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Can the Cougars keep
the momentum (Pg. 20)

Concerns over separatism movement leaves Albertans in limbo

Some are calling out Premier Smith for not speaking up in support of a united Canada as Alberta's independence campaign amps up

Karra Smith

Staff Writer

Following the 2026 Conservative Party Convention in Calgary, more questions are being raised about where the premier and the Alberta government stand on the topic of separation.

While speaking to CTV reporter Vassy Kapelos on Feb. 1, Smith said, "I don't police the responses of my MLAs, they can sign whatever petition that they want."

Smith goes on to say the approach of her and her caucus is to support a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada.

However, some politicians are speaking up about their discontent with the premier and her stance on separatism.

Former Alberta premier Jason Kenney told CBC that the current United Conservative Party (UCP) government should not be signing any petition aimed at forcing Alberta's separation.

"If that's how you were elected, you have no business signing a petition to separate the country, and I sure hope that's not the case," Kenney said.

Heather McPherson, MP for Edmonton-Strathcona, has also voiced her concerns with Smith and the separation movement.

"Every single person who has been elected to represent people in Alberta, including myself, should be very explicit on their position," McPherson said. "I'm disappointed that the premier has not done that."

McPherson says that the ongoing rhetoric about separation and a lack of leadership from Smith could be "extraordinarily dangerous" for Alberta.

"We need to have our premier be replaced because frankly she is doing a horrendous job protecting our province and protecting our economy," she said.

In comparison, some Albertans feel that the current federal government is at a standstill with their concerns, and this petition is



Calgarians can share their opinion on the Alberta separatism movement at various petition signings, including one held in Bearspaw earlier this month. Photo by Karra Smith

the only way to be heard.

Michelle Sharuga is one Albertan in favour of independence for the province. She says that although she is proud of the country she comes from, change is needed.

"I love Canada. I love being Canadian, but it's just been such a disappointment for so long," Sharuga said.

Another supporter of the separatist movement is Scott Craft. He says that listening to parents in the media talk about their kids' future

struggles is what pushed him to root for an independent Alberta.

"That really hits home for me. I have nieces and nephews who are teenagers, and I'd like to see them have a better life," he said.

Craft also says that whether the movement is successful or not, the conversation around Albertans' concerns needs to be addressed.

"It might not happen overnight, or it might not happen at all, but I think that having the dialogue is

important," he said.

Discussions over the legal concerns of separation have also risen to the top of the heated debates, with some questioning how the Indigenous treaties across the province would be respected.

At a press conference on Jan. 29, chiefs from Treaties 6, 7 and 8 came together to publicly denounce the push for Alberta's separation.

"What we're seeing here in Alberta is disregard for our treaties. There's not an understanding here of how

Alberta became a province, and how a treaty had to happen before Alberta could become a province," said Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Grand Chief Trevor Mercredi.

"Our Treaty rights are non-negotiable. They cannot be set aside by petitions, referendums, or political movements, whether citizen-led or government-enabled," the Blood Tribe wrote in a press release following the conference.

Although the outcome of the independence movement is unknown, McPherson says that when it comes to addressing issues happening on both a provincial and federal level, working together is the only path.

"You work to make sure that you solve those different regional challenges. You work together, and you strengthen the country together," she said. "You don't put up a website and threaten to go join the United States at a moment of national sovereignty crisis, [or] at a moment of economic crisis across the country."

McPherson goes on to say that the petition itself is childish and disappointing, and using Albertans' concerns about their position within the federation as fuel is "treasonous and dangerous."

"It's dangerous when you play with fire, and Danielle Smith is playing with fire right now," said McPherson.



The Alberta separatist movement has been met with criticism by other Canadian conservatives, including Ontario Premier Doug Ford and former prime minister Stephen Harper. Photo courtesy of Pexels



Despite past productive conversations between Canada and the U.S., trade tensions are higher than ever. Photo courtesy of Reuters

Opinion: Analysing Trump's rhetoric surrounding annexation

Unpacking the strategy behind the Trump administration's public political disses

Vlad Semeshko

Staff Writer

Donald Trump's remarks about Canada becoming the "51st state" are often dismissed as jokes or delusions rooted in dictatorial ambitions.

Nevertheless, when assessed through an economic and geopolitical lens, these comments reflect broader strategic interests rather than provocations aimed at simply demeaning his rivals.

The Trump administration masterfully utilises social media and television in the game of politics, continuously shaping the perception and narrative of the American people. Through assertions made at the upper echelons of power, algorithmically repeated on the nation's phone screens, the desired interpretation of politics is exerted on the populace.

Trump is sure to never miss an opportunity to use charged language in front of cameras, such as the "51st state" and the "Governor Mark Carney" comments. The goal seems to be consistent normalisation of these ideas for broader acceptance before any direct government action.

The annexation narrative stems from a geostrategic trend of great-power realism and the renewal of unmasked American imperialism, now titled the Donroe Doctrine by Trump himself.

This return of the administration to Manifest Destiny—as the guiding thought behind the role and responsibilities of the United States in the region—ideologically propagates not

just the desire to expand American territories in the hemisphere, but establishes that goal as a duty.

In the new multipolar world order with slowly fading institutions and systems that upheld international law for decades, state-to-state interactions are increasingly dominated by economic and military strength, in which imperial states prevail through coercive market or territorial expansion.

Considering the idling U.S. military behemoth with a trillion-dollar budget, the Department of War—formerly the Department of Defence—is itching for an opportunity to show military supremacy and advanced technology through action.

Like the secret pulsed energy weapon used in the Maduro capture operation, which left Venezuelan soldiers bleeding from the nose and vomiting blood, famously titled the "discombobulator" by Trump.

"It's never been my intention to make Greenland the 51st state. I want to make Canada the 51st state. Greenland will be the 52nd state. Venezuela can be 53rd," Trump joked at the annual dinner of the Alfalfa Club, an exclusive organisation of CEOs and politicians.

Dismissing such remarks as theatrics underestimates the power of narrative popularisation in policy frameworks.

Canada, like Greenland, is a large landmass rich

in resources, minerals and undeveloped land. Donald Trump, a career real estate tycoon and political entrepreneur, has framed territorial expansion through the language of deal-making and asset acquisition rather than international law or respect for sovereignty.

Besides additional tax revenue and vast economic opportunities for large American firms with favourable regulatory frameworks, or lack thereof, U.S. annexation of Canada and Greenland would most importantly grant America complete control over the thawing Arctic region, which is the real gem for the long-term geopolitical strategy.

Covered in immense oil and mineral deposits, competition over controlling

the Arctic is the leading trend among great powers of the multipolar world order. Russia, China, Europe and the U.S. all strive to secure a strong position for the approaching future when a solid foothold in the Arctic guarantees control over global shipping routes, dictating economic capacity and power of state in the face of changing times.

Many Canadians may wonder, 'how can half of Americans be so blind to accept and follow such demagoguery?' One can point out that the Canadian population is not so different in regard to adhering to the dominant domestic narratives that flow down from the top.

In Canada, dominant discourse trickles down in a

centralised manner through the government-funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

In the absence of the ideological and normative fluff which divides the population through emotionally charged discourse, CBC, just like Fox News, CNN or any other mainstream media, serves the interests of profit before the corporate donors, power brokers, and its own shareholders.

Whether it is the acquisition of new capital for the sake of U.S. domestic firms, or safeguarding it for the sake of international businesses and investors in the case of Canada, the driving factors remain consistently the same: power and profit.



Since Trump's re-election, tariff threats have been no stranger to Canada, including a recent call for 100 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods if Canada strikes a trade deal with China. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

MRU's Inclusion Week: How conversations connect

As MRU's Inclusion Week event wraps up its third year, organisers and speakers discuss the importance of an inclusive campus environment

Karra Smith

Staff Writer

At Mount Royal University (MRU), the Office of Community and Belonging strives to create a space that represents individuals from a range of backgrounds, and one way this is being achieved is through MRU's annual Inclusion Week.

Held from Jan. 26-30, the week of advocacy is a mix of speeches, presentations and workshops designed to educate and connect people from all walks of life. Some speakers are students or faculty, and others come from outside the MRU community, all sharing their stories and looking to help attendees better understand the meaning of inclusivity.

The theme of Inclusion Week this year was Conversations that Connect. To Narissa Jessa, an education and development specialist in the office of community and belonging, that means creating important dialogue.

Jessa is one of the lead organisers for the Inclusion Week committee and says bringing the event together is no simple task. One of the things Jessa looks for is providing different considerations, including various diversity, inclusion,

equity and accessibility efforts.

"It was born in 2024, and it's sort of gotten bigger and bigger every single year, and it's turned into something that now a lot of folks in the campus community really look forward to, and we're excited to be a part of," says Jessa.

Since its beginning three years ago, Jessa says she hopes to see the number of student speakers grow.

"So if somebody wants to do a presentation, but they're not really sure, you know, 'Well, does it make sense?' or, 'Would this be something that is applicable?' My door is always open if folks want to brainstorm ideas or if they have questions," Jessa says.

For Faith Richards, Inclusion Week 2026 was the first time she had ever spoken about her experience and subsequent recovery as a car collision survivor.

"After my accident when I was 10 years old, I went through a lot, and for the longest time did not feel ready," says Richards. "I've come a long way in my healing journey, and I realised that if my story could help even just one person feel



MRU's Inclusion Week featured seminars scattered throughout campus, covering various topics such as mental health, 2SLGBTQIA+ learnings, and debunking disability myths. Photo courtesy of Inclusion Week Committee

seen or less alone, then it was worth sharing."

When preparing to talk at Inclusion Week, Richards was nervous because she didn't have a prepared presentation like some of the other speakers, but she says once she started telling her story, the rest came naturally.

"I just spoke from my

heart, and I feel like that authenticity is what stuck with the people," she says.

Richards says inclusive advocacy is about creating space for every type of challenge someone may be dealing with.

"Inclusion, to me, it's truly about making space for people and not just for what

we see, but for the struggles that people carry quietly," says Richards. "That you don't have to pretend that you're okay."

As Inclusion Week continues to grow at MRU, both Jessa and Richards emphasise the importance of creating a safe environment for individuals to share their stories.

"Just talking about our trauma and our experiences and in times where we feel alone, all that stuff, it's really important because you think your story doesn't matter or you think that no one else is struggling with the same thing, but there are a ton of people, and it's really important to speak about it," Richards says.

Jessa hopes people who attend, speak and coordinate this event can not only leave with a better understanding of others' experiences and apply that knowledge, but also use the week to build new partnerships.

"Those connections, those friendships, those relationships, the more that we develop them, the more that we're likely to create an inclusive community," Jessa says.



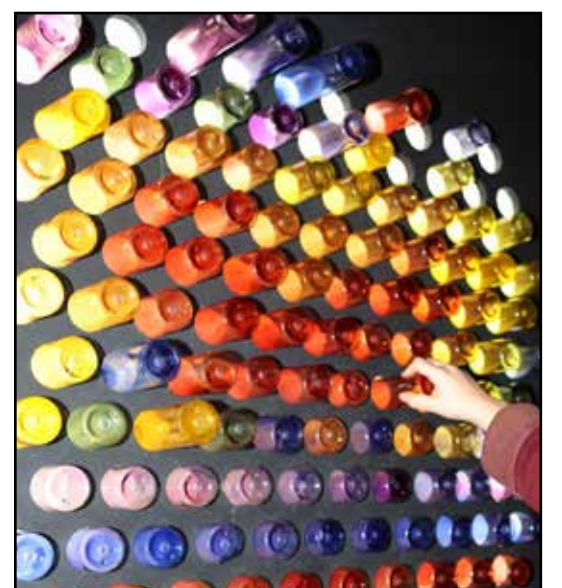
With a new theme every year, Inclusion Week 2026 was centred around "Conversations that Connect," pushing the MRU community to share their experiences and learn from others. Photo courtesy of Inclusion Week Committee



Chinook Blast Photo Gallery

A look at the festival through a camera lens

Chinook Blast is back and the weather is not disappointing. Chinook winds are making the festivities a popular activity for all ages around the city. The main attraction is surrounding Eau Claire Plaza, with performers, interactive art exhibits, vendors and more. The free festival runs until Feb. 16, 2026.



With activities running day and night, the Chinook Blast Festival brings Calgarians together during the bitter cold of January and February. Photos by Mia Smith

Honouring Virnetta Anderson's legacy

Elected in 1974, one city councillor's impact continues to feed Calgary 50 years later

Acacia Carol

Layout Editor



Known as being incredibly involved within her community, Virnetta Anderson was praised for her commitment to volunteer work. Photo courtesy of Esther Elder, Meals on Wheels

Virnetta Anderson has long been commemorated for her legacy in Calgary. As the first Black city councillor—formerly called alderwoman, the official name for female city councillors until 2010—in the city and the province, Anderson was always looking for ways to become actively engaged with Calgary's communities.

Through her volunteer work with various churches and charities, and her time on city boards, Anderson noticed a lack of support for seniors facing food insecurity. Esther Elder, CEO of Meals on Wheels, says that finding a solution wasn't just "nice to have," it was a lifeline.

Meals on Wheels

That's where Meals on Wheels was born. Elder says that in the '70s, their approach was similar to what they do now, but on a smaller scale. In the beginning, 100 volunteers served hot meals and operated on a sliding-scale payment system.

As co-founder and president of the organisation when it began, Anderson was pivotal in ensuring that the program grew from a small pilot to a citywide service that continues to provide one million meals a year.

Elder credits Anderson's community-centred approach and principles to Meals on Wheels' early growth. Anderson adhered to the idea that "dignified nutrition" was an essential piece of community infrastructure, a tenet Elder echoes.

Meals on Wheels' flagship program, the Going Home program, originated from Anderson's involvement with the United Church. During her volunteer work, Anderson noticed that seniors were not adequately supported in the recovery process. The Going Home program was born out of a need to meet community members where they were, physically and financially.

Delivering daily hot meals remains essential to how Meals on Wheels addresses food insecurity. According to Statistics Canada figures, in 2023, almost 32 per cent of Calgarians lived in food-insecure households.

Elder says the need for support has certainly grown in recent years. While their organisation might have started with a focus on seniors, its services have grown to support families, people with disabilities and

children in school.

"We know that one in four Calgary households is experiencing food insecurity," Elder says. "It's a crisis situation."

However, Elder believes that Anderson left a strong foundation for supporting the city in the past, so the Meals on Wheels of today is "well-positioned" to help Calgarians. She also believes that Anderson would be proud of the legacy she has left with Meals on Wheels.

Today, part of that legacy has grown to include new programs that fund the thousands of meals Elder and her team provide every day.

Hot Chocolate Fest

Enter YYC Hot Chocolate Fest, a month-long festival that combines fundraising, competition and innovative

drinks. Since 2011, it's grown to include 170 unique vendors across Calgary, with a recent expansion to include Okotoks as well.

Elder believes that YYC Hot Chocolate Fest is another avenue of pursuing dignified nutrition.

"Different in form, [but] it's still like that in spirit," she says. "It's community-powered. It's partnership-driven."

Brittney Edge, the marketing and communications specialist at Meals on Wheels, says Hot Chocolate Fest has grown significantly over the last three years. Last year, they raised \$175,000. This year, they want to increase that to \$200,000, which would subsidise 40,000 meals for Calgarians.

February is a big month for Meals on Wheels. As they honour the foundation Anderson built for their operations, Elder says it's important not only to look at the impact she had on their early beginnings, but also at how that impact has grown over 50 years.

"She is an incredibly remarkable woman that I think her legacy is not only in the work and what she achieved, but I also think it's what she established for young women everywhere," Elder says.



With her impact going beyond municipal duties, Anderson's legacy with Meals on Wheels led to a beloved Calgary tradition: YYC Hot Chocolate Fest. Photo courtesy of Esther Elder, Meals on Wheels

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First Canadian set to orbit the moon with NASA

What the upcoming mission means for maple-decorated astronauts

Emma Voelpel

Staff Writer

Canadians have been orbiting space since 1984, but the Artemis II mission will mark the first time a NASA-trained Canadian will orbit Earth and the moon.

Initially, NASA was preparing to launch Artemis II early this month. However, after a liquid hydrogen leak was found during a test launch, the mission's engineers have delayed the earliest possible launch date to March 2026.

"With March as the potential launch window, teams will fully review data from the test, mitigate each issue, and return to testing ahead of setting an official target launch date," the space agency said in a statement ahead of its Feb. 3 news conference.

The mission is part of the Artemis campaign — a project that intends to orbit the Earth and past the moon for "scientific discovery and technology advancement."

The crew set to board the Orion spacecraft — the ship used for exploration — includes NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, as well as Canadian Space Agency (CSA) astronaut Jeremy Hansen.

About Hansen

Hansen was born in London, Ont., in 1976. He first became interested in aviation at the age of 12 when he joined the 614 Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron in his hometown.

Some years later, he earned his pilot license at 17 and quickly enrolled in the Royal Military College Saint-Jean in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in space science in 1999 and a master's of science in physics a year later, Hansen spent the early 2000s training to be a fighter pilot.

In 2009, he was recruited by the CSA as one of only two people selected for its third Canadian Astronaut Recruitment Campaign. Two



Canadian Space Agency astronaut, Jeremy Hansen, talks about his upcoming mission during a campaign tour on March 7, 2025. Photo courtesy of NASA HQ

Photo / Flickr

years later, he graduated and started working in the mission control centre.

Over the next several years, he would participate in programs such as the European Space Agency's CAVES program in Sardinia, Italy, where he spent six weeks in an underground exhibition spanning over four kilometres. After that, he was a crew member on NEEMO 19, an underwater training session meant to simulate an environment similar to that in outer space by going into the deep sea.

All of this experience came to a boil in 2017, when Hansen became the first-ever Canadian to lead a NASA astronaut class. During that time, he trained and mentored astronauts from all over North America, a milestone for Canadian astronauts.

Hansen was assigned to the Artemis II mission in 2023.

Canadian's future in NASA

The first Artemis took off in 2022 on a crewless mission that orbited the moon — it was a test launch for future spacecraft carrying actual crew members. The project for the second mission was repeatedly delayed until a blast-off date was set for

February 2026.

The Orion is set to take off at the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. The mission will be the first time a space crew has been sent to the moon since the final Apollo mission in 1972.

"I'm actually pretty pumped to see that, because, you know, in just a few weeks you're going to see four humans fly around the moon," Hansen told The Canadian Press.

"If we're doing that now, imagine what we can do next. I'm pretty pumped to see that come to fruition."

The mission is set to last roughly 10 days. The Orion will spend time evaluating other spacecraft to see how they operate and how they respond to the atmosphere. NASA described the goal of the expedition as a way to "expand our knowledge of space radiation, human health and behaviour, and space communications."

The maximum distance the crew is set to travel will be 4,600 miles beyond the moon—approximately 240,000 miles from Earth.

Part of the mission's ground crew is fellow Canadian astronaut Jenni Gibbons. A native of Calgary, Gibbons has been part of the CSA since graduating from their training program in 2020.

NASA first invited Canadians on board its Artemis missions, and they sure delivered new developments in robotic systems for deep space.

This partnership with NASA creates a space for future Canadians to be given the chance to travel to the moon and beyond.



On a clear day during a full moon even a consumer telescope can see the moon's craters in detail. Photo by Landen Melnick

Opinion: Revisiting a competitive sport

Why bringing passion back into the pool can be a sink or swim

Bella Coco

News Editor

January still feels like a starting block.

I was 14 when I slammed my hand into the wall and saw my 50-meter butterfly time—32.9 seconds, which meant I had qualified for the Alberta Winter Provincials. This was suddenly the most beautiful time in the world, and having it listed next to my name in bright red lettering on the time-tracking sign sent an electric jolt through my spine.

I had travelled this road for far too long, and compared to my teammates, I was extremely late to the provincial party. Most of them had started swimming at age five, trying out for the team as soon as humanly possible, and setting their sights on earning a collegiate team spot before hitting their teenage years.

Beginning the journey at 10-years-old was considered blasphemous and, frankly, idiotic. I would never catch up in time, and their years of experience would shape how they treated me on and off the pool deck.

To them, provincials were nothing but routine. You'd show up, do your damn best, and be sure to score that year's \$100 hoodie, which you would flaunt to every practice going forward.

To me, it was the vindication I had so desperately yearned for after years of locker room whispers and ice outs.

Even though January was mid-season, chlorine-heavy, and all short breath and sore muscles, March suddenly felt close enough to reach.

Provincials were circled on the calendar in pen. My parents would count down the days and be far too chipper to drive me to those



A swimmer does the butterfly stroke while competing in a race on Sept. 24, 2020. Photo courtesy of Brian Matangelo / Unsplash

5 a.m. practices.

Then the world shut down. Pools closed. Meets vanished. By the time March arrived, so did COVID-19, and the meet that I had spent five years chasing dissolved into a press conference and a public health order. I didn't know it then, but that was also the quiet, hushed end of my competitive swimming career.

Before the beginning of the end, swimming had already been slipping away from me. A shoulder injury, one that never felt dramatic enough to deserve grief, had been growing louder with every practice. It wasn't a single breaking moment, just a long negotiation with pain: ice packs, modified sets and the constant question of whether pushing through was worth it.

Being a minor meant the golden ticket opportunity of seeing an orthopedic surgeon was slim, so I was reduced to physiotherapy sessions once a week under harsh fluorescent

lighting.

When the pools eventually closed, the decision was made for me. There was no farewell race, no last ribbon or medal, no chance to prove anything. I was done.

At 14, quitting felt like the ultimate failure, and six years later, it's more complicated.

What it takes to return as an adult

Now 21, I quietly returned to swimming this year and somewhat anonymously. The apprehension and excitement were conveyed in big bold letters in a group text to my parents, who seemed to let out a sigh of relief that I was no longer avoiding the lanes.

There was no bold team logo on my cap. No coach yelling splits. Just me, a public lane, and the routine hum of the filtration system. The first thing I noticed wasn't the burn; it was how surprisingly familiar the water felt after seven years. My form wasn't half bad,

and my strength hadn't completely disappeared.

While my body remembered the movements before my mind did, my shoulders were quick to remind me that this was no longer the same relationship. Breathless, I had to stop mid-lap and switch to a measly back kick. I had to rest. I had to listen.

I've discovered that what I'm relearning now isn't how to be fast or be the best. It's how to be patient.

Competitive swimming trained me to measure my worth in seconds and placements. I learned early that improvement is visible and merciless. Coming back without that structure has been disorienting and humbling, leaving me to feel exhausted after 45 minutes.

Now, I'm learning to see swimming as a privilege rather than a performance. I don't have to go to the pool; now I get to go. How enlightening is that?

It feels incredible to know

my body can still swim, even if I'm imperfect. There is safety in swimming without an audience, in choosing distance over speed and in getting out of the pool before the pain escalates, not after.

Sometimes I think about that 14-year-old, standing on the slippery pool deck in January, dreaming of March. I wish I could tell her that the ending she never got wasn't the end at all, it was just a pause. The water is still here. So am I.

How to build a community

Being a villager is trending, but what does it take?

Serena Kanji-Ramji

Contributor

Gen Z has been dubbed the loneliest generation. This truth is rooted in the recent rise of individualism, which has led to a noticeable disintegration of cultivated communities.

According to an article by the Association for Psychological Science, individualism—the idea that a person’s right to freedom and individual expression outweighs responsibility to the collective or group—has risen by 12 per cent since 1960.

According to Dan Siegel, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, our society is more keen on this separation than ever. As explained in his latest book, there is more “separation rather than connection, independence rather than interdependence, individuality rather than a shared identity.”

Much of the groundwork for the individualist mindsets we see today has been laid by social media. The platforms people use every day push the idea that if they love themselves enough, then they don’t need anyone else. They can make all the connections they need if they just dig deep enough—some go as far as seeing a connection with others as a

genuine weakness.

Like influencer Lis Talks Vibes, who, in an Instagram video that has garnered thousands of likes, said they believe it’s weird to have friends from high school, citing those relationships as holding people back.

They went on to say that they believe people who have no friends at all are the strongest because they are “protecting their energy.”

While those between the ages of 13 and 29 might watch this content and feel doomed to forever revel in their loneliness, much of the research on socialisation disagrees, and recent social media trends suggest that finding community is possible.

‘Everyone wants a village, but no one wants to be a villager.’ TikTok users

One study in the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships concludes that social support is an essential factor in student success, as it can help buffer some of the stress they face. Essentially, community is what keeps people grounded, especially students.

In a viral TikTok, Rachel



A group of friends join hands in a circle. Photo courtesy of Andrius Budrikas / Unsplash

Lovely explains that building a community is actually much simpler than some make it out to be, and that it can be done in three steps.

The first, most important, and arguably hardest step is admitting and accepting that we need people. Lovely says that everyone wants to be part of a community, but being part of one takes work that no one wants to do.

“This ‘I can figure it all

out by myself, I don’t need help from anyone’ is so detrimental to creating community,” says Lovely.

The second step, she says, is being more vulnerable with the people around us. An example suggested by Lovely was always going to the airport to pick people up, but never asking for people to pick you up when you need it. She explained that villages aren’t a one-way street: they are meant to be reciprocal.

Finally, Lovely says that you must be willing to go outside and engage. She says that with social media, connection is at our fingertips. Lovely says that building a community can’t happen in the isolation of our own homes—instead, recommending networking events, club meetings, and friends’ nights out.

Building community at MRU

Now that you have all the steps to cultivate community, let’s take a look at some things you can do close to home or on campus.

It’s no secret that students want to create relationships on campus now more than ever. In fact, the Instagram account @mruchatter—an anonymous confession page not affiliated with the university but widely used by students—is littered with posts asking where to find friends.

One low-risk starting point is to greet the people sitting next to you in class and ask them what their major is or where they’re from. Another way to put yourself out there is to attend on-campus events. MRU has a wide range of activities every week, including Trivia Tuesday at Westgate Social or crafting at the Peer Support Centre on Thoughtful Thursdays.

Aside from Wyckham House, the Riddell Library offers monthly events, like its speaker series, where you can meet like-minded peers. More obviously, its speed-friending event will take place later this month, on Feb. 23, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Finally, the most effective way to cultivate community on campus is by joining a club. Whatever your interest, MRU probably has a club for it, and attending these meetings or even becoming an executive for one gives you an opportunity to meet people who are compatible with you.

Building a community doesn’t happen overnight—it takes effort and sacrifice. But when all is said and done, the cost of inconvenience in the name of connection will never outweigh the cost of being alone.



Westgate Social can be a great place at MRU to find community, especially when they host Trivia Tuesdays to get students together. Photo by Aiden Johnner

Opinion: The realities of living in Banff

The ups and downs of living in a postcard

Emma Voelpel

Staff Writer



Lake Minnewanka, located northeast of the town of Banff in Banff National Park, Alta. Photo by Emma Voelpel

As most young people do, I decided to spend the summer in Banff, Alta., after graduating. As with many young people, those three months quietly turned into three years.

Ever since I lived in Banff, I've been asking myself the same question—is it possible to live in a postcard?

A typical year there consists of summer hikes, autumnal bike rides, and hitting the slopes once the snow falls. Although, to be frank, I'm known as a nuisance on the hill, as well as a danger to myself and others.

During my time there, I learned lessons that shaped me and made self-realizations I wouldn't have known otherwise.

Having moved there as an 18-year-old, it felt as if I was simultaneously maturing too fast, yet not fast enough.

It was my first taste of independence, yet one still surrounded by borders.

Banff is in somewhat of its own bubble. Careers and longevity are possible, but the culture has slowly shifted towards a more favourable view of short-term stints.

In terms of its resident population, the town is on the smaller side. In 2025, 11,402 people called Banff home—a 22 per cent increase since 2020. Still, its population is largely made up of people coming and going, as the town welcomes roughly four million tourists each year.

Tourism is naturally the

economic driver of Banff, and it's something the town takes very seriously. The town balances its aesthetics with commercialisation. While still acknowledging it's a national park, it caps commercial space to only 10 per cent of the town.

Even hotels can only have a limited number of rooms to preserve nature. However, this doesn't alleviate the foot traffic.

The fast-paced nature of summer can be addictive, with an estimated two million people visiting between July and August. The constant influx of people makes one day feel like five minutes.

I reached out to a few friends I met while living there to see if their experiences were similar to mine—including my friend Brooke.

A bitter-sweet symphony

Brooke and I moved to Banff around the same time. At 18, moving from Ontario to Banff, she managed to balance a life of snowboarding, serving at several restaurants, and working on her degree.

"I think it mainly boils down to the overall mindset—work hard, play hard," she says. "Most people had two jobs but wouldn't shy away from a 10-hour hike on their day off, and it's considered normal."

My best friend, Sydney, was born and raised in Banff. She knows the town like the back

of her hand and has always appreciated the backdrop of her childhood.

"I skied, fished, and hiked. I was incredibly lucky to be raised by parents who valued those things," she says.

However, as she grew older, she began to notice another side to it.

"I find the culture in Banff to be incredibly unique, and one that is not unanimous," she says. "I believe that the culture of those born in Banff versus the culture of those who live there temporarily is very different."

The transient life in the town breeds an atmosphere that Sydney described as "the upside down." Banff has a strong nightlife for a town of

its size. Often, even getting the affectionate title of being a 'mini-Vegas.'

Usually, after 10 p.m., bars and restaurants downtown become central social spaces for locals. Drinking is common. Drug use exists. For some, it's occasional. For others, it becomes routine.

There's somewhat of a pattern that starts to form. The hustle and bustle of the workday makes it feel rewarding for a drink after work—maybe even a few. This cycle is one that many people I know have fallen into.

This was, unfortunately, one of the downsides of living in such a transient, fast-paced town. It's also one of the biggest differences compared to my way of life now. At one point, time blurred. Days and weeks began to blend together.

This is a conversation I've had with many of my friends who have moved out of Banff. The structure of life is completely different anywhere else, even in a city only 90 minutes away.

It's important to mention that life doesn't have to be that chaotic while living there. Many people manage to sustain a steady life.

Today, life consists of work, school and being at home with my cat. The thought of being out past 10 p.m. is almost unimaginable to me now. Brooke had a similar sentiment.

"Every day is pretty much the same compared to in Banff, where there was always an adventure to conquer," says Brooke.

I can attest that the days are much less exciting now than they were then.

One thing that Banff has always been, despite the challenges of living there, is beautiful. To this day, I still have friends who are living there. My friend Katelyn is still astounded to have the mountains in her backyard.

"The scenery still takes my breath away," says Katelyn. "I still have moments where I can't believe I get to live somewhere so beautiful."

But what I miss most about it was the people there.

Over time, you learn that the hardest part isn't meeting new people, but letting them go.

Goodbyes became a regular part of life. Friends leave for new jobs, opportunities, or simply because their time there is up. You get used to the farewell drinks, last hikes, and promises to try to stay in touch. The constant turnover makes friendships feel intense, yet there's always the looming reminder that they're temporary.

One thing that makes me incredibly lucky is that many friendships have extended outside of Banff. Some of them have moved home, and some have found different paths. Some have stayed in the mountain town.



View of Mount Norquay as seen from downtown Banff, Alta. Photo by Emma Voelpel

How girl dinner walked so savoury girl could eat

Why the social media trends are taking over, what they symbolise

Anais Loepky

Staff Writer

What started three years ago as a comedic TikTok trend quickly took on a narrative of its own—one that's still relevant today.

Girl dinner—a joke about small snack plates featuring uncommon combinations like cheese, bread, Kraft Dinner, and popcorn—anything with maximum appeal and minimal effort—grabbed audiences' attention through its humour and realism.

More recently, the savoury girl trend is taking over the same corner of TikTok. The glasses of wine and plates of cheese have been traded for avocado toast, rice bowls, and meals that actually fill you up.

Between the two, questions have been raised about whether the trends are indicators of the cost of living, burnout, and the quiet normalisation of eating disorder culture.

Zooming in on girl dinner

While most people saw the trend as harmless and humorous, others pointed out how closely it mirrored eating disorder culture. Women began questioning whether girl dinner unintentionally romanticised meals that lacked proper nourishment.

For many, however, girl dinner was less about aesthetics and more about exhaustion and the realities of modern grocery prices. After a day of work or school, the idea of preparing a proper meal felt overwhelming.

As rising food costs and living alone made traditional dinners feel impractical, dinner for one became a validating way to eat without the pressure of making a 'real' meal.

But while the trend itself was new, thousands of women admitted they had been eating like this for years. What felt like a joke on TikTok was, for many, an accurate representation of how dinner looked at the end of a long day.

"It was honestly just so validating. It was good to know I'm not the only one who occasionally calls an assortment of snacks a meal,"



Small snack plates are essential for those who want to participate in TikTok's girl dinner trend. Photo courtesy of Marios Gkortsilas / Unsplash

says Sydnie Smith, an MRU student.

For students in particular, the trend resonated. Balancing classes, work, and social lives often leaves little to no time or energy for cooking, and grocery bills can make full meals feel like a luxury rather than a routine.

"If I'm making a steak or something like that, it's for a special occasion. If I ate a nice meal every day, it would cost my entire paycheque at this point," says Abby Wilson, an MRU student and server.

Not everyone viewed girl dinner as harmless, however. Some viewers and health professionals criticised the trend for how closely it resembled restrictive eating habits, arguing that it glamorised eating disorder behaviours.

"There is some potential to trigger disordered eating if your girl dinner doesn't have adequate amounts of calories and variety," says Toby Amidor from The Food Network.

But for many women, the trend was never about eating less—it was simply eating in a way that was affordable and manageable.

Introducing 'savoury girl'

As conversations around girl dinners grew, so did discussions about how women approached these low-effort meals.

The rise of the savoury girl trend marked a noticeable shift. Pioneered by Holly Barnes on her TikTok account @savourygirl, people began posting simple yet filling meals: eggs on toast, rice bowls, noodles, soups, and anything that could be made quickly while still feeling substantial.

The tone of the videos changed as well. Where girl dinner leaned into humour and chaos, savoury girl content focuses on nourishment—messages that are less about making do and more about making

something nutritious. The videos almost have an educational undertone, with creators sharing favourite recipes and inspiration for a more balanced diet.

For many students and young adults living alone, cooking elaborate dinners simply isn't realistic. Despite Barnes' recent inclusion of high-class delicacies like caviar, the original savoury girl meals rely on affordable staples like eggs, bread, rice, and canned goods.

Underneath both trends is a reset of traditional expectations around dinner. For generations, dinner has been framed as a cooked, complete meal—often prepared by the woman of the household in a nuclear family. These trends suggest that many women are stepping away from that pressure entirely.

"I think both savoury girl dinner and girl dinner are great in their own ways, sometimes after a long day, managing to make any type

of meal is an accomplishment in itself," says Wilson.

In many ways, savoury girl feels like a response to the criticism of girl dinner. It keeps the low effort and practicality but removes the sense of restriction. It's still about convenience, but now with the intention of actually being fed.

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Putting 'The Blue' in Blue Sky City

How a Calgary artist creates community and culture through music

Hunter Pratt

Staff Writer

If you want to discuss Calgary's music scene, a staple is Hemen Tor-Agbidye, more commonly known as The Blue.

His music combines positivity and life lessons, reflecting a vibe that feels like a warm Calgary day.

Hemen has been making music since middle school. He chose The Blue as his artist name after the nursery rhyme, Little Boy Blue, which he shortened to make timeless.

His music features a whirlwind of collaborative efforts, including his band, which has created a community for him over the years. For Hemen, this community makes his music feel like sunshine in a bottle as it provides the opportunity

for other artists to shine as well.

"We're all different. We all have different viewpoints," says Hemen.

"But I really enjoy working with different people because they push you in a different way."

Hemen says he owes many lessons to working with others, as they have made him want to create better art and push his creative limits. He adds that pushing himself creatively manifests

in his music as poise and self-awareness.

Hemen expresses that positivity is something he pays gratitude toward, even when times aren't easy.

"I approach life with a positive view, and I'm glad that comes through the music," he says. "I know life isn't always sunshine and rainbows, so there's definitely acknowledgement of that part, but understanding there are things to fight for in life."

Hemen truly fights for what he believes in, sharing that a big reason he became so invested in making music was to prove a teacher wrong.

In the eighth grade, Hemen had an English teacher who claimed rap music only focused on girls and cars. Hemen, however, didn't

stand for this.

He spent his time proving this teacher wrong, recording positive hip-hop music and performing at school events. Eventually, the teacher thanked Hemen for pushing back and sharing his side of the argument, even getting extra credit if he was able to connect hip-hop to any English assignment.

"You rarely see teachers come back and acknowledge things you've done like that, especially [teachers] set in their ways," he says.

The Blue pays huge respect to the Blue Sky City within his music, thanking it for being an emerging place to grow as an artist.

"I love Calgary so much, and I think it's genuinely the best city right now for emerging

talent in the country."

Hemen explains that Calgary's audience is unmatched for any artist willing to step to the plate.

"I always hear from so many people that this is like the warmest audience they've performed in front of," he says. "They felt the crowd was engaged and really into what they were doing... it's so great that that's the reputation we're building."

Hemen's pride for the city runs deep, providing encouragement to YYC locals to expose themselves to art that is right under their noses.

"I think the cool thing is we have so much incredible talent in Calgary. You will not regret getting exposed to what's happening in the city and also getting to be part of the culture that's building here," he says.

Hemen has had plenty of opportunities to open for other great Canadian musicians, ranging from K-OS to Down With Webster, fulfilling plenty of childhood dreams. These performance opportunities have always felt surreal for The Blue.

"You dream about it as a kid, and no matter how much you believe in yourself, sometimes you don't process this is an actual, real thing that can happen or did happen," he says.

The Blue considers himself an outspoken advocate for the city, and when it comes to the music scene, this is his self-fulfilling prophecy.

So, whether he is creating music or advocating for local musicians, The Blue works to remind Blue Sky City that:

"Calgary's music scene is beautiful."



Hemen Tor-Agbidye, also known as The Blue, is a local rapper and staunch advocate for Calgary's growing music scene. Photo courtesy of Daman Singh

OUT'N ABOUT

Valentine's Tea at Lougheed House

Celebrate Valentine's Day with a traditional tea experience at the historic Lougheed House. Presented by A Certain Flair Catering, the afternoon will feature infused teas, pastries and open access to the museum. The event runs Feb. 14 and 15, with more information available at lougheedhouse.com.

Anne of Green Gables: The Musical

Presented by StoryBook Theatre, *Anne of Green Gables: The Musical* is set to run from Feb. 20 to Mar. 15. Based on the original novel by Lucy Maud Montgomery, the production will take place at the Beddington Theatre Arts Centre, with tickets available at storybooktheatre.org.

Calgary Fishtival

Celebrating its 14th anniversary, the Bow Habitat Station Fishtival is back on Feb. 14. The event features fish and water activities available through the Discovery Centre, Aquariums and Fish Hatchery from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., with tickets available at shop.albertaparks.ca.

Family Day at Studio Bell

Spend Family Day with Studio Bell, home of the National Music Centre. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Feb. 16, enjoy all-ages activities like scavenger hunts and exhibitions. The event also features live music throughout the day, with Calgary's own BETABOYS headlining the stage.

Come for the beer, stay for the people

Inside Calgary microbreweries that feel more like living rooms than businesses

Anais Loepky

Staff Writer

If you've ever said 'let's just pop in for one' at a Calgary brewery, you know how that goes. That one beer quickly becomes a flight, and that quick stop becomes an evening out with friends.

The atmosphere in Calgary's microbreweries is truly unmatched—these are places where regulars and staff are on a first-name basis, and menus are handwritten in chalk.

This feeling isn't found at large chain restaurants. It is exclusive to Calgary's locally owned microbreweries, where smaller neighbourhood brewers build community, each with its own unique personality.

These under-the-radar breweries reveal how Calgary creates spaces that feel less like businesses and more like gathering places.

Cabin Brewing Company

Cabin Brewing Company is widely known for its impactful work with 2SLGBTQIA+ organisations. The brewery partners with the Super Love beer initiative, where \$1 from every can of Super Saturation New England Pale Ale is donated to organisations that support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Haydon, a bartender who has been with the brewery for five years, shares that Cabin works hard on its community initiatives. He explains that the last Tuesday of every month hosts NeuroNights, an inclusive space where everyone is welcome to drink, hangout or otherwise.

Haydon describes the space as "a casual place where everyone gets along."

"It's all about conversation, you know, you come here to meet good people and talk about good beer," he says.

Cold Garden

Located in the heart of Inglewood, Cold Garden stands out with its lively patio and vibrant interior. The walls are lined with locally made artwork, giving the space a creative, welcoming energy. Known for its inclusive atmosphere, the brewery is open to all ages and, most famously, all pets.

On any given day, the taproom is filled with a mix of families, friend groups and pups, creating a welcoming space to relax. The constant flow of people and conversation gives Cold Garden a buzz that captures the neighbourhood spirit Inglewood is known for.

Tool Shed Brewing Company

This brewery started in 2012 in founder Graham Sherman's backyard toolshed.

Zak Scovoranski, marketing manager at Tool Shed, explains the brewery's philosophy: "We take our work really seriously, we want to make really good beer, and we want everyone to drink really good beer. But we don't take ourselves too seriously—we like to have fun."

He points to the brewery's tagline, "beer best served with a story," as a reflection of its culture. "Our founder is a true testament to that. He's a phenomenal storyteller, and I think everyone who comes in here has their own story about Tool Shed," he says.

Scovoranski also highlights the brewery's broader impact on Alberta's craft beer scene.

"Our founder actually helped lobby the provincial government to allow small breweries to make and sell beer in Alberta," he says. "We were the first small brewery to get a brewing license in Alberta. We kind of sparked the movement that we see in Alberta, and we see all the breweries that came after us

as family."

That sense of history and humour still shapes the atmosphere today, inviting visitors to become part of the story.

Railyard Brewing

Railyard Brewing's taproom is a carefully curated space designed to make you want to kick back and stay a while. With pool tables, board games, gaming consoles and tables large enough for a true party, the atmosphere invites guests to settle in.

When asked what keeps people coming back, Nicole Murray, a staff member at the brewery, highlights "the fact that we are open concept, so people can actually see the brew operations happening Monday through Friday."

Nicole also shares her passion for working in the industry.

"Obviously we are all competitors, but at the end of the day we all support one another, it's a community," she says.

She added that working for a family-run business means "everything just feels more personal, and you really get to know everybody."

Prairie Dog Brewing

Prairie Dog Brewing combines a craft brewery with a family-friendly barbecue restaurant, creating a space that feels welcoming to a wide range of guests. Known for its slow-smoked BBQ and small-batch brews, the brewery emphasises a warm, come-as-you-are atmosphere.

Marlo Hepburn, who has worked as a server and bartender at Prairie Dog for two years, describes it as "a family-friendly, casual and inclusive atmosphere."

Because of the taproom's size, the space naturally lends itself to gatherings. "We are



The golden amber colour of beer can be so inviting, much like Prairie Dog Brewing's "Brewers Getaway" a tropical piña colada inspired beer. Photo by Aiden Johner

a great place for events," Hepburn says. "We host lots of retirement parties, bridal showers and corporate work events."

Programming also plays a big role in bringing people together. "We have trivia every night, we have painting and clay workshops," she explains. "I think that the owners really value having a place that's multi-purpose... they make an effort to be a space that can be customised for whatever group or community wants to use this space."

At Prairie Dog Brewing, the goal is simple: to create a place where, as the website puts it, everyone feels welcome to "have a seat at our table."

So, the next time someone says 'let's just pop in for one,' it might be worth knowing why that never really happens.

Calgary's microbreweries have mastered something that can't be bottled or sold—a feeling of belonging built on conversation, stories and a shared table.



Located in Calgary's historic Inglewood, Cold Garden has become a stable brewery for many Calgarians. Photo by Aiden Johner

'Spectacularly unspectacular'

How Peter Katsnelson is finding power through humour and honesty

Julia Finot

Staff Writer

In front of the camera but behind the screen, a 17-year-old sits reading into his phone, sharing poems about growing up, insecurity and self-acceptance. At first glance, Peter Katsnelson seems ordinary, but his words have prompted viewers to stop scrolling and listen.

Katsnelson is a Calgary teenager gaining attention online for poetry that feels playful but deeply personal. He is an emerging poet and author, and through the power of social media, he has grown an audience by writing candidly about adolescence, identity and the awkwardness of maturing, often with humor at the forefront.

Katsnelson posts videos of short self-written poems on Instagram, and his most-liked post has over 580,000 likes.

Katsnelson is a quirky teenage boy who is not afraid to show it. Through his niche artistic interests and captivating poems, he sets himself apart from other kids. Whether on social media or in person, Katsnelson stays true to himself.

"I would say that I'm a little bit weird," Katsnelson says. "I don't think I'm scared enough of the people around me, I kind of just go for it."

His willingness to openly engage with the world around him has shaped him and his art. Poetry began as a casual hobby before it took on a new life as Katsnelson's

primary creative outlet. It became his way to change while struggling with teenage uncertainty.

Unlike traditional "teenage slam poetry," which Katsnelson notes as dark and sometimes performative, he leans his work into warmth, humor and narrative storytelling.

"I like to tell stories very directly in my poetry," he says. "They're always about experiences I've had and discovering myself and my place in the world."

Katsnelson calls this approach "narrative youth poetry," which is a genre focused on honesty in art.

He often writes about love, acceptance or the issues he sees around him.

His first publication

Katsnelson independently self-published his own book, *This is Fine*.

This was a project that started out as a small chapbook intended to be mysteriously placed in libraries for someone to find by chance. But this project quickly expanded into a three-part full-length work that has since found a large international audience, everywhere from Canada across to Japan.

Publishing wasn't easy. After a failed attempt working alongside a local startup publishing company,

he took it upon himself to publish the book.

The first part of the book is focused on comedy, full of lighthearted and endearing poems. The middle blends his comedic style with sincerity, while the final part strips the comedic tone entirely, revealing raw emotional teenage vulnerability.

"I've heard that it's funny, which is good, because that was the goal," says Katsnelson. "But the end is a lot heavier."

The shift in tones has surprised readers who



Peter Katsnelson independently published his first book, *This is Fine*, which explores personal growth, acceptance and sincerity. Photo courtesy of Peter Katsnelson

expected the book to read as comedic throughout. But instead, *This is Fine* highlights Katsnelson's emotional growth, a choice that structurally matches his real-time experience in adolescence.

Ripple effect

Katsnelson is inspiring many young writers to chase their passion for poetry.

Local 15-year-old poet, Grace, says learning about Katsnelson and reading his work has encouraged her to pursue publishing her own writing. Grace is considering posting some of her own poems.

Beyond writers, Katsnelson influences his fans. His audience includes teenagers and adults alike, many of whom encounter his work through social media.

Katsnelson describes himself as "spectacularly unspectacular," a phrase he uses in his own writing, reflecting his resistance to artistic pretension. Through his poems, he also admits to exaggerating his identity to appear more interesting than he feels, although he rejects his own need to perform.

"If I can't be honest even in my own art, then the only point it serves is to make myself feel important enough to be an artist," he wrote.

His stories are about acceptance, and the recognition that survival, presence and sincerity are enough to make him an artist.

Katsnelson is experimenting with this future and exploring other creative outlets. Filmmaking is one thing at the top of his list.

As his audience continues to grow, Katsnelson remains grounded in that idea. In a media environment often driven by spectacle, his quiet insistence on truth has proven to be exactly what resonates.



Calgary teenager Peter Katsnelson is an emerging poet and author writing candidly about his experiences with awkwardness and identity. Photo courtesy of Peter Katsnelson

Resurgence of retro music in an age of algorithms

Why are younger listeners turning away from modern releases?

Hannah Flammenspeck

Contributor

In a world dominated by streaming and algorithms, retro sounds are striking a chord with modern listeners.

From the disco-funk era of the '70s to the synth sounds of the '80s, retro records like Brit-pop and '90s grunge are making a comeback, reshaping fashion, the charts, and the way audiences engage with music.

One of the driving forces behind the comeback is nostalgia. Even for those who have not lived in a particular era, music has the unique ability to transport listeners to a different time.

For younger generations, this nostalgia extends to the way music is consumed. Young people are increasingly straying from the musical status quo, either as a form of escapism or simply showing an appreciation for the past.

As a result, physical forms of media are returning—cassette tapes, vinyl, CDs and even wired headphones are on the rise. In 2023, vinyl sales in Canada rose by over one-fifth from the previous two years, with album downloads being five times lower than in 2015.

In pop culture

Despite the convenience of streaming services, it appears physical media is here to stay.

Social media, however, still plays a significant role in the

renaissance of older music. TikTok has become a crucial tool for rediscovery, often catapulting old tracks into the mainstream.

Since the recent release of the divisive final season of Netflix's *Stranger Things* that included Prince's 1984 song "Purple Rain," the track has seen a 243 per cent rise in global Spotify streams, most of which are from Generation Z.

The pivotal scene in season five has also led many people on TikTok to create video edits of the show or other pop culture moments to the song. A similar phenomenon happened in 2022 after *Stranger Things* season 4 and its use of Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill," which secured a billion streams on Spotify that year.

However, nostalgic TV shows are not the only thing credited for the revival of old music. Biopics often ignite the popularity of a band or singer upon their release, with well-known actors playing famous musicians. With these performances often come awards—and the music benefits as well.

The release of *A Complete Unknown* in 2024, a biopic of Bob Dylan starring the ever-popular Timothee Chalamet, has led to the folk singer gaining a 150 per cent increase in streams upon the

movie's release.

A similar surge occurred when the movie *Bohemian Rhapsody* in 2019, when Queen's streams increased from 588 million to 1.9 billion. That same year, Rami Malek secured Best Actor in a Leading Role at the Oscars for his performance as Freddie Mercury.

At the forefront of this music discourse is whether or not music from the past is better than music now. One of the main arguments for why music today is worse is that it is unoriginal. However, this implication suggests music from the past must be original, which is not the case.

The Beatles—frequently referred to as the greatest band of all time—were heavily influenced by other artists. When The Beatles began in Liverpool in the early 1960s, they were heavily inspired by American rock, a genre largely shaped by African American artists.

For instance, one of The Beatles' most popular songs, "Twist and Shout," was a cover of a song originally by the Isley Brothers, an African American R&B group. In fact, six of the 14 songs on The Beatles' debut album are covers, four of which are by other black artists.

Similarly, Oasis—recently back in the mainstream



Freddie Mercury from the band Queen, performing in Newhaven in 1977. Photo courtesy of Carl Lender / Wikimedia Commons

following their reunion tour, Oasis Live '25—has faced criticism for borrowing from The Beatles' sound. Despite accusations of unoriginality, Oasis remains one of the most successful and beloved bands to come out of the '90s music scene.

So, why now?

If unoriginality has always existed, even within the classics, then the current shift cannot be fully explained because of it. So what does drive people away from modern releases?

Because TikTok is a helpful tool for music discovery, music labels use it to their advantage. Due to virality being the core of music promotion, songs are now designed for short-form videos.

The hook of the song arrives fast, choruses are frequently repeated, and some remove the bridge of the song altogether.

The lyrics of songs have changed as well, often

prioritising relatability and the capability of tracks within trends. Because of this, modern music feels inauthentic, with the drive being for streams as opposed to creating art.

An over-saturation of this kind of music on social media platforms quickly turns to fatigue, while older music feels less engineered and more intentional in comparison.

Although older music has nostalgia on its side, the appeal of it lies in the variety of music not created under the pressure of virality and overnight sensation.

While nostalgic television, TikTok trends, and biopics clearly lend to the rediscovery of old favourites, it begs the deeper question: why are younger people turning away from newer music?

In a society of doom-scrolling and constant stimulus, perhaps older music invites listeners to slow down and escape to a different time.



The Beatles waving to the public after arriving at the JFK airport in 1964. Photo courtesy of United Press International / Wikimedia Commons

The tenderness of sisterhood

How Lana Collins creates timeless moments one photo frame at a time

Katrina Ebuenga

Staff Writer

There is a great intimacy to capturing a still moment in time.

Captured by Lana Collins, *All My Sisters* freezes time through photography, allowing audiences to ruminate on fleeting moments. Exploring themes of femininity, sisterhood and emotional tenderness, Collins' project reveals moments of connection that go unspoken.

"It feels like an innate feeling of knowing one another, even though you might not," says Collins.

Displaying sisterhood in all its forms, the space Collins creates opens the floor for audiences to explore the meaning of relationships. Her lens directs attention to the bonds that grow between friends, strangers and communities.

Collins was Exposure's Emerging Photographer of the Year for 2025. This year, her solo exhibition, presented by Exposure Photography Festival and hosted in partnership with

Contemporary Calgary, will engage with viewers through the unconditional lens of female friendship.

"Sisterhood is saying, 'you feel like me. I trust you with myself,'" says Collins.

Focusing on women and queer individuals, she captures the wordless truth of truly being seen by one another.

With a set designed to replicate a bedroom, the audience is encouraged to explore every aspect the room has to offer. Presenting ideas of safety and softness, *All My Sisters* brings tenderness to the forefront, opening the space for everyone to fully immerse themselves.

"For the people who feel connected to sisterhood themselves or feel aligned with that identity, I hope they feel seen, feel like they know me," says Collins. "And for the people that are not part of that sisterhood, I have no idea how they're gonna feel, but my only hope is that people actually interact with the space."

Collins brings all sorts of materials and reimagining to the chaotic beauty of sisterhood. She hopes audiences will enter the space through a different perspective.

"I want people to feel like they can engage with it because I feel like that is another huge part of sisterhood," says Collins. "It's like being allowed into the physical and emotional space, and that's what I want people to feel like when they look at it."

Her journey

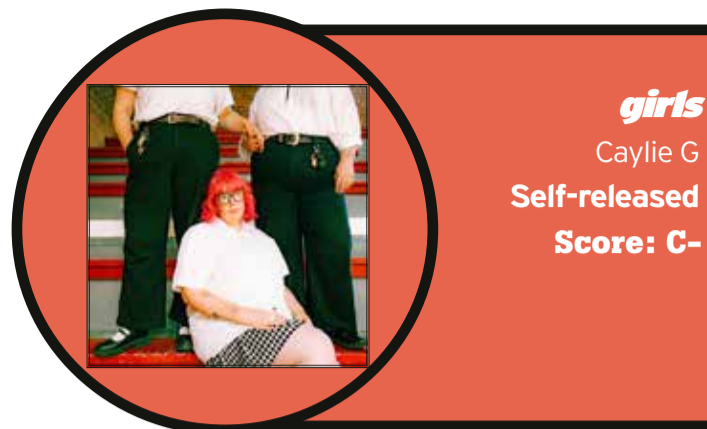
Starting her photography journey in 2021 with a disposable film camera gifted by a friend, Collins has shaped a space for everyone to experience what girlhood feels like through her self-taught craft.

By taking the emotional aspects of femininity and transforming them into visual form, Collins draws attention

Continues on Pg. 18



Lana Collins is a photographer specializing in 35mm film, capturing sisterhood in all its forms in her new solo exhibition, *All My Sisters*. Photo by Lana Collins



girls
Caylie G
Self-released
Score: C-

The third EP from Edmonton's Caylie G, *girls* is the musical equivalent of a total 180°. With its five tracks totalling only 17 minutes, the September 2025 release makes two very different impressions in so little time. Caylie G gets a passing grade, but they should see me after class.

Opening with a fun, Chappell Roan-esque pop song, "Brenda Heather Kelly" closely aligns with the EP's aesthetics and branding and was easily my favourite. Dance pop disciples unite.

However, the next four songs in G's repertoire were pop melancholy. I found the instrumentals pretty standard for yearning music—boring guitar strumming and not much else. The vocals and lyrics are just fine, too.

This is probably the biggest gripe I had with *girls*. If the entire album was sad, sign me up for some crying. But as a

cohesive EP, there's no reason to open with your strongest and then end on such a weak note.

Regardless, I can still give Caylie G their flowers. I enjoy anything unapologetically queer, and they do have some moments where good, creative and different production shines through.

For example, I enjoyed the inclusion of static in the production of "Louise" simply because it was a different sound. In the same vein, "Sam" marries the bouncy saccharine sound with confessional lyricism, resulting in a well-blended song.

There is nothing offensive here, but when compared to the catchy opener, it's clear that G shows the most promise when they take risks, which I didn't really see in most of *girls*. Don't make me dance, then completely switch the vibe.

— Acacia Carol



After Party
Hotel Mira
Self-released
Score: B+

What if you mainlined early 2010 pop-rock optimism and chased it with some funk? Crush and snort some rom-com soundtrack lyrics, and you've got yourself a party. The fourth EP from Vancouver-born, LA-based Hotel Mira, *After Party*, is an indulgent and melodramatic celebration.

After Party's title and album art is an ode to Hotel Mira's 2025 studio album, *Pity Party*, with a same-but-different visual call back. Replacing 'Pity' with 'After' and kicking the band out of the photo, Hotel Mira invokes the feeling of cleaning up alone after a rager.

"Re: Valentine's Day," which was previously released as a single before appearing on the EP, brings drums, tension and begging. "Rise and Shine" taps into the nostalgic happiness you can only get from being 14 and having an anthem. Both of these songs really rang true for me as two particularly strong choices for the opening and closing of *After Party*.

The interesting but subtle production choices are definitely what sell Hotel Mira's vision here—stutters in the closing bridge or the isolated vocals, when accompanied by that addictive guitar, make almost every song on the 16-minute album unique, but tangentially, sonically related. For the LA-Vancouverites, I give them a B, only because I wanted to hear a little bit more variety.

It's clear Hotel Mira has found a strong foundation to build upon, but it begs the question—what happens when they try to shake things up?

— Acacia Carol

Continued from Pg. 17

to gestures that go unnoticed. Reflecting on her friendships, Collins' idea of sisterhood stems from knowing someone over time, which has been spent together.

"Sisterhood is an innate knowingness of each other," she says. "Its the understanding that you don't really know each other as well, and the same with yourself, you don't always know who you are."

The connection of knowing becomes the focal point that Collins directs her lens towards, with ideas of community and forged bonds shining through her work.

Throughout this project, Collins has encountered memorable moments that have shaped her art. She says that while she doesn't envision her pictures beforehand, she comes up with ideas by being perceptive.

"I feel like doing this project has forced me to think about so many ideas constantly... and so there was a moment where I was like, 'Oh, I feel confident in the decisions and the ideas that I have creatively,'" she says.

Taking inspiration from

other talented photographers such as Petra Collins, Sophia Wilson and Summer Wagner, Collins considers her project a celebration of sisterhood and girlhood formed around the unspoken gestures and being surrounded by a community that truly understands.

"That's what sisterhood feels like to me," she says. "I know how you exist in the world. I know how you go throughout this world."

Sharing a very intimate moment during the last shoot, Collins says, "it felt so special" seeing the instant bond and comfort the other women shared. These small yet shared moments go unseen by many.

Collins describes how all of the girls were really there for one another. Although it was only a shoot, the girls truly began comforting each other, forming real connections against the imaginary backdrop Collins constructed.

"I feel like it is a good example of what happened at all of the shoots," she says. "When five to seven different girls who had never met before really got to connect with each other, which felt really awesome to watch and be part of."



Exposure's Emerging Photographer of the Year for 2025, Lana Collins is set to present her new solo exhibition *All My Sisters* at the 2026 festival. Photo by Lana Collins

Exposure Photography Festival

In addition to Collins' *All My Sisters* exhibition, the festival will showcase other emerging photographic art in the Northwest Showcase, formerly known as the Emerging Photographers Showcase.

The selected artists from across Canada will participate

in a group exhibition held at Contemporary Calgary, spotlighting the unique perspective each lens is able to capture.

Calgary-based photographers such as Kathryn Audet are set to explore the vulnerable sides of loss, creating a legacy of a loved one through visual form.

Alongside Audet, other talented photographers tackle themes of emotional

exploration and personal experience, which are captured uniquely by the festival's lineup.

The festival will open on Feb. 5 to March 5 at Contemporary Calgary with free admission on their Free First Thursday.

See the different perspectives each photographer has to offer, which often encapsulate more than words can provide.



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sports

Sports Editor
Zafir Nagji
sportseditor@thereflector.ca



The 2026 Crowchild Classic shattered the U SPORTS hockey attendance record for a second straight year, drawing 13,324 raucous fans to the Scotiabank Saddledome. Photos by Daniel Zappe

A night to remember at the Crowchild Classic

'Dome game features tragic loss, vengeful victory and a broken record

Naomi Campbell

Staff Writer



MRU's women's hockey team couldn't secure a win over the Crowchild weekend, but the men's team earned back-to-back wins against the Dinos. Photos by Daniel Zappe

On Thursday, Jan. 29, 13,324 fans packed the Scotiabank Saddledome to cheer on their respective schools. Mount Royal University (MRU) and the University of Calgary (UofC), for the last 12 years, have been coming face-to-face in the biggest game of the regular season.

The odds for the women's game were split pretty evenly, as they have been sitting first and second in the East division of Canada West since the start of the year. However, the men's game had UofC running as the fan favourite, with the Dinos dominating the regular season so far and MRU hitting their stride in recent weeks.

The energy was high both on and off the ice, and the record-breaking crowd were given an unforgettable night.

Women's hockey

Heading into Crowchild weekend, MRU had won three of four previous matchups, giving them a bit of a one-up look to their game. Scout Anderson made her first Crowchild Classic start after backing up former goalie Kaitlyn Ross. Alongside her was second-year skater

Breanne Comte, who spoke on the atmosphere coming into the night.

"I definitely had a mix of excitement and nerves because it's one of those games you circle on the calendar, and there is so much attention put around that game," Comte says. "Knowing how great the atmosphere and energy were last year, I was definitely excited to relive that and really embrace the moment."

The game remained scoreless throughout the first period. Still, the second period of action started off with a bang as UofC took the lead only 57 seconds in, off of a shot by Caitlyn Perlinger — her first goal of the season. With MRU down by one, the Cougars ramped up the energy, putting the Dinos on their heels for a solid six-minute push in the offensive zone.

Still unable to score, they headed into period three with a hunger to tie the game. Two minutes into the final frame, Josie McLeod doubled the Dinos' tally, giving them a 2-0 lead. At 16:58, MRU struck back as Gabby Lindsay victoriously snuck past the Dinos defence and put the Cougars on the scoreboard,

breaking the lead back to a one-goal game. A late MRU third-period penalty kill sounded the death knell for a comeback, and they took a 2-1 loss with the sound of the final buzzer.

"Scoring in one of the biggest games of the year was really special, especially being able to do it in front of my parents," Lindsay says.

After their bye week on Feb. 6 and 7, they will head back on the road to face up against the University of Saskatchewan Huskies on Feb. 13 and 14, for their last regular-season games. They will be heading to the Canada West playoffs, so be sure to check them out on CanadaWest TV.

Men's hockey

The women's game set the stage and brightened the lights for what was already a highly anticipated game, one that turned into one of the most impressive in Crowchild Classic history.

The Dinos came out victorious last year, sweeping a 4-0 win, but this year, MRU showed up Thursday night with a fire in their hearts and a determination to come out on top in the Saddledome.

The starting goaltender for the MRU Cougars was fourth-year Shane Farkas, who didn't see the ice until the start of the second half of the season after battling injuries. Playing only five previous games in the year, his teammates and Cougars fans were definitely excited to see him back in between the pipes.

"How many times in your life do you get to play a sport in front of that many people? Some people never have that privilege," Farkas says. "It's such a memorable moment where you can be in front of so many people."

"Even just for a second, their eyes and their attention are on you. What a rare and valuable experience."

At the eight-minute mark of the first period, sophomore stickhandler Vaughn Watterodt charged into the

Dinos offensive zone, flipping the puck from his backhand and lifting it past the glove of goaltender Carl Tetachuk to take the first lead of the night. Only a few minutes later, Tristan Zandee took a hooking penalty to force MRU on the penalty kill, which unfortunately resulted in a goal by Jake Poole of the Dinos to tie the game at one goal apiece.

Fired up and ready to get back in the action, period two started with a goal by Clay Hanus off a beautiful down low pass from Blake Stevenson. With MRU up 2-1, and the Dinos on their heels, the men were able to keep them away from Farkas, resulting in the win on Thursday night.

The men's team will take a bye week on Feb. 6 and 7, but is back at Flames Community Arena on Feb. 13 and 14 for the last regular season games. They will be hosting their senior night celebration on Saturday night.

Admission is free for students and all games are available on CanadaWest TV.

4 the legacy: the end of an era

MRU's Core 4 sign off on 5-year legacy, skate together one last time

Naomi Campbell

Staff Writer

For the last five years, four Cougars men's hockey players have grown together, and as the season rapidly comes to a close, so too does their time at Mount Royal University, where they will leave a lasting legacy. Captain Kyle Walker, forwards Spencer Moe and Josh Tarzwell, and goaltender Riley Sims are all in the final chapter of their U SPORTS careers, donning navy blue for one last dance.

Half a decade ago, the four of them showed up to their first-ever practice with almost as much eagerness as nervousness.

From playing junior hockey till their over-age year, coming to MRU was a no-brainer decision for all of them, and they wouldn't have it any other way — such was the case for Spencer Moe.

"I'm born and raised in Calgary, so it was a pretty easy decision," Moe says. "Before the recruiting stage, I already knew I was gonna go to MRU. I was just hoping for Bert to give me a call at some point, but I already made that decision."

Sims describes his career in one word as an example of where the guys started and grew from in their careers, but also the whole culture around the rink, on and off the ice.

"Growth — as a whole culture, we've made some big steps," Sims says. "That makes this group really proud, it's not just the individual, like the whole team, even from

the staff."

As rookies, Moe, Walker, and Tarzwell all looked up to former captain Tyson Helgesen. Known as the "epitome of what a Cougar's athlete is," Walker drew from his teachings often in his two years of wearing the 'C' on his chest.

"He was just so welcoming for all of us, and I think that's something that I made sure to carry on throughout the years," Walker says. "Making all the rookies feel welcome, and having them buy into our beliefs and our culture."

As a rookie, Sims found two fellow Rileys to guide him in Morris and Lindgren. Morris's goaltending experience and Lindgren's off-ice behaviour shaped Sims's habits as a player and a young man for the better, despite their short time together.

"It was easy to look up to Riley Morris because when I came in as a goalie, he was the graduating goaltender. He and I got along very well on and off the ice, and he showed me a lot," Sims says. "But the one guy that really helped me out, I would say, is Riley Lindgren. Just how he operated on a day-to-day basis, and we had a class together, so he led the way and showed me what the school aspect was all about."

Some players hit breakout seasons in their collegiate careers, where they find an extra edge or show sudden and vast improvement in their style of play. Such was



The modern era of Cougars men's hockey was defined by players like Kyle Walker, who got the Cougars to their first national tournament last year. Photo by Daniel Zappe

the case for Tarzwell, who, coming off of playing with the Red Deer Rebels in the Western Hockey League, was constantly battling injuries. He forwent his third year of U SPORTS eligibility in an attempt to get healthy again, and exploded in his fourth year with the team — and crucially, his first year playing a full season since joining MRU.

"For me, it wasn't until my fourth year. I came out of junior injured and really didn't deal with it," Tarzwell

says. "I then managed to play last year, which was my first full year that I played where I didn't miss a game. But each year just keeps getting better and better."

In the 2024-25 season, the men's hockey team headed to the Canada West finals for the first time in program history. For all of them, winning game three in the semi-finals matchup against the University of Alberta was their favourite memory of their careers. Even though none of it truly worked out the way they wanted, they all held their heads high and are using it as motivation for one final push to the very top before they head their separate ways.

"The game against UofA last year, where we punched our ticket to nationals, that was a long time coming," Sims says. "That was four years of work."

Tarzwell's goal in the series is permanently etched in the museum of captain Walker's memory.

"I was leaning over my shin pads and I started crying, and I was like,

'Finally, we finally did it for the program,'" Walker says.

"We didn't even go for the flyby, all of us just hugged each other and on the bench guys were jumping up and down, it was just really special."

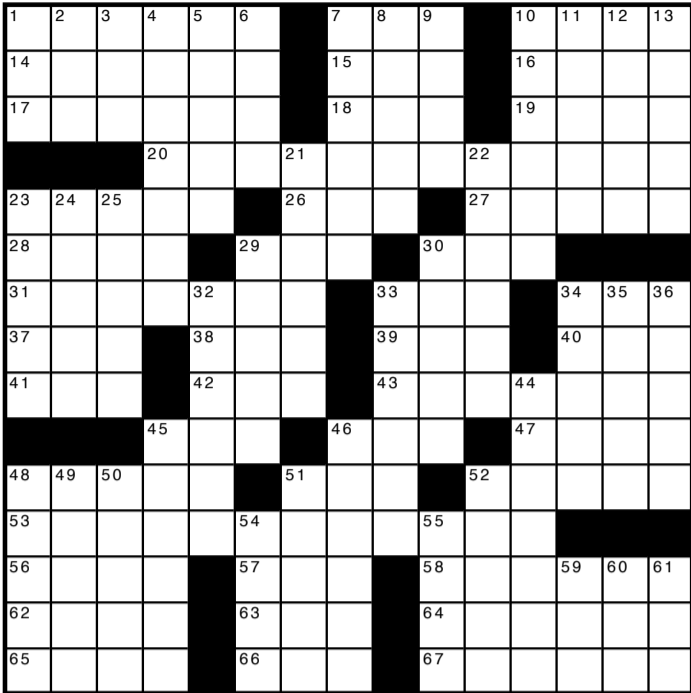
It's hard to describe such long and memorable careers through a short interview. If you haven't gotten the chance to witness those years, there are still a couple games left of the season to catch a small glimpse of who these four men are.

With the regular season coming to an end, they have clinched a playoff spot in Canada West, but before that, the boys will wrap it up with a wicked matchup on home ice against the University of Saskatchewan on Feb. 13 and 14. Their senior night will be celebrated on the Saturday before puck drop at 5 p.m. If you are unable to make it out, all games will be streamed live on CanadaWest TV.



MRU's Josh Tarzwell ranks second on the team in points scored with 31, already exceeding the career-high 29 he scored last season. Photo by Daniel Zappe

REFLECTOR DIVERSIONS



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

ACROSS

- 1 Cottonwoods
- 7 ___ kwon do
- 10 Conked out
- 14 Go over again
- 15 Egyptian cobra

- 16 The King ___
- 17 Theater district
- 18 Go downhill fast?
- 19 Cornfield cacophony
- 20 Aviation mechanic
- 23 Belle or Bart

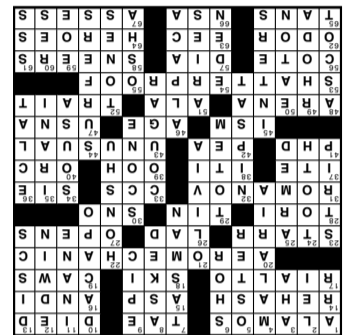
- 26 Boy
- 27 Unfolds
- 28 Amos or Spelling
- 29 Like some ears
- 30 ___-Cat (winter vehicle)
- 31 Imperial dynasty of Russia
- 33 Injection amts.
- 34 Sprechen ___ Deutsch?
- 37 Mineral suffix
- 38 "Lord, is ___?": Matthew
- 39 That's gotta hurt!
- 40 Tolkien ogre
- 41 Third degree?
- 42 Legume
- 43 Uncommon
- 45 Belief system
- 46 Get older
- 47 Annapolis sch.
- 48 Hippodrome, e.g.
- 51 Menu words
- 52 Distinguishing characteristic
- 53 Made to resist breaking
- 56 Pigeon coop
- 57 Cinco de Mayo, e.g.
- 58 Scoffs

- 62 Polecat's defense
- 63 Common Market abbr.
- 64 People of courage
- 65 Neutral shades
- 66 D.C. advisory grp.
- 67 Size up

- 34 March man
- 35 Afghan's neighbor
- 36 Brilliance
- 44 Wave riders
- 45 Buries
- 46 Llama relative
- 48 Cravat
- 49 Role for Valerie
- 50 Stationery brand
- 51 Sign of spring
- 52 Shades
- 54 First place
- 55 Dept. of Labor division
- 59 Fair-hiring abbr.
- 60 Hi-___ graphics
- 61 Conscription org.

DOWN

- 1 Sheet music abbr.
- 2 Wreath of flowers
- 3 I've got it!
- 4 Swampfever
- 5 Blender maker
- 6 Restaurateur Toots
- 7 Dutch navigator
- 8 Inquired
- 9 Larger-than-life
- 10 Repeated from the beginning
- 11 Mindlessly stupid
- 12 Newsmen Newman
- 13 Flat circular plates
- 21 Singer Newton-John
- 22 Island in central Japan
- 23 Piece of bacon
- 24 Fang, e.g.
- 25 Equipped
- 29 Tribal emblem
- 30 Teatime treat
- 32 Tries to bite
- 33 Puma



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Medium

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1			8					
		3				8		
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		5	2	4				
	3				7			8
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Hard

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

WORD SEARCH

Valentine's Day

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

ADORE
 AFFECTION
 APHRODITE
 BALLOONS
 BOUQUET
 BOYFRIEND
 CHERUB
 CHOCOLATES
 CONVERSATION
 DATE
 DEVOTION
 DINNER
 EROS
 FEBRUARY
 FLOWERS

GIRLFRIEND
 HUG
 INFATUATION
 JEWELRY
 KISS
 LOVE
 LETTER
 SONG
 LOVEBIRDS
 LOVESICK
 POEM
 RED
 ROMANTIC
 ROSES
 SAINT

The invincible (SAIT) Trojan horse

The secret sauce behind Canada's only undefeated college basketball team

Zafir Nagji

Sports Editor

When it comes to collegiate athletics in Canada, it's easy to get caught up in the glitz and glam of U SPORTS competition. Prestigious national rankings, a track record as a path to professional sports and a slew of hallmark names make U SPORTS impossible to ignore, and rightfully so.

However, one team in the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) is making waves with its undefeated record, elite-level talent and jaw-dropping statistical output. Meet the only undefeated college basketball team in the country—Calgary's own Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) Trojans.

Back, better and wanting it badder than ever

After being eliminated in the first round of last year's playoffs by their provincial archrivals, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) Ooks, the Trojans have put together virtuoso after virtuoso on their revenge tour this season, raising the curved roof of their temporary home arena—one the school lovingly calls "The Bubble."

High-flying forward Killian Yopa, who played his rookie collegiate season as an MRU Cougar two years ago, is known to raise the volume on the court with his physics-defying slam dunks, and so has a positive impression of his team's temporary home gym.

"It's a big white tent, you go inside, there's a basketball court and some weights on the side, and that's it," Yopa says. "I love that place though... it gets very loud... it's fun to play in there. It's small, but there's a lot of people."

However, the joy in their gym doesn't erase the memory of their first-round loss last year. In fact, that loss has elevated the team's mentality, and even their coach is taking inspiration



The SAIT Trojans pushed their win streak to 17 straight games with a 44-point win over Ambrose, leaving them just four games away from an undefeated season. Photo by Zafir Nagji

from one of NBA legend Kobe Bryant's most famous quotes, "job ain't finished."

The team understands that regular-season wins pale in importance compared to playoff victories, so their focus is fixated solely on the end-goal of winning a national championship.

"[Coach Daly] reminds us every single day that we haven't done anything, the job isn't finished," Yopa said after the team's 16th consecutive win. "At the end of the day, being 16-0 doesn't matter if we go to the playoffs and lose the first game, you know, it's still going to be the same pain."

Supersonic sixth man Steve Adjuya also sees this season as a chance for redemption, but from a more personal perspective. Adjuya suffered a hand injury early into his first season with the team last year, forcing him to watch his Trojans lose from the sideline. This year, the undersized point guard has put up a career-high 4.8 points per game off the bench, seeing the court for just under 20 minutes per game and leading the team's second unit.

Generally appearing on the

court to replace the team's most effective scorer, Marcus Masters, Adjuya knows he won't perfectly replace his mastery of the game, but he brings his own mental and physical edge to the hardwood.

"A player like that, I can't really replace and bring a game just like his, but I definitely will always bring my hustle mentality," Adjuya says. "Just being a dog out there, just never rolling over and giving up... I stick to my strengths, not trying to do stuff that I know that is not my game on the court."

Soaring, flying and reaching for the stars

In the words of legendary Brooklyn rapper Jay-Z, "men lie, women lie, numbers don't," and the shift in mentality the Trojans underwent has produced tangible results on the stat sheet.

By the numbers, the SAIT Trojans have the most efficient offence and least forgiving defence in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC), scoring over 1.1 points per possession

and conceding less than 0.8 points per possession to give themselves an ACAC-best net efficiency rating of +0.333.

However, SAIT has the worst three-point shooting percentage in the entire conference. At just 25.9 per cent from behind the arc, the Trojans take advantage of their roster's incredible athleticism and punish teams in the paint, relying on occasional trifectas from their designated snipers and from their all-around offensive assassin, Masters, who's shooting an ACAC-best 44 per cent from three-point range.

Breaking glass backboards

Put all of those ingredients together, and the Trojans' average margin-of-victory of +29.75 points per game suddenly makes complete sense. The team is mentally tough, physically dominant and emotionally united, determined to erase the tragedies of last year and replace them with championship silverware in 2026.

However, their sights are set on something

much bigger than on-court victories. In fact, the Trojans want the smoke with the best collegiate crews in the country, as well as the love those crews receive in their home cities.

"I'm seeing ACAC teams going up against U SPORTS teams, and they're competing and beating these squads," Adjuya says. "Why not? Why can't we be as big as MRU and [University of] Calgary or even bigger than that, where we're getting coverage, and we're being seen from all around Canada, or even in other countries."

That being said, Yopa knows the immediate task in front of the Trojans is to win ACAC and CCAA championships, and he feels those results will speak for themselves in their bigger-picture aspirations.

"As long as we keep doing what we're supposed to do, eventually it will happen," Yopa says. "But until then, all we can do is just control our part, show up, win games, and then maybe in a couple years like you'll see ACAC teams on TV. For now, I think it's more important that we just focus on what we can control and then the rest will figure itself out in the future."

The SAIT Trojans have just four games left on their schedule, and with each win, the target on their back will continue to grow larger. They'll visit Briercrest College, who rank 14th nationally, in Caronport, Sask., for a two-game road series on Valentine's weekend. They'll end their season with two games against Olds College the following week, with the first game set to take place in Olds and the second under the curved white roof of the SAIT Bubble.

Home games are free for all to attend, and all games are available to watch with a subscription to ACAC TV.

#S

0 touchdowns scored in the New England Patriots' AFC Championship win over the Denver Broncos, setting up a rematch against the Seattle Seahawks

42 points scored in the third quarter by the SAIT Trojans men's basketball team in their 104-60 win over Ambrose University – their 17th win in a row

28 saves made by Amelia Awad in the Dinos' 2-1 win over MRU at this year's Crowchild Classic

31 kills from Bronwynn Davies-Neira, Sydney Scatcherd, Mya Morgan, Paige Davidson and Marie Leggett in their final home game as Cougars volleyballers

Calgary hosts multi-day sporting festival for first time

Julia Finot

Staff Writer

Canada's biggest festival of sport, play and community is coming to Calgary for the first time.

From Feb. 13 to 15, the BMO Centre downtown will host The GOOD Games, an indoor festival celebrating movement, inclusion and community connection through sport.

The GOOD Games is a three-day event combining sports, music and food. Designed to be both spectator-friendly and participatory, the festival aims to create an energetic and welcoming environment, where friendly competitors across the city can face off in the ultimate competition.

The GOOD Games began in 2019, and during the COVID-19 shutdown, organisers kept the event alive by putting on modified sporting events to continue to engage Canadians through the challenging times of the pandemic.

The games in Calgary will introduce a new chapter to

the organisation. This is the first time The GOOD Games will be held at a winter festival outside of Guelph, Ont. Calgary has a strong and diverse sports culture that aligns with the mission of the games. The inaugural event was chosen to be held in Calgary in partnership with Chinook Blast.

"Winter is not downtime. It is playtime," said Helen Stoumbos, the CEO and founder of The GOOD Games in an interview with The Newswire. "Together with our partners in Calgary, we are building a festival where people can watch, play, and experience sport in new ways. Our ambition is to grow this into Canada's biggest winter festival of sport and a yearly celebration of movement for all."

The event features multiple kids' play zones, indoor courts for exciting matches and a full festival of entertainment. Athletes across Southern Alberta are able to register to

compete in a variety of indoor sports, including pickleball, volleyball, teqball, freestyle soccer, arm wrestling and powerlifting.

Accessibility and inclusion are part of The GOOD Games' mission. There will be opportunities for adaptive and para-athletes to compete in events like wheelchair rugby, wheelchair hockey and wheelchair basketball. Planned and built with community organisations, it is important to the organisers that people of all abilities can take part in the fun, either on the court or in the stands.

In addition to accessible events, The GOOD Games also showcase Indigenous sports, highlighting cultural experiences in a large-scale sports environment. This emphasises sports' role as a tool for storytelling and connection in many traditional Indigenous cultures.

At its core, The GOOD Games was created around



Calgary will host The GOOD Games for the first time ever as part of Chinook Blast, featuring crazy events like Freestyle Trampolining, pictured here. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @thegoodgames

the belief that movement and play brings communities together. The organisers describe the festival as an event where people can show up as their true, authentic

self, try something new, and support others around them.

This event is free and open to the public.

Viewership decline reignites WNBA CBA stalemate

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Unrivaled has struggled to maintain its ratings, which could have a huge effect on the WNBA's CBA negotiations. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @unrivaledbasketball

After an inaugural year with high viewership ratings, Unrivaled has begun its second season, but is experiencing an early decline in TV viewership.

The league was co-founded by Minnesota Lynx star and WNBAPA vice president Napheesa Collier and her husband.

The 3x3 basketball league averaged 103,000 viewers across TNT and truTV through week three of the season as of Jan. 26, down 44 per cent from the first three weeks of the introductory season at 185,000, the same time last year.

Among the many concerns emerging with the viewership drop are the decline's effect on the ongoing negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) in the WNBA.

The agreement deadline has been extended since the season ended in October.

WNBAPA representatives and commissioner Cathy Engelbert are at a stalemate

about an agreement. They conducted their first in-person meeting a few days ago.

WNBAPA vice president Breanna Stewart said that the league isn't prioritising the main thing.

"Personally, I want to be in the room talking about the real stuff happening," Stewart told ESPN.

"These meetings get so sidetracked by the language, verbiage, and context. We're missing the point."

Vice president Kelsey Plum said she is hopeful both sides can reach an agreement.

"I'm just excited for the opportunity to be able to be there in person with other players that are really invested in this, in the executive committee, and then of course the league making the commitment to be there," Plum said.

While there have been "some areas of agreement" in Collier's January interview regarding child care, maternity leave, and travel,

both sides remain far apart on salary and revenue share.

Even so, the proposal was set for December to raise the salary to \$1.3 million for the first year of the new deal since the salary cap would increase to \$5 million.

A source close to the case told CBS Sports that the league wanted multiple players eligible for a maximum salary of \$2 million. The minimum salaries would be \$230,000, and the average salary would be \$530,000.

Players countered with a request for a salary jump from \$2 million to \$2.5 million and an increase in the salary cap to \$10.5 million.

With the league's significant growth over the last few years, a lockout may happen if both sides don't have a deal.

The WNBA draft is scheduled for April 13. The regular season begins on May 8 with the Las Vegas Aces looking to defend their title.