbook from 1911 lists 125 students enrolled, though MRU's website lists 197, with annual tuition sitting around \$360 between 1911 and 1942.

Strain of WWI

Although it was a strong start, Mount Royal's early decades were rocky. The First World War and the Great Depression brought overwhelming financial strain. The new institution's survival depended entirely on innovation.

"Programs were attuned to what students needed and wanted...it was academically entrepreneurial, constantly searching for new needs to meet," writes Baker.

He also states that MRC "relied heavily on its boarding school function for revenue," but because most students came from rural backgrounds, "rural penury implied scarcity for the College." To keep MRC afloat, Kerby and house directress, Mabel Carrick, took numerous voluntary salary cuts of more than \$9,000, and faculty lived in residence with students.

By 1930, with enrolment at its lowest and city high schools expanding, MRC made a decisive shift. According to Baker, it chose to "form an affiliation agreement with the University of Alberta and establish an identity for itself as a junior college," eliminating elementary

programs and duplicating the first two years of university so students could stay in Calgary and avoid relocation costs to Edmonton.

As the 1940-41 calendar put it, "to students who are looking forward to securing a university degree, the Junior College affords an opportunity to complete their first year without the necessity of leaving their own homes...to those who are preparing to enter more directly into modern life, [MRC] serves a useful purpose as a finishing school."

This shift spurred growth. New facilities, housing, warhuts, library materials, labs, and auditoriums formed a campus. Enrolment climbed to 499 by the late 1930s, and "by the end of the decade, the college's advertisements proclaimed that it offered first-year university courses" leading to degrees across arts, commerce, engineering and law, says Baker. He also believed that, "it was remarkable that the college survived while all of the other private colleges initiated in Calgary before 1914 disappeared." Notably, the mandatory morning chapel was also made voluntary.

During this time, Baker explained that MRC proposed new forms of learning that relied on "inspiring teachers and student motivation," forgoing strict requirements and textbooks. The University of Alberta and the Alberta Institute of Technology rejected this model multiple times, but MRC developed it

anyway—what would later be known as continuing education.

Strength in WWII

By 1942, Kerby retired and was succeeded by Reverend John Henderson Garden, a former MRC student. In stark contrast to the First World War, the Second World War brought financial stability. Wartime programs boosted enrolment to 630 students by 1943, allowing MRC to clear its debts.

Male students were required to join either the University Air Training Corps or the Officers Training Corps. Ultimately, the college formed its own flight squadron. Students trained in drill, navigation, first aid and aircraft recognition, while women in the university stream joined the Women's War Services, training three afternoons a week. MRC also offered clerical programs for service members starting in 1941 and introduced a 25-week journalism course in 1944. Still, war took its toll, as more than 300 students served, and sixteen never returned.

By the 1950s, enrolment had tripled, and space was strained. The government offered MRC land for \$1 per year at the Institute of Technology's site, but the board chose instead to remain in the city core, raising \$100,000 to build the Kerby Memorial Building. Baker suggests this may have been the only reason MRC avoided being absorbed by the Institute of Technology when it itself became a public college.

Yet space issues persisted. Students complained in the newly-founded campus newspaper, *The Reflector*, in 1962 about overcrowded dorms, cafeterias, classrooms, and parking. Meanwhile, MRC's relationship with the University of Alberta grew tense. Baker explains that by the 1950s, the college was actively "reorienting its academic programs from the University of Alberta to American institutions," giving it greater autonomy.

That independence was challenged again when the University of Alberta opened its Calgary branch—now the University of Calgary. Still, MRC thrived.

Baker refers to a 1959 report asking why, "in spite of high fees and makeshift facilities," did it "have more university-transfer students than it had had when it was affiliated with the university?" The answer: small classes, personal attention, and a mission built on accessible education.

Evening college further expanded MRC's reach, allowing working adults to study at night and pursue upgrading or transferring credits. Baker referred to this as another example of MRC's entrepreneurial instinct to meet community needs.

By the mid-1960s, *The Reflector* had shifted from school-spirit boosterism to open dissent.

"The answer...was student radicalism," Baker writes. The paper published political commentary, cultural criticism, and provocative poetry, amplifying students' frustrations with restrictive rules and even hosting calls for alcohol in lounges and for marijuana legalisation. "The '1960s' had arrived at Mount Royal," writes Baker.

From church to state

When William 'Jack' Collett became dean in 1948, Mount Royal entered its final phase as a college. Despite every effort during the following six years—new programs, higher fees, fundraising—the college faced growing financial pressure and competition from subsidised public institutions. As Baker writes, "the private college was in a battle it could not win."

In 1966, Mount Royal College became a publicly funded institution, opening the way for the modern university it would become.

A timeline of key events from 1911 to 2010 is available on *The Reflector's* website, titled "100 Years of Mount Royal."

SAMRU Elections: Lead or Vote

Ready to **Lead** and support your MRU peers? Decide between the Representation Executive Council (REC) and Student Governing Board (SGB) roles.

Simply planning to **Vote**? Use this chart to understand the commitments of both key positions before you cast your ballot in March.

samru.ca/rec		samru.ca/sgb
Representation Executive Council (REC)		Student Governing Board (SGB)
✗	Volunteer Position	✓
✓ \$49,500 plus benefits	Employment Position	✗
Full-time, 35 hours/week	Time Commitment	Part-time, 8-10 hours/month
One-year term	Term Length	Two-year term
✓ No experience needed! Training is provided	Training Provided	✓ No experience needed! Training is provided
✓	Eligible to Credit Students	✓
✗	Eligible to Non-Credit Students	✗
✓ 2.5 or higher	Minimum Cumulative GPA Required	✓ 2.5 or higher
✓	One class per semester paid for by SAMRU	✓
✗ Must be enrolled in one credit course per semester.	Can be enrolled in multiple classes throughout term	✓ Can be a part-time or full-time student
✓ Only VP External and President	Some travel required	✗
✓	Work with a team of diverse like-minded peers	✓
✓	Gain experience in leadership	✓
✗	Receive experience in governing a not-for-profit organization	✓
✓	Advocate on behalf of students to the University and government	✗
✓	Earn valuable real life experience that you can use in your future career	✓

Have questions? Ask us at governance@samru.ca

Adaptation culture ends where idealisation begins

How modern audiences are being shaped by hypersexual expectations

Katrina Ebuenga, Staff Writer & **Hannah Flammenspeck**, Contributor

Are acts of toxicity forgiven when the outcome satisfies the hypersexual desires of the public?

Recently, expectations for erotic themes have become more normalised in mainstream media.

Examples such as Colleen Hoover and her heyday of movie deals, as well as the highly anticipated film release of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* reflect the need to add suggestive themes to media to appear entertaining.

The most recent film adaptation of a Hoover novel, *Regretting You*, released Oct. 24, is argued to be a questionable representation of modern relationships. The story disregards the act of adultery, playing it off as a normalised solution within complex relationships.

In the film, one of the main characters, Clara Grant, played by McKenna Grace, finds herself entangled with Miller Adams, played by Mason Thames, after the tragic death of her aunt and father.

The troubled situation becomes further complicated when it is revealed that Miller is in a committed relationship while pursuing Clara, increasing tensions between the characters.

Nonetheless, the action of cheating is seen as justified. Miller describes a toxic relationship with his current partner, further claiming that he has been in love with Clara for years despite being with someone else.

As such, common themes like trauma, secrets and betrayal are normalised concepts within Hoover's books, as well as within the films. The baseline of these tropes has created a different

outlook on relationships, which frames tragedy with an idealised perspective.

One of her more popular film adaptations, *It Ends With Us*, was released on August 9, 2024. The film garnered major backlash over the promotional decisions and the perceived problematic portrayal of domestic violence.

The glamorisation of the abuse cycle the main character falls into normalises the concept and capitalises on the triggering topic, reframing it to be something that can be taken lightly and even aspired towards.

With another film adaptation on its way, *Reminders of Him* is set to release March 13, 2026, directed by Vanessa Caswill. The storyline is similar to most Hoover books, with the main character being challenged by tragedy, only to overcome her hardships through a newfound relationship born of catastrophe.

Hoover is a prime example of how recent onscreen releases are expected to have sexual implications to appear valuable. As seen with her books, the misguided romance plots fit within the hypersexual expectation, resulting in anticipation for other releases to include the similar elements.

This concept toes the line between the reclamation of women's sexuality and the oversexualisation of women within different forms of media. Hoover's books seem to solidify the idea that women must be challenged by abuse or oversexualisation in order to be loved.

Within this, women are reduced to their physical worth, catalysing the

romanticisation of abusive cycles, a common theme that appears within Hoover's books as well as within the dark romance subgenre.

These solutions to tragic relationships show how the toxicity can be subsided with a result that feeds into the need for sexual satisfaction.

This leads to many books justifying the dark romance trope popularised by BookTok, feeding into the oversexualisation of storylines.

Along with modern romance adaptations, there has been an influx of classic literature resurfacing; Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein*, a new six-part series of *Pride and Prejudice*, and the controversial adaptation of "*Wuthering Heights*" directed by Emerald Fennell.

Fennell's "*Wuthering Heights*" is set to release Feb. 13, 2026, with a hypersexual modern twist. The influence of Hoover's popular book tropes can not be avoided, even in gothic classics.

Promoted as a tragic romance filled with sexual tension and forbidden desires, and acted by two of Hollywood's most popular actors, it can be debated whether or not the original story of *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë is romantic source material.

Written in the gothic tradition, *Wuthering Heights* is a psychological drama with gloom and despair at its core. Heathcliff's unrequited love haunts him until he dies; it is not supposed to be romantic.

In evaluating the film's recent trailer, many of the scenes explicitly include romance and sexual implications, which stray away from the original



Margot Robbie (R) and Jacob Elordi (L) as Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, respectively, in "*Wuthering Heights*." Photo courtesy of Warner Bros

meaning of the story. The focus of this element acts as a solidification of the film's intent, further deviating from the original concept.

In Brontë's novel, Heathcliff is tortured by both his love for Catherine and the fact that his social standing makes her unattainable, leading him into a life of despair and languishment.

The romanticisation of the possessive love interest seems to be masked by the popularised concept of yearning or the intense longing for the unattainable. This is normalised through the misinterpretation of abuse being an intense form of love.

While the visuals of the movie keep to the gothic tradition, the heightened expectations of erotica are viewed as a reflection of the romance genre. It strays away from the destructive aspects

of love within the original novel and replaces them with unnecessary sexual tensions.

"*Wuthering Heights*" is a reflection of how the modern era approaches adaptations of classic literature. Classic novels are undergoing a reorientation to fit the model set by authors such as Hoover, which isolates sexual themes in an attempt to satisfy the need for erotic material.

What seems to be an unavoidable element of this is how attention is brought to the perception of women's sexuality, and the extent to which women must suffer to feel a sense of love and acceptance.

Although audiences may be in favour of the raw shock provided by Fennell, the growing demand for dark romance in media remains a controversial and even damaging trope.

OUT'N ABOUT

Holiday Market Collective

Back for another year, Market Collective's holiday series is set to run from Dec. 5 to Dec. 14, from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Including over 160 vendors and artisans, the market offers \$10 admission per weekend.

Light up the Square

Hosted by East Village, Light up the Square celebrates its 11th annual community tree lighting, which includes food trucks, seasonal drinks from Cold Garden, and more. Starting at 2 p.m. on Dec. 6, the event is free to attend at 5th Street Square, 5 St. and 7 Ave. SE.

It's a Wonderful Life with the GRAND

To celebrate the holiday season, the GRAND presents another classic film, *It's a Wonderful Life*. Partnered with the GRAND, Uncle Fatih's Pizza will be serving pizza for purchase when the doors open at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 12. Tickets are available at thegrandyyc.ca, starting at \$15.

Theatre Calgary's A Christmas Carol

From Nov. 28 to Dec. 31, join Theatre Calgary at the Max Bell Theatre (Werklund Centre) for the classic tale, based on the original story by Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*. Tickets are available at theatrecalgary.com; prices and show times may vary.

Is bronze the new gold?

ARDN on growing, progressing and staying true

Hunter Pratt

Staff Writer

Let's talk about the Edmonton-raised ARDN. His name may mean bronze in Hebrew, but his music doesn't deserve third place.

ARDN has been making waves in the music industry, expanding outside of our northern ecosystem. His first official project, *Goodwill*, came out in 2018, and to ARDN's own surprise, it was created with GarageBand.

"I couldn't even tell you how I made *Goodwill* because I'm still not good at engineering," says ARDN. "I listen back and know it's poor quality, but I'm still proud of what came out of it."

Once he saw the talent within himself, the sound and storytelling of ARDN's music only grew from there.

ARDN's musical style is personal, filled with charm and vulnerabilities that paint a picture for his listeners. The underlying themes in his music range from relationship roadblocks to navigating grief. All of these raw emotions are then wrapped into a bow with melodic beats and catchy hooks that tie the knot.

"Til' the morning" is regarded as the first song that grabbed people's attention, and the artist credits social media for getting him to that place.

"Social media has changed my life. It

completely changed the trajectory of my music and career," he says. "It allowed me to break out of Edmonton and actually establish and solidify a real fan base."

Beyond the exposure ARDN has gained through social media, opening for Isaiah Rashad on tour gave him even greater visibility, and a valuable opportunity to develop his stage presence.

ARDN found out that he would be accompanying Rashad on tour less than 10 days before it started, with very little performing experience to lean on. Therefore, at the first show of the tour, the nerves struck. Luckily, ARDN had a fellow artist to lean on for advice.

"I was super nervous, I remember my first show in Vancouver, my stomach was going up and down before going on stage. But then [Isaiah] was telling me stories about when he first started touring and what he would do when he was nervous, so that kind of calmed me down," he says.

With every show performed, ARDN associates each one with training in the gym—with progress comes repetition. There is no



ARDN, Edmonton-raised artist, talks about his musical journey. Photo courtesy of Sebastian Castro

bargaining when it comes to sharing your music with a live audience, and he explains that stage fright was a conflict of mental strength.

"If I want to be an artist, this is something I'm going to have to overcome and literally just throwing myself up on stage and experiencing different things is what helped me to become a performer," he says.

Eventually, ARDN's stage fright passed, and he joined Rashad on tour once again, this time in Europe. He refers to the

opportunity as "the craziest thing I've experienced in my career so far."

Filled with many memories and anecdotes, ARDN hopes to top his touring experience in the future, this time being the headliner.

Stage fright wasn't the only conflict he had to face, however, with his next obstacle being a tough crowd. ARDN revisits a time where the crowd he was performing for booed him, but how he never let it get in the way of putting on a good show in the midst of adversity.

"It created a reverse effect in me to lock in, and it was to this day one of my best performances," he says. Perhaps a tough crowd is what he needed to fully conceptualise himself as a performer, rolling with the punches and pushing back to his full potential.

Opportunity rings for the artist, sliding on features from SiR to Oblé Reed.

"To be able to enjoy music and look up to certain artists and get the opportunity to work with them, it's crazy," says ARDN.

A prominent collaboration that ARDN recently put out is "Retail Therapy" with Férina, a song with strong 2000's nostalgia that already has 1.5 million streams on Spotify just a month after its release.

It stands to reason why ARDN switched from using Spotify to Apple Music, as streaming numbers are so vital to keep musicians at a constant state of validation. For the sake of his mental

health, he made the switch to prevent him from associating his music with the numbers that Spotify presents.

"When you're an artist, everything is by numbers, you've got to post on TikTok, you've got to gain followers. It's all about streams," he says. "So I think listening to music on my own personal time and being able to enjoy music for just music and not think about numbers is what made me enjoy Apple Music more."

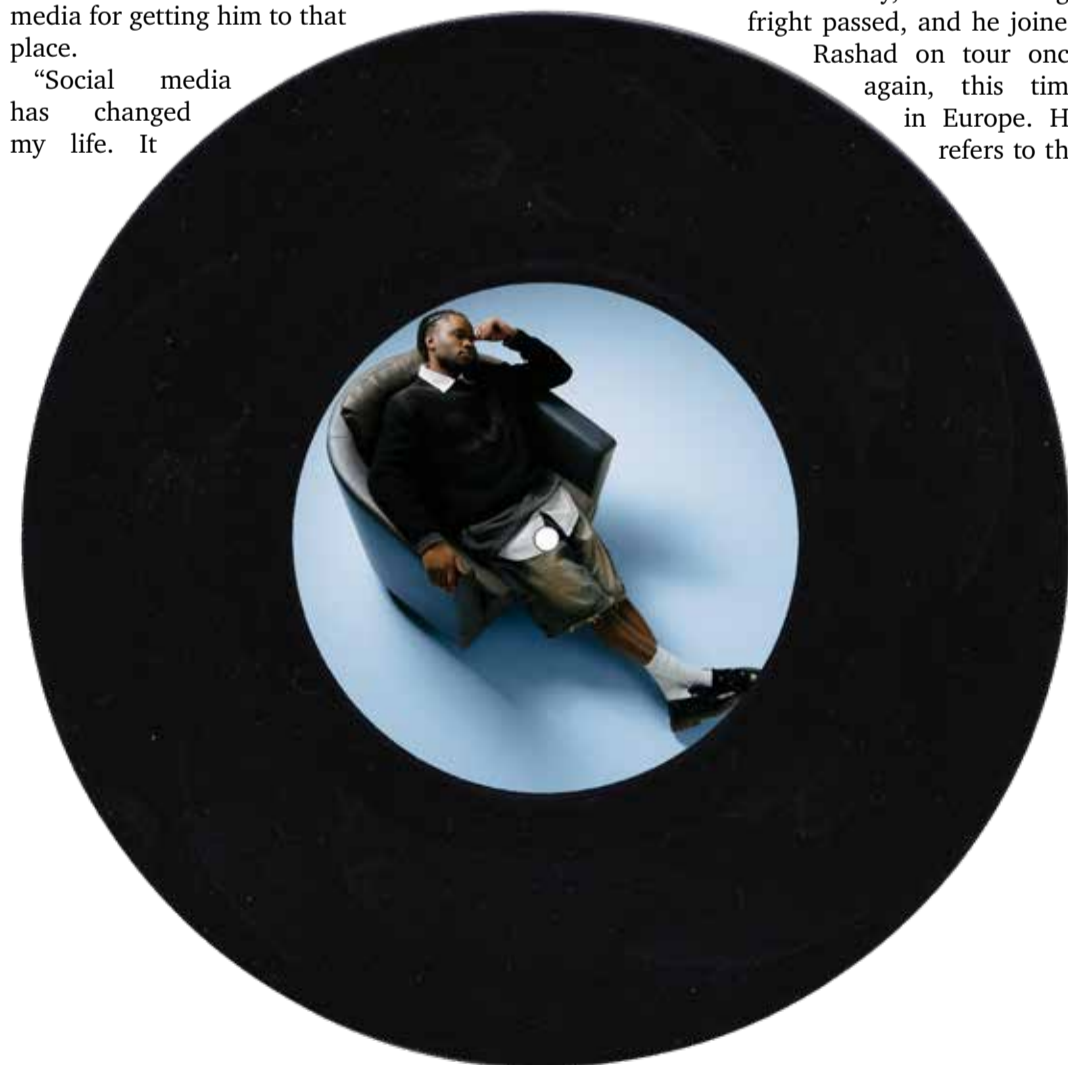
ARDN has gone through a journey in the music industry, moving from being signed to a label to branching out as an independent artist. He has refined his music career into one full of life lessons on managing his own music and navigating the music industry.

A huge perk of going independent for ARDN is the freedom to explore his creativity and self-direction.

"The freedom of your own creative direction is what I enjoy about music. I don't think music should come with restraints," he says.

Having freedom has led him to put out two projects in a mere seven months, but what's after this? Though ARDN has plenty of music in store for the future, his current focus is to keep enjoying the music in hopes of generating buzz for his future releases.

"I'm just having fun with music, and keeping people excited with one song at a time."



ARDN on stage fright, touring, and being true to yourself. Photo courtesy of Sebastian Castro

Why Christmas markets matter

Spreading holiday cheer behind the booth

Anais Loeppky

Staff Writer

When you first walk into a Christmas market, it feels just like stepping straight into a snow globe of cozy chaos and holiday memories.

Christmas markets are precious—every booth you pass has a story, and local artisans come together to create the warm experience that so many call a tradition.

Meelas Mixes

If you wandered through the Spruce Meadows Christmas Market this season, you might’ve been lucky enough to see Vanessa McKinnon at one of the sweetest booths in the whole place—Meelas Mixes.

McKinnon works for her mom’s small business that specialises in little baking mixes. The perfectly packaged mixes contain Canadian-sourced dry ingredients for cookies, muffins, and even soups.

McKinnon’s mom, Pamela Campbell, created this company after being diagnosed with stage-four cancer. Instead of letting that dark time define her, she used it as an opportunity to find a new, creative way to bring joy to others.

Once she was strong enough after surgery, she wanted “to share a bit of herself with others,” says McKinnon.

The name “Meela” comes from a childhood nickname Campbell’s grandmother used to call her, and the name

beautifully reflects the love and warmth of the business.

“I wanted my business to be about family, great memories, and most importantly, to help others, to help the kids that want to dance, the swimmer that wants to go to the finals, the organisation that wants to give more to the community, the list goes on and on,” Campbell says.

According to McKinnon, there is no better place to spread that love than a Christmas market. The festive crowds give them the chance to chat with families face-to-face, and hand out a little Christmas cheer with every mix sold.

Meelas Mixes is an inspiring example of how artisans spread positivity and love through Christmas markets.

Mittz Inc.

Scott McKenzie and his good friend, Iain Anthony, founded Mittz Inc. in 2018. While they are both oil field workers, they both met in the most unlikely place—a beach in Thailand.

Before starting Mittz Inc., the two friends had faced the age-old Canadian problem: being forced to make the sacrifice of cold hands in the name of an ice-cold beer around a fire. Or, even worse, wearing a mitten to prevent frozen fingers, only to drop a perfectly good beer.

McKenzie and Anthony then took matters into their own hands and created Mittz

Inc., the perfect cozy knit glove to keep both your beer and hands safe and warm. They wanted the product to feel authentically Canadian.

“We thought it would be cool if it looked like grandma knitted it for you,” McKenzie says.

Since then, they partnered with a small knitting company in Ontario and ran with the idea, creating designs like lumberjack plaid, sock monkey, and classic hockey team colours.

McKenzie says that they used to sell year-round, but have since found Christmas markets to be the gem they needed.

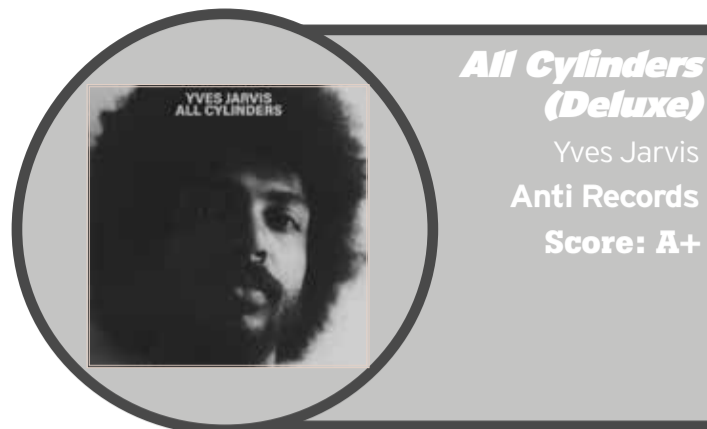
“It’s a great time to come out and chat with patrons and just have a good time,” McKenzie says

Field Stone Fruit Wines

Lanna Laboucane has been working with Field Stone Fruit Wines since September, although the company has been around since 2005.

The wine is made right here in Alberta, and some say you can taste the care that goes into every batch.

Almost a year ago, Field Stone Fruit Wines was acquired by new owners, Laura Atherton and Phil Hoogendam, who’ve been working hard to carry on the company’s legacy while also bringing new, creative ideas to the table.



All Cylinders (Deluxe)

Yves Jarvis

Anti Records

Score: A+

Calgary’s own Yves Jarvis has released his sixth album, a deluxe reimagining of his fifth record *All Cylinders*, further strengthening his discography.

Jarvis’ music effortlessly combines indie with a reggae undertone, and his latest album is no exception to why his music has caught such attention in the local Calgary art scene. The album, which was three years in the making, gives a new meaning to alternative indie.

The quality of the album is high, with the artistry even higher. Jarvis’ unique sound for the album gives it a taste that has never been heard before. The deluxe album includes five extra tracks, including “Silver KG.”

But what really sets this album apart is Jarvis himself. His use of unique melody, distinctive layering and gentle softness combined with his buttery voice creates a perfectly relaxing new sound.

The element that caught my attention most was the stripped-down melody in “Patina.” The track features only two deliberate guitar strums that not only lend the album a cinematic feel but also work as a natural pause, giving the listener a moment to reset before continuing on with the album.

There is something to be said about artists who can carry such a range of sounds within a singular album. Every single song in the album was vastly different, yet stood on their own in their own way.

—Mia Smith



The Second Best Band in Bowness

Sour Patch Men

Howdy Doo Dah

Score: B-

A local Calgary band, Sour Patch Men recently released their debut album, *The Second Best Band in Bowness*.

Although it is not everyone’s cup of tea, this album is pure fun. The group’s use of eccentric noises makes it seem almost childish, but in the best way possible. When I say childish, I mean to the extent that in one song featured on the album, “Mutant Man,” ended with a fake fart noise.

The album is serving Raffi in the best way. And for those who do not know Raffi, you probably know the immensely catchy song, “Down by the Bay.”

Although some of the band’s songs carry the playful, singable quality of children’s music, that doesn’t mean the songs themselves are childish. In fact, they often include explicit lyrics.

The Sour Patch Men lean into an East Coast energy, using chant-like vocals and spirited melodies to create something both nostalgic and refreshingly bold.

The group, who often

perform in and around Calgary, bring fun and charisma everywhere they go. These principles shine through this album.

Though they focus on fun and charm, their musical talent is not something to be overlooked. Within the song “The Whacker,” they showcase their artistic skill through a over two-minute-long acoustic interlude.

The Sour Patch Men are a very talented local group. If given the chance, they are definitely worth checking out for a fun time. Their music is the epitome of skipping around a campfire singing with friends on a summer night.

—Mia Smith



Catching up with Santa at Century Downs Annual Christmas Market. Photo courtesy of Mia Smith

Laboucane has found working Christmas markets to be a really fun experience and loves the small-business community. She mentions that everyone is always happy to help each other, and it's such an exciting and busy time of year.

She says this is the busiest season for most small businesses, and the locally made products make perfect gifts. It's also one of the best ways to get your name out there.

For.Avi

Run by Elyanna Alemandra Ventura, For.Avi is a small jewelry business started alongside her mom, Maria Learmonth, after the passing of Ventura's grandmother.

Known for her extravagant jewelry and accessories, they wanted to carry on her grandmother's legacy.

"She was a very bright woman," says Ventura.

Not long after she passed, Ventura and her mom began making jewelry as a way to cope and to honour her memory. They ended up creating so much that starting a business felt like the natural next step.

They've now been doing Christmas markets for years, and it has become one of their

most successful and favourite time of the year. This season, they were set up at the Millarville Christmas Market, which quickly became a staple for them.

One of their favourite parts is getting to know the other vendors. They all support each other, share each other's posts on social media, and visit one another whenever they get a free moment.

Avi is the name of Ventura's grandmother, and the mother-daughter duo take real comfort in building a business dedicated entirely to her.

For.Avi has become a beautiful way for them to keep her memory alive and honour her through their art.

Two Rivers Distillery

Tyler Strang has been with Two Rivers Distillery for two years now, although the business was originally started by Mark Freeland.

Two Rivers Distillery was created to honour founder Mark Freeland's grandfather, James Freeland, and great uncle, Alexander Freeland, who fought at Vimy Ridge in 1917, where Alexander was killed in action. Their legacy of courage and dedication

lives on in the distillery's handcrafted spirits.

It all began as a small garage setup where Mark distilled for fun. Eventually, he decided to get the permits and turn it into a real business. Friends and family loved his creations, Strang says, and it didn't take long before he opened the distillery, originally focusing on vodkas and gins.

Since then, it has grown into an award-winning distillery that now includes liqueurs and even whiskeys.

Strang loves doing Christmas markets with the company and says Spruce Meadows is a huge opportunity for them.

As the head of sales, he also hosts tasting events at stores and restaurants throughout the year. Customers often recognise him from Christmas markets, and he really values those connections.

According to Strang, an absurd amount of preparation goes into these markets—weeks of bottling, labelling, packaging, and long twelve-hour days in the distillery getting everything just right. He even designs the displays and builds the shelves himself.

It really is a labour of love for Strang and all of Two



Holiday markets rely on the continued participation of vendors. Photo courtesy of Mia Smith

Rivers Distillery.

friends and family.

Why it matters

Christmas markets are a beloved tradition for so many people, and they're so much more than just a place to shop. Every vendor brings their own passion and story to the table, creating a feeling of love and nostalgia that simply can't be found anywhere else.

Some are honouring loved ones, carrying on family legacies, or building something meaningful with

Christmas markets give vendors a chance to connect with the community and share their work in a personal way, and visitors are able to thoughtfully support local businesses at the same time.

With so much love and memory surrounding the season, Christmas markets bring those feelings to the forefront, reminding us of the people and stories behind our most precious gifts.

SAMRU IS HIRING!

2026/27 REPRESENTATION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

APPLY NOW!

No Experience Necessary

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

Questions? Contact governance@samru.ca

samru  students' association of mount royal university

Apply Now!

samru.ca/RECaply



Application deadline: Jan. 12, 2026



 samru
students' association
of mount royal university

[SAMRU.CA/EVENTS](https://samru.ca/events)

You're invited to
[STUDENT CONNECT]

Building Connections Between MRU Students and Politicians

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15
2:00PM – 4:30PM

2nd Floor Lounge, Wyckham House
Enjoy free appetizers!

samru.ca



@samrubuzz



/samrubuzz



/samrubuzz



@samrubuzz.bsky.social

The athlete's holiday playbook

Gifts that score everytime

Manveet Kaur Waraich

Staff Writer

The holiday season is just a jump, skip, and hop away—and so is the perfect gift for the athlete in your life. Whether they're squeezing in workouts to de-stress before exams or keeping busy following their favourite sports team, these suggestions will give you the play-by-play.

Athletes are known for their focus and dedication, so a well-chosen gift can go a long way. Just like their training, precision matters; when the gift fits just right, it feels like landing a first-round draft pick. But let's be honest, finding that perfect pick can feel like its own marathon, from juggling budgets to trying to avoid basic, forgettable options. Think of this guide as your playbook for a guaranteed slam dunk.

Low-budget wins (<\$50)

In today's economy, we need gifts that help your athlete break a sweat, not the bank. Add to their ever-growing sports merch collection at a fraction of the original price by spending some time perusing thrift stores. If the selection is sparse, head over to a grocery store or online marketplace, which may be slightly more expensive than thrifting but definitely better than an official sports store.

If merch feels too restricting, choose mind over body and get them an inspirational book written by or about their favourite sports idol from the same places.

The running joke about being disappointed when receiving socks for Christmas does not apply to athletes. Performance socks with features like breathability, cushioning, compression, and anti-blistering speak their love language perfectly, so don't be afraid to get a quirky pair to prove just how well you know them.

Speaking of feet, show them your love and support with insoles or orthotics to achieve maximum function at a minimum budget—just remember to consider elements like breathability, moisture-wicking, temperature rating, and, for some, ease of washability.



Christmas can feel daunting when it comes to gifting for athletes, but there truly are options for any budget, effort and time-frame that will make any athlete very jolly indeed. Photo courtesy of Alhill42 via Wikimedia Commons.

Feel like the stocking is still only half full? Complement your gift with electrolytes and post-workout snacks to keep their spirits, and energy, merry and bright.

Mid-range magic (\$50-\$100)

Santa may have the element of surprise, but you don't. Grab a couple of hot chocolates and spend some quality time shopping with your athlete to find the perfect gear for their goals instead of guessing and ending up with something that 'almost works.'

Alternatively, show you care about their recovery and injury prevention with a foam roller, resistance bands, or a massage gun. Consider it a personal investment—they won't be able to say they're too sore or tired to join you, and suddenly you can go to every holiday night market without a single complaint—a Christmas miracle.

Additionally, you'll be making a scientifically tangible change in their physical well-being. According to The International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy's report, vibration treatment provides significant results "in promoting acute adaptations in pain reduction, increasing

strength, and improving flexibility after single and multiple treatments."

Looking for another gift that could be just as enjoyable for you as for them? A bundle deal with a sports streaming or subscription-based media service means you'll be able to watch whatever show or movie your heart desires after the game—the gift of balanced screen time.

High-budget hall-deckers (\$100+)

Want to be on the nice list until the end of time? Gift your athlete a pair of customised footwear. Many popular brands let you choose the colour and material of various components and even add an embroidered element of your choosing—consider their initials, jersey number, a sentimental date, or logo. Just be mindful to order these early, as the elves consider this a special request and absolutely require advance notice.

Moments > merch

Quality time will always trump anything bought, and raises a polite, but firm, middle finger to capitalist society—that's a two-for-one I can respect. Attend their

games, ask in-depth questions about their favourite teams with true curiosity, or organise watch parties for their favourite team's games. Whether or not you're gifted with athletic abilities, try to play their sport with them or help them train.

Athletes are also notorious for neglecting their feet, making a pedicure an underrated but overachieving gift. Schedule yourselves for a relaxing pamper session at a salon and watch them make it a monthly ritual.

Being a student is all about finding great deals. Whether it's a general student discount or you sign up for the Saddledome-specific Student Rush deals, sports tickets can drop to nearly 20 per cent of their original price for the academically inclined.

If watching a sport doesn't jingle their bells, play one. Purchase passes to boxing class, climbing centres, batting cages, golf ranges, curling, or even bobsleigh, something new for both of you—remember to ask for student pricing or a free trial.

Campus power plays

Being a Cougar has great benefits for recreational athletes. The MRU student

massage clinic offers sessions at a \$20-per-hour student rate, which is sure to revive those strained muscles.

Afterwards, put the holiday cheer into high gear at a free Cougars sports game on Kenyon Court with your MRU OneCard, or pay \$16 as a non-student adult. University and collegiate sports games have a unique appeal that professional sports often fail to live up to, and remember SAIT, UofC, Bow Valley College, and St. Mary's are options too.

The athlete is a creature of improvement, and what better way to support than student-priced personal training sessions at MRU Rec? Students also have access to all recreational facilities, and apart from drop-in open gym times, consider trying squash or a recovery swim coupled with time in the steamroom. Nothing says happy holidays like sweating out the stress of finals.

Beyond the goalposts

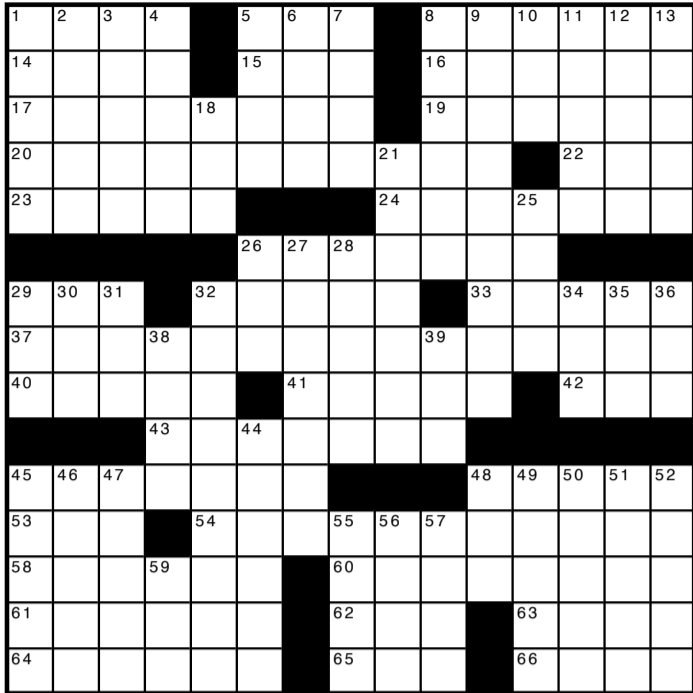
If you really want to warm their heart faster than a December practice session, tap into your creativity.

Thrift or buy a hoodie with minimal design. Customise it with quotes from their favourite sports idols, team logos, or their jersey number. MRU's Maker Studio can help bring that to life, but if DIY feels more like 'D-I-Why,' there are plenty of other companies at your disposal.

Write a song or create a personal project like a digital or hand-drawn illustration based on their athletic journey and milestones. Print it, frame it, and voilà—a gift that says, 'I pay attention,' louder than any store-bought item ever could.

Want something even more cinematic? Make them a personalised highlight reel—yes, you can be the Spielberg of their sports saga. The library has photography and videography equipment rentals, so you can shoot, edit, and deliver. Extensions can even be granted if needed, because sometimes art requires a little extra overtime.

REFLECTOR DIVERSIONS



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

ACROSS

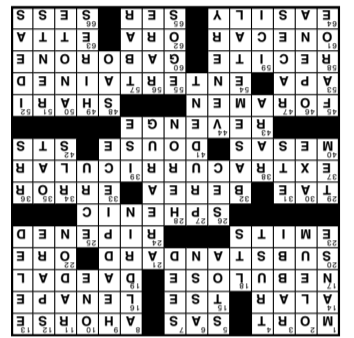
- 1 Death, in France
- 5 Eur. carrier
- 8 What Richard III offered "my kingdom" for
- 14 Banned apple spray
- 15 Half a fly
- 16 Delaware tribe
- 17 Cloudlike
- 19 Labyrinthine
- 20 Meat, lettuce, cheese

- 22 Source of iron
- 23 Sends out
- 24 Matured
- 26 Wedge-shaped
- 29 ___ kwon do
- 32 Kentucky college
- 33 Mistake
- 37 Like afterschool activities
- 40 Arizona sights
- 41 Drench
- 42 Thoroughfares: Abbr.
- 43 A dish best served cold, it's said
- 45 Small opening
- 48 Puppeteer Lewis
- 53 Therapists' org.
- 54 Amused
- 58 Narrate
- 60 Capital of Botswana
- 61 Like a small garage
- 62 '... man - mouse?'
- 63 James of jazz
- 64 Effortlessly
- 65 Sun. delivery
- 66 Mtg.

DOWN

- 1 Parsonage

- 2 Fuming sulphuric acid
- 3 Temple leader
- 4 Faith
- 5 Greek portico
- 6 Org.
- 7 Bird feed
- 8 Buzz in space
- 9 Helmet
- 10 The loneliest number
- 11 Hazardous gas
- 12 Surplus
- 13 Caught congers
- 18 Mil. officers
- 21 Floor covering
- 25 Hose hue
- 26 Fairly dry, when describing champagne
- 27 Cautious
- 28 Long-legged bird
- 29 Pro ___
- 30 Lumberjack's tool
- 31 "The X-Files" extras
- 32 Tin or zinc, e.g.
- 34 "Treasure Island" monogram
- 35 Cereal grain
- 36 Monopoly quartet: Abbr.
- 38 ___ avis
- 39 British verb ending
- 44 Sport of hunting
- 45 N Atlantic archipelago
- 46 ___ can of worms
- 47 Speed contests
- 48 ___ Paulo
- 49 Takes on
- 50 Make ___ of (write down)
- 51 Leases
- 52 Thoughts
- 55 Psyche parts
- 56 Few and far between
- 57 Skier's transport
- 59 Henri's here



SUDOKU

Easy

		5	1	4				8
3		8					7	1
	1			7	8		4	
					1	8		6
	2		8		9		3	
8		7	4					
	3		5	9			8	
7	8					3		4
6				8	4	7		

Medium

				8				5
		1	9					
7						1	6	
			1		6		9	
3		5			1		4	
6		8			3			
5	6							2
					5	4		
9				2				

Hard

	6		3	2		7		
	2							4
				1	7			
	5	7						6
			5		6			
	8					5	2	
			1	4				
5								8
		3		7	2			9

WORD SEARCH

Winter in Canada

R J M A F F O R D A B L E H O
 C A C T I V I T Y S E E K E R
 M O D E R A T E I N S I D E Q
 Y S D E S T I N A T I O N B D
 A M O U N T I N S T A N C E J
 I C A N A D A D V E N T U R E
 J V W T E M P E R A T U R E Q
 C E L E B R A T I O N Y S K I
 B U D G E T A I R F A R E T Q
 R F J C L I M A T E M A R C H
 F R E E Z I N G Z R E A S O N
 E I F E S T I V A L G R E A T
 K N G C A N A D I A N S N O W
 T B Z E X P E R I E N C E A W
 J C E L E B R A T E M A K E P

ACTIVITY GREAT
 ADVENTURE INSIDE
 AFFORDABLE INSTANCE
 AIRFARE MAKE
 AMOUNT MARCH
 BUDGET MODERATE
 CANADA REASON
 CANADIAN SEEKER
 CELEBRATE SKI
 CELEBRATION SNOW
 CLIMATE TEMPERATURE
 DESTINATION
 EXPERIENCE
 FESTIVAL
 FREEZING

Canada's first ever national sport is back

The second-most popular sport in the world is experiencing a maple resurgence

Amanpreet Kaur
Staff Writer

With over two billion fans around the world, cricket is the second-most popular sport on the planet—beaten only by soccer as per the number by Sports for Business website. It's also known as “the gentleman's game,” which ingrains the spirit of the game with mutual respect, sportsmanship, and high moral conduct which is well explained by Moonshot Blog. With the International Cricket Council (ICC) T20 World Cup right around the corner in February 2026 and the sport sweeping Canada, here's everything you need to know about one of the oldest bat and ball games in human sporting history.

Origin story

The ICC website that cricket is believed to have originated during Saxon or Norman times in south-east England with the first record of the game being played in 1611. It was derived from the classic English game, bowls, when a batsman tried to stop and diverge the ball from hitting the target.

In the 17th century, cricket developed into village ricket and became a leading sport in London and the south-eastern counties of England, with the first women's match being played in Surrey.

The *Laws of Cricket* was written in 1744 and amended in 1774 to have standardised rules for the game. Colonists brought cricket to North America, West Indies, India, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The first international cricket match was played between the USA and Canada in 1844.

How it's played

The ICC is the governing body of cricket which was established in 1909 by the Imperial Cricket Conference. There are 104 member

countries in five continents which involves 92 assistive members to grow and improve the sport and its standards as per the recent data from ICC website.

Cricket is divided into three main categories—test cricket, one-day international matches (ODI) and Twenty20 matches (T20). In both cases, the game starts with a coin toss where the winning team chooses to bat or bowl/field first. The team that bats first has to score the highest possible number of runs in the given number of overs, or sets of six legal balls bowled, until they accumulate 10 wickets, which can be likened to outs in baseball. After that, the second team must beat the runs scored by the first team within the same number of wickets to win the game.

The difference comes in the number of overs each team is allowed to bowl, with ODIs restricting the bowl count to 50 and T20s being limited to 20 overs.

Test cricket is the most traditional form of the sport, spreading matches over five consecutive days and having no restrictions on the number of overs played. Instead, each team gets two chances to bat, with the matches only ending after the five days have expired or after the team that bats last exceeds their opposition's point total. Innings only end when team captains forfeit the rest of the inning, which they may do if they are confident in their point total, or when every batter on the batting team is declared out.

Cricket in Canada

Cricket is experiencing a serious surge in Canada. In fact, it could even be labelled a resurgence, and a CBC article highlights that Prime Minister John A. MacDonald

declared cricket Canada's first-ever national sport. Canada was victorious in the first international match, as they defeated the US in September of 1884 in front of an audience of over five thousand people.

Today, around four million people actively engage with the game annually in the country, says a study by Sponsorpulse. Some have attributed that growth to the fast-growing population of South Asian people in Canada, which was recorded at over two million in 2021 by Statistics Canada and represents arguably the most cricket-loving demographics in the world.

Contemporary cricket column

ICC events like the Women's World Cup, Men's Champion

Trophy and the final of the World Test Championship dominated 2025 and is set to build on that when the ICC Men's T20 World Cup rolls around in 2026, hosted in India and Sri Lanka.

In June, South Africa defeated Australia in the finals of the World Test Championship for their first major cricket title, while India won the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy by remaining undefeated in the tournament and beating New Zealand in the final.

In November, India took their first-ever ICC Women's ODI World Cup trophy by defeating South Africa in the final.

Outside of national-team cricket, the most well-known cricket league is the Indian Premier League (IPL), which started in 2008 and in 18 seasons, it has generated

huge revenue and viewership. In North America, Major League Cricket is growing rapidly and rivals many other well-established leagues in per-game payouts for their most valuable players—including the IPL.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup begins in February 2026, but there are plenty of tournaments, leagues and matches to watch until then. Additionally, the City of Calgary finished its master plans for the Northeast Athletic Complex in 2024, which, according to the project's website, “will be one of Calgary's largest athletic parks” and feature indoor and outdoor cricket facilities intended to host tournaments and provide year-round recreational cricket for Calgarians.



India has long dominated men's cricket, but earned their first Women's Cricket Championship title earlier this year against South Africa. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @icc



10 consecutive games won by the SAIT Trojans men's basketball team, who remain the only undefeated team in the ACAC and rank first nationally in the CCAA

8 wins secured by MRU's men's basketball team in their last 10 games, placing them second in the Prairie Division and 25th in U SPORTS

2 games with more than 40 points by Iowa State Cyclones centre Audi Crooks, who leads all of NCAA women's basketball in scoring

13 wins recorded in 16 games by MRU's women's hockey team, ranking them first in the East Division and third nationally in U SPORTS

A stick, a dream, and a city behind him

How Harrison Matsuoka manifested his lifelong lacrosse dreams

Naomi Campbell

Staff Writer

In Canada, the sport of lacrosse is loved from coast to coast. Over the last couple of years, the National Lacrosse League (NLL) has gained popularity, especially in the Blue Sky City, which happens to be home to the Calgary Roughnecks.

If you've ever been to a Roughnecks game, you'll know that the energy inside the Scotiabank Saddledome is electric and addictive. With the speakers booming and fans roaring, the players definitely feed off the energy, making every game just as memorable as the last, and for Harrison Matsuoka, every moment is a dream come true.

Matsuoka grew up in the heart of Calgary, and his interest in lacrosse formed at the sight of a banner on the highway at the age of seven. His box lacrosse career started with the Calgary Hornets Lacrosse Club, which took him to draft day to move up into the junior level.

Matsuoka was drafted by the Junior A Raiders, where he played his entire five years of eligibility, and spoke very highly of the team and atmosphere surrounding those years. In his first year on the team, the Raiders won the Alberta championship after battling a loaded Coquitlam team, during which he faced former teammate Christian Del Bianco and current teammate Tyler Pace.

"I met some of my best friends there and made a lot of really great memories," Matsuoka says. "We had a really great coaching staff as well, with Mitch Bannister, Andrew McBride and Jesse Fair. They really helped mould me into the player that I am today."

Matsuoka gave field lacrosse a shot as well, playing with Elevate Lacrosse, run by Jeff and Bobby Snyder. He played field through grades nine to 12, which helped him commit to Division I at Stony Brook University in Long Island, N.Y.

In Alberta, most lacrosse players choose to play box lacrosse, but to try and get any scholarships playing the sport they love, field lacrosse



Harrison Matsuoka and the Calgary Roughnecks can't help but smile as they rank sixth in the NLL with a 10-8 record and the fourth-most goals in the league. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @harrymats_15

presents a more lucrative path as it is much more popular across the border. Matsuoka mentioned that playing lacrosse has allowed him to travel and open amazing doors to further his career.

"Lacrosse has really allowed me to travel and meet some really amazing people," Matsuoka says. "So I've always been super blessed for that."

After he aged out of juniors and COVID ended Matsuoka's final season of NCAA lacrosse, the Calgary product was drafted by the Calgary Roughnecks in 2020, where he currently resides as one of their top transition players. That position necessitates a level of versatility, as he plays a key role with the team's forward core, but also has to be able to switch quickly to play alongside their defensive crew. Matsuoka played as many sports as he could growing up, such as hockey, track and field, basketball, and even volleyball, thanks to his parents, building a dossier of skills to pull from each sport and integrate into his lacrosse game.

"I remember my mom's big thing was that Wayne Gretzky and John Tavares both played lacrosse growing up, and Tavares' uncle is

one of the NLL's best players of all time, so lacrosse and hockey go hand-in-hand," Matsuoka says. "Doing track really helped me progress in lacrosse because I was always in pretty good shape, which helped me focus on different aspects of my lacrosse game because I didn't have to worry about dying from running so much."

Matsuoka wears number 18 on the back of his jersey, but didn't always wear this number, as he originally started out in junior ranks as number 23. When he moved away for college, that number was occupied by a sophomore player, so he chose 18 as his backup. After that, his Roughnecks teammate Liam LeClair also wore number 23, so he stuck with 18.

"When I came to the Roughnecks, Liam LeClair was already 23 and 18 was open, so I was like 'well this is perfect, just keep the good times rolling with 18,'" Matsuoka says. "Nothing symbolic behind it, but I really like it, it's a good number."

Some NLL players cannot afford to make lacrosse their full time job like guys in bigger leagues. As a result, getting a lacrosse scholarship is of utmost importance, as it helps them either land on a backup plan, or helps

them out while getting to play at a high level. Harrison graduated from Stony Brook University with a bachelor's degree in biology, while also minoring in linguistics.

Being a full time student and athlete is a huge commitment, but Matsuoka stuck it out, with help from his now-fiancé, who also studied linguistics, to get to the end of those heavy four years of school. Matsuoka now does medical sales for hospitals around Calgary.

Going into his fifth year with the Roughnecks, Matsuoka has been an integral part of the team. He has played 68 career NLL games, with ground balls being his best statistic at 212 in his career. In lacrosse, "ground balls" is a measure of a player's ability to secure loose balls, which is crucial for gaining possession and creating scoring opportunities.

Matsuoka claims his rookie year as his favourite, not because of the points, or games won, but because of the team, and the feeling of his dream coming true.

"It's tough to pick just one year that was the best, but I'd say my rookie year was really cool just because it's obviously what you've worked towards your whole

life," Matsuoka says.

"To finally be there and play against guys you grew up watching and to be on the same team as guys you grew up watching. It's kind of just a surreal moment and really cool."

If you want to see Matsuoka and the Calgary Roughnecks this year, make sure to grab your tickets, some of which are eligible for student discounts and others even include special events. The first game of the season takes the boys on the road to Saskatchewan, where they play the Saskatchewan Rush on Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. The official home opener will be played on Dec. 28 against the Buffalo Bandits at 6 p.m.