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**Milano Cortina, and  
everything in between**

# Navigating neutrality and national pride

*Can there still be neutrality at international sporting events in the current political climate?*

**Emma Voelpel**

Staff Writer

The Olympic Games are typically an event where countries showcase their best overall athleticism in a spectacle of medals and ceremonies. However, the 2026 Winter Olympic Games taking place in Milan, Italy, this year are being met with a much different atmosphere than in years past.

With many countries finding themselves in both domestic and international conflicts, athletes are facing a crossroads between displaying sportsmanship and pride for their country while also speaking up about political unrest.

## Team USA vs. the USA

Earlier this month, Team USA freestyle skier Hunter Hess shared his concerns during an Olympics press conference about his mixed emotions over representing the United States. He commented that he is competing more for his friends, family, and what he believes are the true values of the U.S.

"I just think, if it aligns with my moral values, I feel like I'm representing it," said Hess. "Just because I'm wearing the flag doesn't mean I represent everything that's going on in the U.S."

The athletes' comments

were met with scrutiny by U.S. President Donald Trump, who referred to Hess as "a real loser" in a Truth Social post.

However, Hess isn't the only member of Team USA who has shared thoughts on the current political climate in the U.S.

Fellow skier Chris Lillis also commented on how "heartbroken" he was regarding the state of affairs back home. Figure skater Amber Glenn also noted how she "won't stay quiet" about issues that directly affect her and her community.

Lori Williams, associate professor of policy studies at Mount Royal University (MRU), shared how those competing for Team USA have been put in an awkward position by the acts of the U.S. government and how other countries are reacting.

"What ICE is doing in the United States is something that a lot of democratic countries want to distance themselves from," says Williams. "Especially a country that has experienced fascism, as Italy has done, it's a real sore point for them."

## Athletes abroad

Olympic athletes speaking out against their own governments' geopolitical conflicts or against the actions of other countries

isn't a new practice, but it hasn't been this mainstream before.

Ukrainian athletes have been at the centre of these contentious debates. Skeleton racer Vladyslav Heraskevych was disqualified after refusing to remove a helmet that paid tribute to the Ukrainian athletes who had been killed in the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war.

The International Olympic Committee defended this decision, along with its strict stance on political neutrality at the games. In a recent statement from IOC President Kirsty Coventry, she expressed her support of Heraskevych's mourning, but stood her ground on removing him from competing.

"It's not about the messaging, it's literally about the rules and the regulations," said Coventry. "We have to be able to keep a safe environment for everyone. And sadly, that just means no messaging is allowed."

Simultaneously, the IOC has allowed Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete independently after their countries had been barred due to their involvement in the invasion of Ukraine.

Williams provided insight on how athletes with no affiliation to a country have



**Known for speaking her mind on politics, Team USA's Amber Glenn has also made history as the first out 2SLGBTQIA+ Olympic women's figure skater. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @womenshealthmag and @amberglenniceskater**

more leeway to speak up about their country's actions, but that doesn't always mean they can.

"There may be other countries that are engaging in activities that are highly controversial," says Williams. "But without freedom of speech, those athletes feel constrained in saying something unless they go and compete in another country."

## Canadian pride

As for Team Canada, the threat of Canadian sovereignty as well as annexation by the United States has made Canadians as supportive of their team as ever.

"It's culture, it's economy, you know, even its existence has been called into question. It's brought a lot of Canadians together in a way I haven't seen before," says Williams.

As the maple leaf-decorated athletes continue to uphold each other after the games, their sportsmanship goes beyond medals.

Canadian freestyle skier Mikael Kingsbury dedicated his gold medal to his country after the dual moguls.

"I saw a lot of online comments saying Canadians were a bit 'cursed' here in Italy," Kingsbury told CBC. "I really wanted to break that curse and win that first gold for my country. I do this sport for myself, but I'm very proud to share it with the country I love the most."

However, for many participants, the line between sport and global politics is impossible to ignore. The removal of national symbols from some competitors and restrictions on certain tributes have raised questions about how patriotism should be expressed in an era of global conflict.

With another Winter Olympic Games in the books, the debate over nationalism, political expression and the role of the Olympics in a divided world is likely to deepen.



**In a game that felt like much more than ice hockey, Canada suffered a loss for silver versus Team USA in the men's and women's games. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @olympics**

# Opinion: Why society should focus on empathy over fascination

*Focusing on victims in the aftermath of violence isn't just interesting, it's a moral imperative*

**Acacia Carol**

Layout Editor

Kylie Smith. Abel Mwansa. Zoey Benoit. Ticaria Lampert. Ezekiel Schofield. Shannda Aviugana-Durand. Jennifer Jacobs. Emmett Jacobs.

On Feb. 12, a shooter ended the lives of each person mentioned above. The community of Tumbler Ridge, B.C., is mourning a significant loss. It's my opinion that during moments of communal grief and tragedy, it becomes more important than ever to focus on remembering those who are gone.

However, I was disheartened to see that the public has spotlighted the Tumbler Ridge shootings in the same way that many tragedies often are. Discussing who the shooter was, their family drama, and the way they conducted themselves online have taken precedence over stories about the eight victims.

Our fascination with the underlying causes of crime isn't new—from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, crime fascinates us. No more so than when we can attach that ever-so lurid label of "based on a true story."

This often pushes the people most harmed by an individual's actions to a footnote.

Our curiosity isn't harmless. Instead, it feeds into a multibillion-dollar true-crime industry that funds podcasts, movies, and limited-run TV series. And, most often, our curiosity comes at the expense of victims, their families, and survivors.

## Feeding a pulpy machine

Despite the success of *Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, the limited series faced criticism for the ways it seemed content to invoke the names of real-life victims, only to then cast off any connection to the real and vibrant person who was murdered.

*Monster* is just one example of modern-day true crime sensationalising the victims for entertainment purposes.



**A small town designed to support the coal industry, Tumbler Ridge has a population of 2,399 people. Photo courtesy of Visit Tumbler Ridge**

Podcasts like the aptly-named *My Favourite Murder*, or TV shows like *Dateline* have come under fire for their insensitive treatment of victims, their lives and more worryingly, their deaths.

And more often than not, the laissez-faire approach to true crime often hits too close to home for community members. The impact isn't limited to just families and friends.

I would say Canadians, but those of us here in the West, especially, remember the bus crash that killed 16 and injured 13. During a time when many people were looking for answers, a place to grieve, what often took precedent was the question "how could this happen?"

Which, of course, morphed into, "who caused this?"

I mention the Humboldt Broncos not only because they are a recent Canadian tragedy. Rather, I bring them up because their stories, that trauma, will join the aforementioned ranks of having their trauma made into spectacle.

An untitled project from Shawn Levy's production company, *21 Laps*, will produce a show about a small, hockey-centric community that is wrecked by the loss of their players and coach after

a bus crash takes their lives.

Sounds familiar? Well, despite Netflix's claims in a statement to CBC that the show is not inspired by real-life events, family and community members of the Broncos still find the similarities too close for comfort.

With disgust, I'm reminded of the Kurt Vonnegut quote, lamenting that in our modern

age, if you die horribly on TV, it will not have been in vain. "You will have entertained us," he wrote.

In these fictional scenarios, where names are replaced with sound-alikes and moments of intense pain and suffering are set against tear-jerking, evocative instrumentals, it's easy to forget what really happened.

That separation makes

us comfortable. Far too comfortable. Comfortable enough, that when a family loses their child, we do not ask to know more about who was lost, but rather, we focus too intently on who took them.

Yes, the media and the true crime industry are partially to blame for our desensitisation. But do we not also bear responsibility for analysing our personal curiosities and machinations?

## Tumbler Ridge

This is where I see the writing on the wall with the shooter involved in the 2026 Tumbler Ridge shootings. I will not be referring to this individual by name, simply because I don't wish to.

In a significant number of personal conversations I've had with others about the Tumbler Ridge shootings, the shooter's gender identity comes up. To which I say, why is it relevant? It doesn't undo the harm.

If you can only name two facts about this case, one of them the gender of the perpetrator, and the other is their name, you are only participating in sensationalism, and I have no interest in following suit.

It's not abnormal to wonder. But why is your idle speculation about motives, identity and larger consequences worth more than the peace these families desperately need?

As you analyse footage and old social media presence to build motives and narratives that only serve to feed your own guesswork, Maya Gebala, a victim of the Tumbler Ridge shooting, is fighting for her life in the hospital.

It's my hope that one day we can find a balance in the media. A balance that answers the questions a tragedy might raise, while still respecting the real-life people who have been impacted. But that change can only really begin when we stop focusing on "how could this happen" and shift it to "who did this happen to?"



**Both Prime Minister Mark Carney and UCP leader Pierre Poilievre paid their respects in Tumbler Ridge following the shooting. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons**

# Saddledome demolition debate continues

*Not all Calgarians have saddled up to the idea of demolishing the Dome*

**Julia Finot**

Staff Writer



**The City of Calgary has released renders of the future Scotia Place, which will include space for hockey games, concerts, and a community area. Photo courtesy of The City of Calgary**

As the end of the NHL season quickly approaches, one thing hangs over the heads of Calgarians: the planned demolition of the Scotiabank Saddledome.

The 2026-27 hockey season will be the last opportunity for people to enjoy the arena.

The Saddledome is one of the most recognisable buildings in professional sports, but the city says its replacement is necessary for Calgary's growth.

"It's much more about an investment that the city is making in that district than it is about the operators of an NHL team," said Calgary's chief administrative officer David Duckworth in an interview with CBC. "It's really about building community."

For many, the closure of the Saddledome is more than just the loss of a venue; it also makes the disappearance of a symbol closely intertwined with Calgary's identity.

The Dome opened in 1983, originally constructed for the 1988 Winter Olympics. Not only has the arena been used for sports, but it also hosted conventions, concerts, and even a royal visit from Queen Elizabeth II.

Its saddle-shaped roof has been anchoring Calgary's skyline for four decades, but despite its iconic history, it

is the second-oldest arena in the NHL. With Calgary's downtown revitalisation plan, the city is looking to take bold action in modernising the city's centre to fit the needs of Calgarians.

## A building from another era

The Saddledome was designed in the late 1970s by Barry Graham, who modelled the Dome after the Scandinavium arena in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Its design reflects an old generation of sports infrastructure. With ageing mechanical systems, narrow concourses and limited luxury seating and services, the building is considered by some to be a production constraint, and has raised questions about its long-term viability in a growing city.

Modern arenas surpass the Dome in functionality. They are now multi-use entertainment hubs with exceptional hospitality services, technology, and event spaces. Renovating the Dome to those standards would be costly and complex.

"It's 40-years-old," said Duckworth. "Either [it] needs to be replaced, or it needs hundreds of millions of dollars in upgrades."

The saddle roof structure is one of the most complicated

aspects for the possibility of renovations, with its shape limiting the opportunity to significantly improve the interior of the arena.

This has led the city to support replacement rather than redevelopment, framing it as a practical step.

## Public pushback

Unfortunately, even with the city's green light, Calgarians are unhappy with the plans to demolish the Dome.

The new arena deal is currently valued at over \$1.2 billion, with a major portion of the funding coming provincially, which is pulled from taxpayer dollars.

Critics argue that taxpayers should not fund the majority of the arena development costs, particularly when the facility will be home to numerous professional sports organisations.

"Taxpayers shouldn't be the ones footing the bills to build these new arenas for the players to play in and for the owners to kick back in their corporate boxes," said Kris Sims, director of The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, in a statement to City News.

Petitions and social groups are advocating to "Save Our Saddledome." The hope is to have the arena repurposed

rather than removed.

Calgarians have suggested turning the Saddledome into a community recreation facility or an improved multi-functional entertainment venue.

## Construction as the next chapter

While the debate continues, the construction of a new arena has been well underway.

Calgary's new arena, Scotia Place, is set to replace the Saddledome by fall 2027. It will increase Calgary's arena seating capacity while also attracting new entertainment opportunities.

Scotia Place has a new innovative design to maximise its use. During sporting events, the arena will hold 18,400 spectator seats and up to 20,000 for concerts. It will also feature a 1,000-seat community rink.

It has been designed with accessibility at the forefront. There will be quiet rooms, accessible concourses, and seating, as well as flex washrooms.

Scotia Place is also designed to be a net-zero facility by 2050, featuring solar panels, district heating, and high-efficiency cooling.

"When you consider that Calgary is already the envy of other cities with a new world-class convention centre in the heart of the Culture and Entertainment District, the addition of Scotia Place is another signal to investors that our city understands

how to build a future that leverages hospitality and hosting as its core strengths," said former Calgary mayor Jyoti Gondek.

Scotia Place will be the home to many Calgary sports teams, including the Flames, Wranglers, Hitmen and Roughnecks.

The arena is a highlight of the city's entertainment district, and it is set to expand on live amenities and attract large-scale events that Calgary has previously missed out on.

## Legacy

As Calgarians await demolition, the Saddledome's final months are unfolding right next to the building set to fully replace the iconic Calgary landmark.

For some, the construction of Scotia Place next to the Dome is a symbol of closure. It's an opportunity to celebrate the legacy of the building and all the events it proudly hosted. For others, it reflects Calgary's development as a growing city adapting to new infrastructure.

Whether remembered as an iconic landmark or a stepping stone in Calgary's downtown revitalisation plan, the Saddledome's departure will mark the end of an era that not only shaped Calgary's sports scene but also shaped Calgary's cultural landscape for the last 43 years.



**Despite the city greenlighting its demolition, Calgarians continue to rally to save the Saddledome. Photo courtesy of Landen Melnick**

# Most 'gender-balanced' Olympic Winter Games still ban an entire women's division

*As the 2026 Winter Olympic Games spotlights up-and-coming athletes, one group of female skiers is forced to watch from the sidelines*

**Karra Smith**

Staff Writer

For many competitive athletes, competing at the Olympic Games is the peak of their career, but for women in Nordic combined, this has yet to be an option.

Nordic combined is a winter sport that mixes both cross-country skiing and ski jumping and has remained an Olympic event since the first Winter Games were held in 1924.

It is also the only Olympic sport to date that upholds a gender-restriction policy barring women from competing at the games.

Annika Malacinski, an American skier and champion Nordic combined athlete, is leading a campaign that demands equal opportunity for women in the sport.

"[We] work just as hard, sacrifice just as much," she told NPR.

Back in 2022, Malacinski had joined a conference call with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) while on her flight back to Denver from Munich. It was during this call that her

dreams of competing in the Milano Cortina were crushed.

"Then the decision came: 'no.' No explanation, no discussion. Just 'no,' and then they moved on to the next topic," Malacinski told the Associated Press.

By the time she had arrived in Denver, her eyes were almost swollen shut from how much she had cried.

Although she was still attending the games in Italy, Malacinski was there cheering on her brother, who competes in the same sport.

While many winter athletes continue to push for equal opportunity in the games, the future of Nordic combined as an event at the Olympics is unknown.

Due to a decline in audience interest and fewer competing athletes, the IOC has spoken of cutting the sport altogether.

"Truthfully, the IOC is just trying to take away Nordic combined. And so to solve equality, they are just going to take away the sport," Malacinski told The



**Under scrutiny for barring women from competing, the IOC faces the decision to cut Nordic combined from the Olympics, or listen to critics. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons**

Guardian.

The Milano Cortina 2026 marks the most gender-balanced Winter Olympics ever, with women representing 47 per cent of all athlete positions.

However, Malacinski told

The Guardian that the IOC is still "excluding a women's division," and in the fight for equality, she has no intention of backing down.

"That just fuels the fire for me," she said to the Associated Press. "We

deserve to be there, and I'll fight until 2030 because that's our rightful place."

And this is not the only gender-based controversy to come out of the 2026 Olympics.

Following both the women's and men's U.S. hockey teams taking gold in the finals, the women's celebration was short-lived after President Donald Trump made jokes at the expense of the women's team during a congratulatory phone call with the men's team.

"It was sort of a distasteful joke, and unfortunately, that is overshadowing a lot of the success, the success of just women at the Olympics carrying for Team USA and having amazing gold medal feats," captain of the U.S. women's hockey team Hilary Knight told ESPN.

The U.S. women's hockey team declined their invitation to the White House alongside the men's team, stating there was a schedule conflict.

This conflict has brought bigger discussions of women in sports and the ongoing fight against sexism in athletics.



**With its unique combination of cross-country skiing and ski jumping, Nordic combined holds a test of both power and endurance. Photo courtesy of IntoWinterSport**

# New housing developments threaten to sink the Ship and Anchor

*The City of Calgary wants to build around the Ship and Anchor, what does this mean for Calgary's beloved bar?*

**Abiola Famakinwa**

Contributor

Many people come to the Ship and Anchor due to its location in the heart of the city, but everyone stays for the live music—the thing that the Ship is known for.

But the same thing that brings in patrons both new and old might be the reason the beloved bar shuts down.

With the city's plans to build a multi-story high-rise and develop the area directly above the Ship and Anchor's location, the owner worries that these changes would mean the end of the Calgary staple.

"Live music has been one of the key elements of the success of the Ship," James Ballantyne told city council.

While suggestions have been made to add sound-dampening measures to the plans for this development, nothing has been confirmed.

While the city says the new developments will be affordable, only 29 out of the 130 are actually marked as "affordable housing" in the proposal.

With a capacity of 377 people, the Ship and Anchor has been a popular hotspot in



**Known for genre-themed musical showcases, Ship and Anchor helps uplift local artists. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @shipandanchorpub**

downtown since its opening in 1990.

The Ship has been committed to supporting local artists and, with no cover fee, attracts people from all walks of life.

With the pub in danger, this epicentre of culture, community and good sound would disappear.

The Ship used to have its

offices above the main part of the building, and they said it was loud when they had bands at night, which doesn't spell good things for any future neighbours.

**If the Ship disappears, what will the city lose?**

As a place with affordable

food and drink close to two major universities and Stampede grounds, the Ship's location is imperative to drawing in its patrons, given its proximity to major areas of population density and a major train station. It's easy to get to, and for university students, not too hard on the wallet.

Calgary and Alberta as a whole are a focal point for art. It's a popular place where studios come to shoot, including the popular TV show, *The Last of Us*—part of which was shot on MRU's campus.

However, the Ship is one of the only places where local artists are invited to get a taste of their future.

With apartments and retail coming to the area, contact with late-night patrons and loud music is bound to cause some friction.

The Ship is as vital to Calgary as the tower, but if city plans push this 35-year-old business out, it is only logical to ask which one could be next.



**While also functioning as a pub, Ship and Anchor hosts arcade nights, drag shows, and bingo. Photo courtesy of shipandanchor.com**

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## Residents remember Saddledome's glory days

*Former staff pay homage to iconic Calgary landmark ahead of demolition date*

**Karra Smith**

Staff Writer



Calgary's Saddledome, then named the Olympic Saddledome, pictured on Oct. 15, 1983, when the Calgary Flames NHL team played their first home game. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @flamesalumni

Sizzling summer heat marked the start of decades worth of Stampede ground memories for then 14-year-old Kari Kavan, who spent the holidays of 1992 working at a fish and chip shop in the Big Four building.

Two years later, she got her start in the Scotiabank Saddledome, one of Calgary's most beloved architectural and cultural monuments set to be demolished in 2027.

Known to many Calgarians as simply 'the Dome,' the arena was built in 1983 during a booming time for the city. Before becoming the new home for the Calgary Flames NHL team, the arena was designed for the 1988 Winter Olympics and hosted both figure skating and hockey events.

Up until 2020, Kavan worked various jobs and events. She says a few core memories stand out when reflecting on her time at the arena, the first being special event viewings with her dad.

He worked the sound booth at the Dome, which, for Kavan, meant getting to enjoy concerts and hockey games with her father apart from the average seats.

Some of the headlining bands that performed during her time there included the Steve Miller Band, New Kids on the Block, and AC/DC.

The second memory is one many Flames fans from the early 2000s were likely watching as well—the Flames' series victory over the Detroit Red Wings.

"You know, the 2004, 2005, when we played against Detroit, was electrifying in that Saddledome. I don't have any other words for it," says Kavan.

"Calgary scores, and the entire place erupted. You could feel the concrete shaking. It was so loud in there."

It was also during her time here that Kavan met her now husband, with whom she will be celebrating 30 years of

marriage this year.

Kavan is one of many Calgarians who look back on the Dome fondly.

For two seasons, Lynne Palmer worked as a server in a lounge on the concourse. She says the hustle of the environment and the great team of staff she served with added to the job's overall enjoyment.

"It was just fun to work in," she says.

Palmer explains that the Dome's layout proved challenging for some employees. Much of the food and liquor was stored in the basement, so running out of an item meant staff were running up the stairs.

She also says this system played into why a couple of drinks during a game or show would have patrons feeling the effects a little more than usual.

"That's why they used to call it 'heroin beer.' Because people would get drunk on it faster than normal because

there was so much gas that we're putting the lines to push it all the way up to where it needed to go," says Palmer.

For both former employees, seeing the Saddledome go is sad but necessary.

**"It is time for a new building. So I'm excited to get one. New memories, new concerts, new activities potentially to do, down at the grounds," says Kavan.**

Similar online discussions highlight the true sadness many Calgarians feel about

the Saddledome's inevitable fall.

One comment on the r/Calgary Reddit forum sums up the grief many Calgary residents are experiencing.

"Time to let it go. She gave us 35-plus years," writes user u/NOGLYCL. "Very few Olympic buildings anywhere have seen that type of utilisation post-Olympics. It no longer comes close to meeting the needs of this city. I'm not happy about the funding structure of the new arena, but it's a done deal, and it's time to say goodbye to the Dome."

Similarly, in the @unlockcalgary Instagram post about the planned demolition, one user says the loss will not go unnoticed.

"Iconic to the skyline. Will never be the same without it," writes user @iveawesome.

With the construction of the new Scotia Place arena well on its way, there has been a mixed reaction to the building's lack of homage to Calgary culture.

"It doesn't have anything unique about it anymore. It's just the building," says Kavan.

Despite this, many city residents are excited for the new opportunities the upgraded arena will bring to the city and look forward to making new memories in Scotia Place.

The Saddledome represents not only a historic period for Calgary culture, but also the home of many residents' greatest memories. From hosting the Olympics to Flames wins and losses to concerts by some of the biggest stars in music, the Dome has done its job by creating a space for Calgarians to celebrate, and it will be greatly missed by much of the community.

# Opinion: Gender as the name of the game

*Disparity between male and female athletes has never been clearer than in the 2026 Winter Olympics*

**Acacia Carol**

Layout Editor



American figure skater Amber Glenn, 26, won one gold medal at the 2026 Winter Olympics. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @amberglenniceskater

The Winter Olympic Games have passed with their usual oompah and a revival of sportsmanlike nationalism. However, something bothered me this Olympics, something that's been playing underneath our noses for all our lives. Something we see as innate and natural, but that requires intense policing and judgment.

## Seriously, what's going on with gender in the Olympics?

It wasn't until 1900 that women were allowed to compete in the Olympics, and with 126 years of experience, expectations for female athletes have certainly shifted. In the beginning, there were only a small handful of 'feminine' sports women could try their hand at, like tennis.

Compared to the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, where 45 per cent of competitors were women, change has happened fast. But that doesn't mean that

female athletes have had the same social opportunities that have long been granted to their male counterparts.

From the recently posted lambasting of the United States women's hockey team by President Donald Trump, which was weirdly met with laughter by the men's team, to the disastrous splatfest during the men's free skate program, I believe that the way we have approached gender and sports in the West was on full display this year.

There was no bullpen where this was more obvious to me than on the ice. If we want to talk about gender in the Olympics, there is no better avenue than figure skating.

## Focus on figure skating

To me, American figure skaters Alysa Liu and Amber Glenn were two standout Olympians. Liu returned to figure skating after a hiatus, took home two gold medals and a new personal best score in her free skate program, which was conceivably

unheard of until this year. Glenn, the oldest female athlete to compete in figure skating at age 26, also took home gold.

I would argue these are very significant achievements in an extremely gendered field. However, I was disappointed, but not surprised, to see that a significant portion of the conversation around these athletes centred on how they physically present themselves.

During an interview for the podcast *My New Favourite Olympian*, Glenn's mother said she often had to cover her arms with mesh while competing because she feared lower scores due to her muscles.

Figure skating, the sport where you famously have to jump, lift, spin, and perform other physically demanding activities, has some interesting ideas about femininity. Men, like Ilya Malinin or 'Quad God,' are often praised for their strength and power, while female athletes are often

celebrated for being graceful and weightless.

And that's not just an observation that a few bulky women have made—a qualitative study published in the *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* observed that many female figure skaters feel pressured to adhere to certain "inflexible body ideals."

Although the standard is more flexible, male figure skaters feel this pressure to conform, too, the study continues. However, I would argue that their aspirations to stay lean yet strong still respect their status as elite performance athletes. 'Quad Gods' chiselled legs certainly don't lose him any points—no hiding required.

Even in sports where gender presentation isn't a factor in scoring, female Olympians have faced discrimination for not fitting into a Eurocentric, thin ideal of femininity. Athletes like heavyweight boxer Imane

Khelif and runner Caster Semenya were subject to intense gender speculation at their respective Olympics for not fitting this ideal.

Female athletes' achievements are consistently downplayed or disregarded, and this year, the politics behind this dismissal cannot be overlooked. From President Trump's lament to the men's hockey team and a continued push from the alt-right to "save women's sports," it's become imperative to not only push back against these perceived notions of femininity but to question their utility in our everyday lives as well.

Otherwise, it's a thin blade that only serves to divide. Ultimately, it will make us bleed.



American figure skater Alysa Liu, 20, won two gold medals at her first Olympic Games. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @alysaxliu

# Digging out of the gopher hole

*World-famous museum's relocation highlights the struggles of small-town attractions*

**Nadoo Abaagu & Amy Jaquish**

Staff Writers



Up-close picture of an exhibit at the World Famous Gopher Hole Museum in Torrington, Alta., on Aug. 18, 2017. Photo courtesy of Mack Male / Wikimedia Commons

The World Famous Gopher Hole Museum, a beloved historic centre in Torrington, Alta., is relocating for reasons that raise alarms about the struggles faced by small-town attractions province-wide.

After 30 years of operation, the buildings housing the museum's gophers are no longer usable due to a maple bug and wasp infestation, says the museum's director, Laural Kurta.

"The building has twisted, there's wood rot, and the wood rot has brought in maple bugs," says Kurta.

Additionally, she says there is also water damage and insulation problems with the buildings. Kurta says the museum has made calls about a new building since last year, but there is nothing to rent in Torrington.

"We have had lots of buildings offered to us, but it's people who are building new homes on their existing old farmhouses. So they're old farmhouses or older mobile homes, and then we're running into the same problems that we have now," says Kurta.

Finding a building has been hard for the museum, but funding is another issue. Whether it is buying a new building, paying for exterminations, or supporting daily operations, Kurta says money is limited since they operate primarily on donations and grants.

One of the organisations that provides funding to museums is the Alberta Museums Association (AMA), which, in a 2024 budget report, noted that due to budget stagnation, it is struggling to support local museums.

"The AMA continues to operate on a reduced funding envelope, putting continued strain on the programs and services that are offered to the diverse community of museums and museum professionals that we support," read the report.

However, grants and bursaries are not the only way the AMA supports museums, as CEO Jennifer Forsyth says that they also offer training workshops, networking opportunities, and other resources.

**"Small-town museums are the backbone of Alberta's heritage sector," she says.**

"Many rural museums rely on volunteers, and we offer tools, mentorship, and community-building supports that meet their capacity."

According to the Alberta Museums Project, the Gopher Hole Museum is not the only one struggling to stay afloat, as many of the province's 314 museums are also located in rural areas.

The Sundre & District Museum says it was almost forced to close for half of 2025 because of a lack of funding. Executive director Carrie Couch says that if it weren't for a handful of donations, their doors could have closed.

"We were going to close, but the town stepped in and offered an operational lifeline to keep us open," she says. "In December, we received two donations that have enabled us to keep our doors open for the public, retain our staff persons and our very important volunteers."

With eight historical buildings sitting on four acres of land, the Sundre museum depicts Sundre's pioneer life. It also manages 170 taxidermied animals in its wildlife exhibit.

Though it is a much bigger operation than the Gopher Hole Museum, it is still primarily supported by donations and grants. But because there are many museums vying for the same funding, Sundre says it's slim pickings.

One of the grants offered by the AMA is called the Operational Staffing Grant, which provides one-year

funding assistance for wages or salaries of core staff positions. In 2024, they said this grant made up 81 per cent of the grants they gave out.

However, the struggle to secure grant funding is not limited to Alberta but also at the national level.

## Not just a provincial problem

In a November 2025 letter to François-Philippe Champagne, minister of finance and national revenue, the Canadian Museum Association expressed its concern about federal budget decisions.

"The federal budget has abandoned Canada's museums. Budget 2025 delivers virtually nothing, no cohesive vision for Canada's 2,700 museums—institutions present in every riding that preserve heritage, educate communities, drive tourism, and employ over 32,000 Canadians," read the letter.

A 2020 Statistics Canada report found that museums in Alberta employed 826 full-time employees, 1,372 part-time employees, and 5,531 volunteers.

In part, Forsyth explains that these two challenges work together to create an uphill battle for museums in Alberta.

"Sustainable funding and staffing capacity are ongoing challenges. Many museums operate with small teams or volunteers while balancing rising costs, aging infrastructure, collection care, and evolving public expectations," she says. "Maintaining long-term financial stability while staying relevant to diverse communities is a major pressure point."

Couch says it is harder for small-town museums to receive grants when, unlike bigger institutions, they don't have professional grant writers.

Staffing poses a challenge for both the Gopher Hole Museum and the Sundre & District Museum, as they rely on small pools of volunteers that are often insufficient to meet the required workload.

"Staff and volunteer burnout is an issue—the job required and the many hats we wear is amazing,

and the stress we carry, especially because we are the gatekeepers of local history, is immense," says Couch.

## Local directors find the work worth it

Kurta says that running the Gopher Hole Museum is hard work, but worthwhile. She says it is a family business of sorts, since her parents helped build the attraction and remained steadfast stewards of the museum.

When she was younger, Kurta resented the time and energy her parents invested in the museum, but after five years as the museum's director, she has come to appreciate the museum's ability to bring people together.

"People just start talking because they're laughing, and those conversations are really transformative," says Kurta. "I really appreciate that. I've seen stories in there that deeply touched my heart, and I didn't realise that could come from a Gopher Hole Museum, but it does, and it happens all the time."

In 2026, the Gopher Hole Museum will be making some adjustments to stay open. A new location has not been decided on, but Kurta hopes to start sponsoring the gopher boxes to private companies to help with funding the museum. She says she will do everything in her power to help it live on.

"It really affects people deeply, and I can't explain that. I don't know why it touches people the way it does," says Kurta. "The fact is, it does, and that's important to me. For that reason, I'm going to make sure that it stays around."

# Why young adults are going analogue

*AI resentment, payment plans top reasons for Gen Z's switch*

**Serena Kanji-Ramji**

Contributor



Today's young adults appear to be reaching for prints rather than phones to capture their memories. Photo courtesy of Chris Hardy / Unsplash

Gen Z, the very generation considered to be chronically online, is going analogue—from printing photos, to burning CDs, and bringing back quality-shot cameras. But while nostalgia was to blame during the pandemic, today points to a growing agitation toward artificial intelligence (AI).

This group, including anyone born between 1997 and 2012, are moving towards a less digitally focused lifestyle and placing importance on physical media—such as photo albums, film cameras, CDs, and more.

It's the act of intentionally putting down technology and creating something tangible and permanent, not as a performance but as a regrounding technique. The newest way of embracing the low-tech life is an analogue bag.

Analogue bags, an idea made trendy by TikTok creator Sierra Campbell (@siececampbell), are curated bags full of screen-free activities like crosswords, novels, digital or film camera, journals and maybe a craft. The purpose of these bags is to fill the free time in between tasks with nurturing activities, not doomscrolling.

While these fun bags are popular amongst the going analogue crowd, it's not the

only way people are choosing to disconnect. Some are choosing to simply craft in their spare time.

## Transitioning to tangible past-times

Michaels, a craft and hobby store, has seen a major uptick in sales of “grandma hobbies,” such as knitting supplies. According to an article in *Mezha*, yarn and knitting sets saw sales increase by 1,200 per cent in 2025.

Overall, Michaels site reported a 136 per cent increase in interest in ‘analogue hobbies’ last year.

“I think there’s a really big cultural shift happening right now,” the article quotes Michaels CMO, Stacey Shively.

## But why?

What are the forces driving this shift towards decentering the internet?

An article by Medium suggests that Gen Zs going analogue is a direct response to AI fatigue. With 63 per cent of Gen Z making an intentional effort to go offline, it seems we’re headed back to tactile hobbies. Not as a complete rejection of progress but as a deliberate recentering of the non-digital world.

## Understanding AI fatigue

AI fatigue is described as the exhaustion that comes from keeping up with the rapidly changing field of artificial intelligence. It’s the emotional and mental toll of keeping up with technology evolving at a speed never seen before, with no indication of slowing down in the near future.

People aren’t just surrounded by ever-changing AI during school or work hours, but also in other aspects of life. AI has ingrained itself into everyday life to an almost inescapable level, from Apple’s Siri to Google’s suggestion boxes.

The analogue movement is being championed as a way to reconnect with the real, offline world. It’s an effort to slow down and find joy in the lack of constant stimulation. One influencer fully committing to the lifestyle is Shaughnessy Barker (@notshaughnessy). In her interview with CNN, Barker describes herself as an “AI hater to her core.”

Barker has a large collection of CDs, cassettes, and vinyl records, but her most analogue move to date was getting a landline. From hosting tech-free theme nights to running a monthly snail mail club, Barker is self-

proclaimed as having gotten going on an analogue down-pact.

While AI fatigue is certainly a factor in going analogue, it’s not the only reason. A new phrase has popped up online: “don’t let social media be your only archive.” Over the past few years, certain social media applications have proven unpredictable and volatile.

Parts of apps can change overnight, leaving users confused and fearful about what this means for their digital memory archives—precisely what happened when Snapchat started charging users to store memories.

## Snapchat's slap in the face

Having first launched in 2011, the picture-sharing social media platform introduced Memories in 2016, which allowed users to save images directly to an album within the app. Over one trillion images have been saved via the function, prompting the app to limit free access for all.

“When we first launched Memories, we never expected it to grow to what it has become today,” read a news release from Snapchat. “We want to make sure that our community can continue to

store all of their Memories over the long term.”

In September 2025, Snapchat announced its Memories Storage Plans, which means that users with over five gigabytes of saved images are now required to pay to keep them. This prompted some users to reflect on whether their digital memories truly belonged to them in the first place.

One article points out that social media sites are fragile. They are frequently sold, shut down or drastically changed. It’s not just social sites, either—hard drives crash, digital files accidentally get deleted. The only way to guarantee a memory’s permanence is to make it tangible.

Research shows that there is greater emotional attachment to tangible memories, as well as better recall, because they activate more of our senses and provide a real-world anchor for the memory.

The going analogue movement points to a deeper desire among Gen Z to put down their phones and reconnect with the world around them. Whether this is another micro-trend remains to be seen, but all signs point to it being just the beginning.

# Opinion: Would the honourable member retract that statement?

*A look into the weirdly wonderful world of parliamentary traditions*

**Ryan Montgomery**

Staff Writer

Parliament can be rather stuffy. It can seem like an archaic institution full of inane traditions.

However, do not let the old mahogany walls and antique green leather chairs deceive you, because parliament has a history that's as bloody as a butcher's cleaver, and significantly less efficient.

The distance between the government and opposition benches, exactly 3.96 metres apart, was decided centuries ago to be just beyond the length of two swords. This was so that, back in the day, when gentlemen had sabres and the like, the honourable members couldn't stab each other from where they sat—something I'm sure today's Liberals and Conservatives lament daily.

Weapons are at the very core of the parliamentary process. If you have ever watched a parliamentary debate, the eagle-eyed among you would have noticed a massive golden mace in the middle of the central table.

This mace represents the power of the King and the power of the speaker to control the House of Commons. I trust the threatening symbolism of a huge weapon representing the King and his authority sitting in the middle of parliament isn't lost on anyone.

However, we live in a more enlightened time, away from the executioner's axe of Henry VIII, away from the spectre of civil war between the house and the king. Our bruised arms are now strung up for monuments, as Shakespeare said.

Today, it is a different age: the many fleeting fights of our democratic representatives are now settled with battles of words rather than wars of weapons. And boy, is it annoying.

## Canada's parliamentary rules for dummies

Jeering, name-calling, bickering, and petty, argumentative squabbles are the order of the day in our democracy. So who is to keep order in the schoolyard?

The speaker, of course, has



West Block of the House of Commons at Ottawa's Parliament Hill on Aug. 5, 2022. Photo courtesy of Hutima / Wikimedia Commons

many tools at their disposal—the most prominent among these is control over what is called 'unparliamentary language.' This is language deemed unacceptable to use whilst parliament is in session. There are numerous types of speech that meet the threshold of unparliamentary behaviour, the most obvious of which is swearing or foul language.

Regulating this has caused many aspiring parliamentary poets to come up with new and novel ways to say mean things about their coworkers. The most iconic of these was in 1971, when the former prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, mouthed two decidedly unparliamentary words starting with "f" and "y" at the Conservatives across the bench. When later questioned, he claimed that he mouthed the words "fuddle duddle" at the opposition, but I'll leave it to the reader to infer what he actually said.

Across the 800 or so years of Westminster parliamentary government, there have been some real gems of unparliamentary words flung across the aisle. Some of my favourites from

across the Commonwealth are as follows.

One incensed New Zealand MP once declared of his political opponent, "his brains could revolve inside a peanut shell for a thousand years without touching the sides."

Some of the highlights from the United Kingdom are predictably old-fashioned and quaint, numbers like "hooligan," "guttersnipe," "pipsqueak," and my personal favourite, "wart." It is the job of the speaker of the house to ensure that no honourable member ever utters such abhorrent words as these.

These rules extend to even that most ubiquitous of a politician's pastimes: lying. MPs are strictly forbidden from accusing fellow members of lying. This is because the language of the politicians must uphold the honour of the house and its members, so any attack on another member's honour is strictly forbidden.

This has led the honourable members to search for all manner of synonyms and euphemisms. The most notable of these was coined by none other than Winston Churchill himself. The

young Winston accused an opposing member of uttering a "terminological inexactitude," which surely must be the most eloquent 'nuh uh' in the history of the English language.

If an MP utters a statement deemed by the speaker to be unparliamentary, then they will be formally asked to retract that statement. If the honourable member declines to do so, invoking the parliamentarian version of a 'no take-backsies,' then they will be removed from the chamber. This happened in April 2024 when the leader of the Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, called former prime minister Justin Trudeau a "wacko."

Trudeau himself once had a run-in with the metaphorical unparliamentary language police when, in 2011, a then-backbencher Trudeau sporting a supervillain goatee called a fellow member a "piece of shit." Trudeau, however, apologised immediately for this outburst and was allowed to remain in the house. Personally, I think Trudeau got more value out of his dollar in the swear jar.

Another statement that is considered unparliamentary

is the insinuation or accusation that your opponent is drunk or intoxicated. Prime minister from 1867 to 1873, Sir John A. Macdonald, a notorious boozer, got a lot of mileage out of that one.

In one incident, while in the middle of a debate, he suddenly retched all over the debate stage. Upon coming to his senses, Macdonald said to the crowd, "forgive me, but whenever my opponent speaks, I lose my stomach."

Britain's parliament, always keen to find the next frontier of articulate insults, invented the euphemism "tired and emotional" to describe a member of parliament who was clearly out a little too late last night. Innovation really is a beautiful thing.

Parliament is a peculiar place, a mix of antiquated rules, absurd traditions, and interior decor full of implicit threats. Despite all these curiosities, or perhaps in a small way because of them, is why I see the political system as one of the most stable in human history. So if there's any moral to this story of swords, swears, goatees and gagging, maybe it's that if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

# Your SAMRU Elections Guide

Get to know the candidates, vote, and attend SAMRU's Annual General Meeting.  
Got questions? Email [elections@samru.ca](mailto:elections@samru.ca)

## MARCH 12-18

Representation Executive Council (REC) and Student Governing Board (SGB) candidates campaign to MRU Students. This is your chance to get to know who you'd like to vote for.

See the candidates: [samru.ca/elections](http://samru.ca/elections)

## MARCH 16-18

Voting begins! Eligible MRU student voters will get an email for how to vote online.

Vote: [samru.ca/vote](http://samru.ca/vote)

## MARCH 17 - 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM

Meet the REC candidates in-person at the REC Candidate Meet & Greet.

Meet the REC candidates: [samru.ca/events](http://samru.ca/events)

## MARCH 18 - 7:30 PM

Get elections results LIVE during SAMRU's Online Annual General Meeting.  
More information (& prizes!) below.

Register to attend the AGM: [samru.ca/agm](http://samru.ca/agm)

Attend SAMRU's

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Online via Zoom  
(pre-registration required)

Wednesday, March 18  
at 7:30pm



Scan here to pre-register or visit [samru.ca/AGM](http://samru.ca/AGM)

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LIVE Election Results: The 2026/27 Representation Executive Council & Student Governing Board

# Comparing The Substance to Shell

One s(hell) of a standard

Amy Jaquish

Staff Writer

Released in 2024, the film *Shell* was recently added to Prime Video, and one can't help but draw comparisons to another film featured on the platform.

*Shell*, directed by Max Minghella, follows an actress, played by Kate Moss, who is struggling to find work as her age begins to show. In an attempt to save her career, she takes drastic measures and pursues a new medical advancement that alters her DNA to keep her from aging.

However, it ends with the actress's appearance being altered horrifically forever. The film also features Moss' character feeling threatened by a younger actress, who is played by Kaia Gerber.

## Sound Familiar?

That's because it follows a similar plot structure to Coralie Fargeat's Oscar-nominated and winning film, *The Substance*.

You may be thinking: who copied who? But the films were actually released around the same time, with *The Substance* on Sept. 20, 2024, and *Shell* on Oct. 3, 2024.

However, it should be noted that Fargeat did release a short film in 2014 titled *Reality+*, which follows a similar plot.

While it's unclear if one pulled ideas from another, there remains some major differences between the two films. The first is the medical procedures the characters go through.

In *The Substance*, Demi Moore's character, Elisabeth Sparkle, uses a black-market serum to create a better version of herself, played by Margaret Qualley. Sparkle then switches with the clone every seven days, using her spinal fluid to stabilise herself and her other version.

In *Shell*, Moss' character, Samantha Lake, uses a



Margaret Qualley and Demi Moore behind the scenes on the set of *The Substance*.

Photo courtesy of Instagram / @trythesubstance

widely available service promoted by fellow celebrity, Zoe Shannon, played by Kate Hudson. The medical procedure uses lobster DNA to keep Lake looking young, although it comes with side effects that make clients grow crustacean-like spores.

When considering the films together, it's important to note the differences between not only the treatments themselves, but also the procurement of them.

With *Shell*, Hudson's character acts as a celebrity spokesperson for the company, claiming that she is 60-years-old and will continue looking young and beautiful because of the lobster treatment. Because the lobster treatment is a common procedure done in the film, it draws viewers to a metaphor for influencer culture and the current beauty treatment standards.

This thematic framing reflects social media influencers pushing forward

treatments like red light therapy, micro-needling or extreme morning routines.

Gerber's character, Chloe Benson, further represents this younger, media-oriented generation diving right into these trends to stay looking young.

According to Yale Medicine, dermatologist Dr. Kathleen Suozzi explains that 20 per cent of preteens and teens spend around \$50 a month on skincare products they don't need. *Shell*, it seems, hits the nail on the head.

In comparison, *The Substance*, with its black market service, focuses more on beauty standards that have been around for decades, reinforcing the idea that women who have aged will be pushed out of the industry.

While *Shell* does focus on age as well, they never actually replace Moss' character, change her weight or age her down at all. She simply has a new glow to her

that makes her seem more youthful. *The Substance*, however, completely replaces Moore's character with Qualley's younger character, Sue.

While *The Substance* maintains the idea that the industry will always push out older women in favour of a younger version, *Shell* is more of a commentary on current influencer culture.

*Shell*, however, is not a one-sided story. Half-way through the film, Moss' character attempts to dismantle the industry and the medical treatments it pushes forward. By doing so, she becomes an activist who speaks out against the beauty standards.

Although in the end, even after she reveals how the company is burying their secrets by making women disappear, the company still keeps operating.

*Shell* conveys that even as we work towards dismantling beauty standards and pointing out how they impact

people, especially women, conventions still continue to thrive in society.

It is interesting to note, though, that while *Shell* comments on attempts to dismantle beauty standard culture, *The Substance* takes a more personal approach, focusing on how the beauty standards affect women mentally.

Throughout the film, Moore's character is seen struggling with self-doubt and feelings of self-consciousness. At one point, she attempts to get ready for a date, and while looking in the mirror, begins to redo her lipstick over and over again, never feeling fully satisfied with how she looks.

In addition, Qualley's character begins to enter a similar cycle at the end of the film when her body begins to fall apart. Even though she keeps trying to fix it, she eventually destroys herself in the process.

As such, both characters represent how beauty standards keep women from ever being fully satisfied with how they look.

*Shell* also features a similar thematic pattern, with an actress destroying herself for beauty. However, this is not Moss' character, but instead Gerber, who gets turned into a giant human-eating lobster.

Both films feature a young actress attempting to fix a fictional idea created by the beauty industry. Although in different ways, the movies comment on the fact that the film industry doesn't want women to age, highlighting the drastic measures women will take to fit these standards.

## OUT'N ABOUT

### Dirty Dancing at The GRAND

Hosted by The GRAND, Emile Ardolino's classic film, *Dirty Dancing*, returns to the screen. Catch the film on March 6 from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., with Uncle Faith's Pizza serving food on-site for purchase. Tickets are available at thegrandyyyc.ca, starting at \$15.

### Dance Dance Disco

Join the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra at a disco-themed concert inspired by the sounds of legendary New York nightclub, Studio 54. Groove with Diana Ross, the Bee Gees and more at Dance Dance Disco. The event is set to run from March 6 to 7, with tickets available at calgaryphil.com.

### Little Modern Market

On March 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., enjoy Little Modern Market's newest event. Located at McMahon Stadium, the pop-up market will feature everything from flash tattoos to homemade baked goods. Enjoy free entry with a donation to Discovery House, a charity organisation that supports women and children fleeing domestic violence.

### Women's History Walk

Celebrate International Women's Day with a guided walking tour at The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland. On March 8, 15 and 22, explore the history of influential women who made an impact on the lands that are now The City of Calgary. For more information and ticket purchases, visit theconfluence.ca.

# What does it take to make it in the Calgary music scene?

*Exploring how artists rise in the Blue Sky City*

## Lacey Holowaty

Contributor

Over the past few decades, Calgary's musicians have been taking up more and more space in the national and global music scene.

Notable household names include Tegan and Sara, Feist and Tate McRae. Now, many young artists are trying to navigate the unique landscape of the Calgary music scene, and it can be daunting to figure out where to start.

An emerging artist from Calgary is indie-rock band SHY FRIEND, who got their start playing at the city's well-beloved Rockin' 4 Dollar\$ events. Lead singer and founder of the band, Julie Olive, says an integral part of the Calgary music scene is how live-show focused it is.

"It's one of the most helpful things for aspiring or coming-up artists to sort of meet the community and figure out how to play live and get the opportunity to do so in a sort of judgment-free zone," Olive says.

SHY FRIEND initially started as a solo project of Olive's during the pandemic. Olive put herself out there through Twitch and Reddit livestreams, where she'd play her then-unreleased songs and covers for up to 100 viewers every day. The demand and financial support from her viewers eventually led to her releasing her solo EP, *Frank*.

"A lot of the stuff that actually went on that record was just stuff that people really wanted to hear over and over again, and not just live," she says.

After releasing the record, Olive realised that managing her music career was becoming too much for one person to handle, so she asked a bunch of her college friends if they would help her perform the record live. From there, the group slowly formed.

According to Olive, the band's sound is reminiscent of what Chappell Roan would sound like if she played rock 'n roll.

"[The resemblance] is not just the music, it's definitely the style," Olive says. "It's the culture that we're wanting to create."

Olive says the Calgary music scene has been incredibly supportive and welcoming of not only SHY FRIEND, but of other up-and-coming artists as well.

"[The music scene] is really focused on uplifting people who have something important to say," she says. "I really love what people are doing to support folks who are femme, or queer, or fringe, or not white, just be able to say what they have to say and have the platform to do it."

The current music scene in



SHY FRIEND regularly plays Rockin' 4 Dollar\$, a live music event that takes place every Thursday at the Blox Arts Centre. Photo by Michael Grondin

Calgary can be described as a "mixing pot," according to the founder and producer of Calgary's Peach Jam Records, Kenton Dobrowolski. Despite Calgary's closeness to country culture, there are many well-established subcultures within the city's music scene, including punk, indie, R&B and others.

"I think Calgary's a really untapped market," says Dobrowolski. "We're not nearly as developed as the Vancouver or Toronto music

scenes."

But Dobrowolski says there's value in that. Calgary's hidden-gem status when it comes to harbouring a plethora of talented musicians makes it easier for artists to connect to their hometown and build an audience. He mentions Toronto's pride towards Drake's success as an example.

**"I think that people want to see the hometown hero win," he says.**

A common misconception with budding musicians is that success in the industry is determined by how big a record deal you sign. However, Dobrowolski says that with the rise of social media and self-promotion, record labels just aren't what they used to be.

"I would honestly encourage artists to stay independent," he says. "I think in today's world, there's actually not a lot of labels that do what artists can't do themselves."

According to Dobrowolski, Peach Jam Records ensures their artists own 100 per

cent of their masters and royalties. The purpose of the company is to empower artists and assist them in various phases of their project launches, including production, recording, development and marketing.

That same sentiment is echoed through SHY FRIEND's status as an independent artist. Olive says that after thorough research and conversations with people in the industry, the most a label could do for the band is distribution, which they already have covered.

According to Olive, a common dream for any creative is to be able to make a living from their art. Unfortunately, funding is hard to come by, and many record labels don't offer much money up front anymore. She explains that the band's only options are to either self-fund or apply for grants, which has proven to be a lengthy process with a lot of red tape.

Olive says that, in order to "make it" in the Calgary music industry, artists shouldn't be afraid to put themselves out there authentically.

"The worst that someone can say is, 'Oh, they're working hard. Cringe,'" she says. "But if you kind of accept that...it'll work out good."



The band rocks out at the Palomino Smokehouse, a popular music venue in Calgary. Photo by Joel Johnson

# Opinion: Dressing to impress at the 2026 Olympic Games

**Katrina Ebuenga**

Staff Writer

Hosted in the fashion capital of the world, Milan, the 2026 Winter Olympics challenged countries to step up their creative game.

Rocking the maple leaf, Team Canada stirred up quite a controversy surrounding one item seen at the opening ceremony. The alleged quilted puffer wrap vest sparked questions about whether or not it is an enlarged scarf, or rather, some sort of sleeping bag.

With the Winter Olympics being held in the same city as the famed Milano Fashion Week, the expectations for how the teams presented themselves were high.

While some brand partnerships stepped up this year, others fell short. And with trending controversies like Team Canada's athletic kits, the ranking for best and worst teams changes depending on who you ask.

## Standout creative teams

Starting strong in terms of creative design, Team Mongolia leads with a strong sense of cultural expression. Differing from the other teams that adopted a typical puffer or peacoat jacket, Team Mongolia used the spotlight

to showcase their cultural identity and nationality, wearing a traditional deel at the opening ceremony.

Their display of quiet, yet meaningful luxury showcased a high-quality brand deal that refused to compromise on purpose, contradicting Team USA who signed multi-brand partnerships.

Team Mongolia's designer, Goyol Cashmere, incorporated materials such as fur, silk trimmings and blue cashmere into the kits, representing the "Eternal Blue Sky" that the country is known for. Also included with the traditional deel and robe, the knit sweaters feature mountain-themed designs, a reference to ger, also known as yurt, culture.

Team Norway comes in a close second with the consistent designs of their knit sweaters. Designed by Dale of Norway, the timeless sweaters continue to pay homage to past creative choices and athletic teams. Although their athletic attire does not display the country's flag, fans can still recognise the team because of the classic Norwegian patterns.

Team Haiti and Team Brazil also deserve recognition for their creativity in design. Team Haiti's Olympic look



**Team Canada, wearing Lululemon, proudly sports the maple leaf at the opening ceremony. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @teamcanada**

was created by Stella Jean, an Italian-Haitian designer, who hand-painted the iconic red horse design seen on the team's jacket and skirt.

This subtle incorporation of nationality can also be seen in Team Brazil's puffer jacket, designed by Moncler, that appears plain on the outside, but is flag-lined on the cape-inspired outerwear.

## Dressing Team Canada

While teams like Mongolia and Norway have stayed on top because of consistent designers and brand partnerships over the years, Team Canada's shift to Lululemon has fans questioning the partnership.

In the past, Team Canada has memorably partnered with the Hudson Bay Company and Roots, two well-known Canadian brands that have represented Team Canada for years.

Lululemon's partnership with Team Canada began at the 2022 Olympics in Beijing, China, with their plain yet bold red design.

This year, they have expanded their athletic kits to include 42 apparel pieces, with some pieces even straying away from their signature red. Lululemon has elevated its athletic apparel in activewear, making this year's kits runway-ready from opening to closing ceremony.

Despite their successes, Team Canada can't seem to escape the infamous quilted puffer vest. The garment was front and center at the

opening ceremony, proudly displaying a large maple leaf plastered on the front.

The vest can be seen being worn as a waist cover in the promotional photos on Lululemon's official website, emphasising the variety of ways it can be worn by athletes. Lululemon's intent was seemingly diversity in style, allowing athletes to adorn the clothing however they see fit.

Even with the promotional photos, athletic kit unpacking videos have gained traction on social media, as content creators and athletes express their confusion about what the vest is meant to be. At the beginning of the Olympics, Canadian snowboarder Juliette Pelchat posted a video wearing the vest, with comments quickly filling her inbox about what she was wearing.

However, although met with plenty of confusion, the vest also gained support from proud fans. For them, the vest is quintessentially representative of Team Canada and the Canadian flag, or better yet, an older version of a Tim Hortons cup. This call back to the '90s is a perfect and arguably innovative way to bring nostalgia into representing national identity.

Unlike the other pieces from the past, this wrap vest has caused a loud commotion to what the next years may look like for Team Canada with their multi-year partnership with Lululemon.

## Our neighbour to the south

Team USA has been consistent with its longstanding partnership of 20 years with Ralph Lauren. Embodying the "American spirit," as described by David Lauren in Vogue, this year's line incorporates the traditional colours of reds, whites and blues, using Ralph Lauren's traditional styles of cable-knit sweaters and fleece jackets.

Team USA has also partnered with Skims and Nike, making them the only team with multiple partnerships. With Skims covering loungewear and Nike covering activewear, Team USA is overstocked with apparel for any situation.

And, surprisingly, Nike's trending eagle skirt made from recycled materials has not gathered as much attention as Team Canada's vest. The skirt-blanket is at least on-brand for its resourcefulness, made from recycled plastic bottles and polyester to reduce mass waste.

While the large print of an eagle is boring and tacky, it is inspired by the Colorado mountains as a tribute to the athletes' training centre, located in Colorado Springs.

From start to finish, the Olympic catwalk was one you did not want to miss. From American tackiness to Canadian authenticity, the Winter Olympic outfits had their own competition to win amongst fans.



**Team Mongolia partners with Goyol Cashmere to create timeless and traditional athletic kits. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @goyolcashmere.mn**

# From Barbie to ballots

*How Nicki Minaj's public evolution shows how fame and politics increasingly collide*

**Anais Loepky**

Staff Writer

In the era of social media, artists are scrutinised for a lot more than just their art. They're expected to be brand strategists and, at times, political participants and activists. A single post can travel faster than a press release, and public reaction often unfolds in real time.

## From rap persona to public figure

Few artists reflect this media shift quite like Nicki Minaj. When she initially broke into the mainstream with the release of her 2010 album, *Pink Friday*, her brand centred on bold femininity within the male-dominated rap industry.

Her early career was defined by this branding, as well as her striking performance visuals and brazen lyricism. But, over the years, Minaj's public identity has shifted beyond music.

From questioning industry decisions online to engaging in debates about public policy, her commentary has increasingly intersected with larger political conversations.

As cultural expectations around celebrities have changed, with audiences expecting public figures to take a stance on social issues, Minaj's brand also evolved.

Her career trajectory reflects a new industry landscape, in which fame and politics now operate together, often in ways that blur the boundary between personal expression and public influence.

## The Bible, the president and the backlash

Recently, Minaj has made global headlines because of the visibility and frequency of her engagements with high-profile political figures and events.

Last month, Minaj broke the internet after sharing a photo on X of a Bible signed by U.S. President Donald Trump. In the post, Minaj calls it "one of the most meaningful gifts I've ever received in my entire life."

The Bible sparked discussion online, with reactions ranging from open praise to criticism of the political symbolism and the religious implications of the signed book.

This moment follows several other public interactions between Minaj and Trump that have unfolded in recent months. This January, she appeared alongside Trump at the U.S. Treasury Department's launch of the "Trump Accounts" program, where she publicly described herself as his "number one fan."

Late last year, Minaj also attended an annual conference hosted by Turning Point USA, a right-wing non-profit, where she joined the organisation's CEO, Erika Kirk, onstage.

These public endorsements and appearances have generated both support and criticism among her followers, as coverage and online conversations highlight how her political associations have become part of her broader public identity. She faced significant backlash across social media platforms because of this, with comment sections and trending discussions reflecting the sharp divide amongst fans and the media.

In response to the intense reaction, Minaj temporarily deactivated her Instagram account, further fuelling online speculation and commentary. While she did not provide an explanation for the deactivation, the timing did not seem coincidental.

Despite her motive, the move reflected how celebrity political engagement enables immediate response to controversy, where even the act of stepping away from social media becomes part of the broader narrative.

The backlash Minaj has received has taken multiple forms, including fan debates over loyalty, calls for boycotts and renewed scrutiny of her past statements on public health and government policy. Supporters, meanwhile, framed the criticism as evidence of increasing intolerance toward dissenting political views in entertainment spaces.

## Fan culture and political identity

Part of what made the online reaction so intense is the audience space Minaj has built over the last decade and a half. From the start of her career, Minaj has held a visible place within queer fan



**Nicki Minaj and U.S. President Donald Trump at the launch of the "Trump Accounts" program, where she publicly aligned herself with the Republican Party. Photo courtesy of X / @WhiteHouse**

culture.

Her exaggerated alter egos and theatrical visuals made her a staple in drag performances and Pride playlists. She has also frequently acknowledged the loyalty of these communities, often referring to her "Barbz" as powerful and dedicated.

It is then no surprise that her recent political associations landed differently for some fans. Online conversations showed visible tension within parts of her queer audience, with some expressing discomfort given Trump's record on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, which advocacy groups have criticised over the years. Others defended Minaj's right to personal political alignment, arguing that fandom does not require ideological agreement.

The moment underscores how deeply intertwined

celebrity branding can become with specific communities. When an artist's image is closely connected to marginalised or identity-based audiences, political gestures are rarely received in isolation.

In Minaj's case, the response revealed how shifts in public positioning can ripple through fan cultures that have long been central to branding.

## The artist, the audience and the algorithm

Minaj's evolution speaks to something bigger than one artist or one political moment. It reflects how dramatically the expectations surrounding celebrities have changed.

In an era where social media collapses the distance between public figures and

their audiences, artists are expected to be performers as well as personalities, commentators and even political figures, whether they intend to be or not.

For Minaj, that evolution has played out publicly and in real time. The same platforms that once amplified her music and persona now amplify her political gestures and the reactions to them. Her brand now exists within a landscape where personal belief, public alignment and audience identity intersect.

Rather than existing on separate tracks, fame and politics increasingly move together. Minaj's story illustrates how difficult it has become to separate the art from the individual behind it, and how quickly a celebrity's public image can expand beyond entertainment into something far more complex.



**Erika Kirk (left), CEO of Turning Point USA, sits down with Nicki Minaj (right) at the AmericaFest conference last December. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons**

# Remembering Catherine O'Hara

*How the icon made a name for Canadian talent with her Alberta-based show*

**Emma Voelpel**

Staff Writer

Comedy and acting legend Catherine O'Hara passed away in late January of this year.

O'Hara managed to shape Canadian humour through her work, bringing her roots and wit to the world stage. Now, she is being remembered as a trailblazer whose career spanned more than five decades, marking an influence felt far beyond the roles that made her a household name.

O'Hara's comedy career began in the 1970s when she became part of the Toronto-based comedy sketch group, *Second City*. The group moved from the stage to television in 1976 when *Second City Television (SCTV)* premiered.

The show, known for its sharp satire and eccentric characters, later moved production to Alberta's own Edmonton in 1984. The move helped put an unexpected Canadian city on the comedy map, all the while showcasing the show's creative talent to national and international audiences.

"I don't think people take comedy seriously enough," said O'Hara in an interview

with Paul Soles on *Canada After Dark* in 1978. "With our show, people will come to me and go 'you're just as goofy in real life.'"

The run in Alberta was part of what many fans and comedy historians point to as a crucial era that helped launch several comedy legends from the show, including Martin Short, Rick Moranis, and John Candy.

Operating somewhat outside of the glare of Toronto and Los Angeles, it gave the cast and crew room to experiment. The prairie setting, far from the traditional entertainment capitals, became an unlikely hub for comedic innovation.

For O'Hara and her colleagues, the Edmonton years represented a uniquely Canadian approach to making television—resourceful, collaborative and unpretentious. The decision to move filming locations also underscored that world-class comedy could emerge from anywhere in the country. For local crews and aspiring performers, the presence of a hit series in Alberta showed that opportunity in the arts wasn't confined to Central

Canada.

*SCTV* went on to collect a multitude of awards during its run, including two Emmy Awards. In 2002, the show was inducted into the Canadian Walk of Fame.

More importantly, the show established how Canadian talent can find international success without losing their identity. As for O'Hara, her work on the series showed that Canadian humour—self-deprecating, sharp and delightful in parody—could resonate far beyond the border.

Her transition into film amplified that impact. In Hollywood, O'Hara delivered memorable performances in films such as *Beetlejuice* and *Home Alone*, where she often stole scenes with a raised eyebrow and perfectly timed lines.

"She was my pretend wife, my pretend nemesis, and my real life, true friend," said Michael Keaton—O'Hara's *Beetlejuice* costar—on a social media post.

**Continues on Pg. 18**



Catherine O'Hara on the set of *Beetlejuice*, where she played the eccentric Deila Deets. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @beetlejuicemovie



The final chapter in J. Cole's "Jermaine Cole" storyline arrived on Feb. 2 (2/2/26), a fitting date as "2-6" is the nickname of his hometown of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Including his first three mixtapes and three of his studio albums, Cole intends *The Fall-Off* to be the bookend of the J. Cole storyline, waving farewell to the character and moving into a new stage of his rap career.

A two-disc album, Cole returns to versions of himself that listeners have been yearning to hear since the story's last installment, *2014 Forest Hills Drive*. He also incorporates some of the tricks he stored in his bag from his 'sidequest' projects.

Cole even gets Future to feature on "Run A Train," but surprisingly gets the Atlanta rapper to avoid his usual trope of toxic rap. Instead, he utilises his soulful, melodic

voice to convey Cole's emotions returning to his hometown after ascending to such levels of fame.

The aggressive, hard-rapping Cole we seldom see now also returns on songs like "Two Six" and "Poor Thang," and some songs, like "The Let Out," even feature electric guitar hits.

Cole's evolution as a rapper, writer and producer all shone throughout this project, further establishing his place as one of the genre's greatest of all time. *The Fall-Off* is nothing less than a virtuoso and represents a justified ending to one of rap's greatest stories ever.

— Zafir Nagji



It took four years for Baby Keem to return after the masterpiece that was *The Melodic Blue*, and while *Ca\$ino* is less than half the size of its predecessor, it is more than enough to showcase the Californian rapper's broad range of skills.

Baby Keem opens the album by reflecting on the pressure of wanting to produce more great art, comparing it to the pressures of life before fame and the desire to continue to save his family from financial burdens. The song then abruptly ends on the sound of a spinning slot machine.

Across the album, Keem likens his life and decisions to gambling at a casino and the confidence that he gained from winning his bets on himself.

Kendrick Lamar makes ad-lib appearances on multiple tracks, but gets an official feature credit on "Good Flirts," where both artists speak about on-and-off relationships. On "Highway 95 pt.2" and "I am not a Lyricist," Keem explains

that if he didn't bet on himself and win, he would fall into the bad habits that plague his community.

He balances that with bouncy California vibes on "\$ex Appeal," featuring Too \$hort, a filthy five-minute freestyle on "Circus Circus Free\$tle," and "Dramatic Girl," featuring Che Ecu, the most melodically pleasing track on the project.

Keem ends off with "No Blame," venting about his mother's tragic death and the abuse she endured while alive. As a prodigy of Kendrick Lamar, we couldn't expect anything less than perfection, and after the wait since his last masterpiece, Baby Keem delivered on all fronts.

— Zafir Nagji

Continued from Pg. 17

## “This one hurts, man am I gonna miss her.”

Macaulay Culkin, O’Hara’s *Home Alone* co-star, also went to social media to share in the loss.

“Mama. I thought we had time. I wanted more. I wanted to sit in a chair next to you. I heard you. But I had so much more to say. I love you. I’ll see you later,” he wrote.

Yet even as she appeared in major studio productions, she remained closely associated with Canadian collaborators, including Eugene Levy and other *SCTV* alumni. Their enduring creative partnerships reinforced the idea that Canadian artists could build lasting careers together, rather than entirely dispersing into the U.S. system.

That collaborative spirit reached new heights decades later with the hit CBC comedy *Schitt’s Creek*. Created by Eugene and Dan Levy, the show cast O’Hara as Moira Rose, a flamboyant former soap star navigating

life in a small rural town. With her strange accent and eccentric wigs, Moira became an instant icon. And O’Hara, already revered in the industry, found herself embraced by a new generation of fans.

*Schitt’s Creek* grew from modest Canadian beginnings into an international phenomenon, eventually sweeping the comedy section of the Emmy Awards in 2020. For many viewers outside of the True North, the show was an introduction into the depth of the country’s television talent. For those within it, the success felt like validation.

“We laugh at each other but we also laugh at ourselves,” O’Hara told the Guardian in 2020 when she was asked to define Canadian humour. “But the love in the show, that really comes from Danny and Eugene, because that’s the world Danny wants to live in, and so do I.”

O’Hara’s presence on the show gave it credibility and continuity—a bridge between the *SCTV* era and modern Canadian television. Her willingness to anchor a domestic production, rather than exclusively pursue U.S. entertainment, sent a powerful message to

investing in Canadian stories.

Her legacy also intersects with how Canadian media is financed, distributed and celebrated. In the ‘70s and ‘80s, many Canadian performers felt like they needed to leave Canada to find longevity in their careers. O’Hara’s success proved that Canadian talent was just as needed in Canada as it is anywhere else.

By maintaining strong ties to Canadian productions, she helped contradict the theory that Canadians must abandon their turf in order to film for global acclaim.

As tributes continue to pour in, communities like Edmonton and Goodwood, Ont., where *Schitt’s Creek* filmed key scenes, are honouring the legacy of a Canadian whose laughter resonated around the world. The most notable tributes coming from the people that knew her most.

“Words seem inadequate to express the loss I feel today,” said Eugene Levy, O’Hara’s longtime collaborator, in a statement online. “I cherished our working relationship, but most of all our friendship.”

## “And I will miss her.”



Known for roles in *Beetlejuice*, *Schitt’s Creek* and *Home Alone*, Catherine O’Hara was a comedian and trailblazing Canadian actress. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @schittscreek

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# MRU volleyball teams end seasons on drastically different notes

*Women wave goodbye to legends, men usher in new era*

**Julia Finot**

Staff Writer



**Mya Morgan's five years as a Cougar may have ended with a first-round playoff loss, but her legacy as a leader and middle blocker are entrenched in MRU history. Photo courtesy of MRU Cougars**

The MRU Cougars volleyball teams closed their 2025-26 seasons with contrasting storylines

The women's program said goodbye to its veteran core, while the men's team exceeded expectations with the help of its rookies.

Despite different journeys, both teams have one thing in common: with disappointing endings to the season, they want to come back stronger and fight for playoff opportunities.

## A tragic end to a magical run

It is the end of an era for the Mount Royal women's volleyball team.

The 2025-26 year initially appeared promising for head coach Rhonda Schmuland and her team, but that narrative quickly faded throughout the season.

Last season, the Cougars finished sixth in Canada West, making it to the quarterfinals. Entering the season, the coaches' poll ranked the team eighth. With a mighty veteran presence on this team, expectations exceeded their previous playoff appearance—the goal was nationals.

Mount Royal added

some notable talent in the offseason to support their postseason pursuit. They brought in third-year setter Kennedy Williscroft from Humber College and first-year middle Aleda Bondaroff.

The Cougars opened their season with mixed results. They lost their home-opening series but went on the road and got two big wins, and then their momentum shifted. They would go on to lose 10 consecutive matches, struggling to put practice into play.

A turning point for the team was their series against the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO). Ninety-one days after their last win, the Cougars broke through on Kenyon Court and finally got a win. They ended up winning both matches in that series 3-1, giving the team a much-needed spark late in the season.

The Cougars finished the season with a record of 4-16, placing second last in the standings. While the season presented a fair share of challenges, there have been some bright moments of growth.

Third-year Faith Obasi stepped into an expanded role this year. Her best game of the season came in a win

against UBCO, where she had eight digs, seven kills, seven aces, two blocks and even one assist.

Next year, she is stepping into a big leadership role as one of the veterans on next season's young Cougar roster.

To end the season, MRU said farewell to five women who have defined that standard of Cougars volleyball. Mya Morgan, Bronwynn Davies-Neria, Marie Leggett, Sydney Scatcherd and Paige Davidson, all members of the team since 2021.

During their time as Cougars, the program transformed five young athletes into five accomplished graduates. Each balanced academic success with the tedious responsibility of being student-athletes.

Looking ahead, they have announced two new recruits for next season: Abby Kruchten from Daysland, Alta. and Taeya Wright from Edmonton.

The end of the 2025-26 season closes a significant chapter in MRU women's volleyball history as they honoured their leaders and prepared to welcome a new wave of talent.

## Extra-Orr-dinary results

MRU men's volleyball season was defined by growth and resilience.

After a disappointing finish in 2024, head coach Shawn Sky and his group entered this season determined to move forward. Finishing 12th last season, the coaches' poll projected them to slightly improve this season into 10th.

Instead, the Cougars exceeded expectations.

Mount Royal started their season at Kenyon Court with two series matchups against Thompson Rivers Wolfpack and the Saskatchewan Huskies. The team won all those matches and were quickly positioned as one of the top teams in U SPORTS.

Defence has been their strength. By the end of the regular season, MRU was ranked third in blocking among Canada West teams, while also having several high-producing offensive players.

Mount Royal finished the regular season in eighth, earning a spot in the play-in series against their cross-town rivals, the Calgary Dinos.

The Cougars delivered a competitive series but were unfortunately eliminated by a

two-point loss in the fifth set of the final game.

The Cougars brought in four new rookies, and each contributed to the team's performance.

Kale Orr emerged as the standout of those freshmen. After making his long-awaited Cougars debut, he quickly took Canada West by storm. He finished the season in the top for kills and kills per set, making him a strong candidate for Canada West's Rookie of the Year honours.

Outside hitter Kai Toney provided momentum shifting offense, delivering timely kills and showcasing impressive athleticism. Luke Wright, though used sparingly, was a consistent service substitution who added depth to the roster.

The Cougars will say goodbye to two players this year, middle Maxim Turgeon and captain and libero, Matthew Clements. They both played key leadership roles on this team.

Looking ahead, MRU will be hosting men's volleyball national championships next season, automatically securing a spot in the final eight. With the opportunity to compete for a national title on home court, now they shift their attention to proving they belong among Canada's best.



**Kale Orr's rookie campaign was earmarked by Canada West All-Rookie and All-Star selections, establishing himself as the cornerstone of the future for Cougars men's volleyball. Photo courtesy of MRU Cougars**

# Era-ending loss ushers in new era for Team Canada

*Where we stand in the post-Crosby era after losing to Team USA*

**Naomi Campbell**

Staff Writer

Since 1920, Team Canada men's hockey has established a legendary reputation in the Winter Olympics, with nine gold medals. Over the decades, Canada is a leading country, with 17 medals in the sport—five silver and 3 bronze. Every four years, a group of players is selected from the best of the best to represent their country in the Winter Olympics. NHL players were disallowed from participating in the 2010 Olympics onward, until the ban was lifted at the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympic Games.

Back in 2010, Team Canada's roster was decorated with many of the best players in the world. Skaters such as Jarome Iginla, Roberto Luongo, Scott Niedermayer, Drew Doughty and Sidney Crosby dominated the tournament. This group went down in history as one of the best teams of all time, including the iconic story of Crosby's 'Golden Goal' in overtime against the United States. Crosby also won the Stanley Cup one year before those Olympics and went on to establish his all-time legacy with two more championships after.

## New year, same superstars

When the Canadian roster was released for the 2026 Winter Olympics, the hockey world erupted, debating about which players should or should not have made the cut. Many believed Connor Bedard deserved a spot on this year's roster, especially after his performance at the World Junior Championships back in 2021-22 and 2022-23, where he won back-to-back gold medals, and his blazing hot start to the 2025-26 NHL season. Tom Wilson, known for his enforcer role on the Washington Capitals, is not shy of the penalty box and game suspensions, but some believed Bedard's youth and offensive talents warranted him a spot over Wilson.

Crosby and Doughty reunited after 16 years as the veteran presence of this year's group. New to the Olympics, but not new to high-level tournaments, Connor McDavid and Nathan

MacKinnon went hand in hand as the alternate captains for this year's games. At just 19-years-old, Macklin Celebrini set the record for the youngest Team Canada player ever and eagerly jumped up to the plate, hoping to make an impact with his teammates.

Crosby was named captain for the Canadian men's team, placing him at the forefront of the battle to come as his fans worried that this could be his last time suiting up for Canada on the Olympic stage.

## The Italian job

Canada got off to a great start in the round-robin stage, avoiding any losses. However, going into the semi-final game against Finland, Crosby was marked as injured, leaving the weight of the world to the rest of his teammates.

In international tournaments, if the captain cannot play, the head coach is required to choose a player to fill that spot. McDavid was honoured with the 'C' for the semi-finals game against the big-hitting group representing Finland, a role he became accustomed to after being named captain of the Edmonton Oilers in 2016.

With Canada down by two heading into the back half of the second period, the boys in red pulled out a heroic feat, punctuated by MacKinnon's game-winning third-period goal, punching their ticket to the gold medal game.

## (Tragic) end of an era

The final game could not have been scripted better as Canada prepared to face Team USA in a rematch of last year's 4 Nations Cup Final. Canada came out on top in that tournament, being the first ever 4 Nations Cup Champions. Despite outshooting the USA, Canada was down by a goal until Cale Makar evened things up at the end of the second period. The stalemate stood until the end of regulation, necessitating a controversial 3-on-3 overtime.

For over 18 minutes, both goaltenders stood on their heads. With less than two minutes to go in the extra



**Macklin Celebrini entered the Olympics as Team Canada's youngest player ever, and scored an Olympic-best five goals on his way to a silver medal. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @hockeycanada**

frame, New Jersey Devils star player Jack Hughes snuck through Canada's defense and goaltender Jordan Binnington to win it for the U.S.

## What the future will feature

Crosby's long tenure as a Canadian captain likely ended as Hughes' goal crossed the line, leaving a vacancy for arguably the most important position in global hockey. With him also goes Doughty, while Mark Stone and Brad Marchand could conceivably call 2026 their final Olympic run as well.

However, the team still has plenty of stars in their prime years and some of the brightest prospects in the world waiting for their spot on future rosters. McDavid, MacKinnon, Nick Suzuki, and Mitch Marner headline Canada's future offense as

the next veteran core, while Makar, Shea Theodore and Colton Parayko fill that role on defense.

Celebrini impressed many with his tournament-leading five goals and 28 shots-on-goal, firmly reserving himself a spot on the next Canadian roster, while Bedard will hope to make his Team Canada debut in 2030.

Mark Scheifele, Mathew Barzal and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins closely missed out on a roster spot this year, but have a strong case to grace 2030's forward core, while MacKenzie Weegar, Matthew Schaefer and Owen Power will provide strong reinforcements for the future defensive unit.

Goaltending was a concern for Team Canada after Luongo and Price's eras ended, and while Binnington provided historic performances at 4 Nations and this year's Olympics, his time in a

Team Canada jersey is likely over. Scott Wedgewood and Mackenzie Blackwood will provide stiff competition for Logan Thompson and Darcy Kuemper when it comes to deciding the trio of goalies Team Canada will employ in 2030.

Canada's IIHF World Junior program also put some fresh new names on the radar for the next Olympic roster, including Gavin McKenna, Zayne Parekh and Michael Misa, among other burgeoning talents.

Team Canada wasn't able to secure a gold medal at Milano Cortina, leaving fans to wave goodbye to the legends that built the country's modern reputation on a heartbreaking note. That being said, the future looks to be bright for the boys in red and white, with plenty of young emerging stars ready to fill vacating roster spots.

# Canada's top performers at the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympics

*Individuals shine despite lowest total medal count since 2002*

**Julia Finot**

Staff Writer

After two action-packed weeks, the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympics have wrapped up. Team Canada delivered remarkable performances, marked both by captivating wins and disappointing losses.

Canada finished 11th overall at the games with 21 medals, including five golds.

In total, 207 athletes represented Canada on the global stage, with several competitors delivering standout performances that captured international attention.

## Mikaël Kingsbury

Mikaël Kingsbury is one of the most dominant mogul skiers in history.

Canada's opening ceremony flag bearer is no stranger to international competition, having made his first Olympic appearance in Sochi 2014.

Over his Olympic career, Kingsbury has won a medal in every event he has entered. In Cortina, he competed in two events: moguls and dual moguls, capturing silver in single moguls and gold in dual moguls.

While Kingsbury added two medals to his decorated career, his Olympic appearance was highlighted by bringing his two-year-old son to the games. Family has always been important to him, and throughout the games, Kingsbury shared the 'dad power' experience on social media with fellow Olympians.

## Ivanie Blondin, Isabelle Weidemann and Valerie Maltais

Ivanie Blondin, Isabelle Weidemann and Valerie Maltais each compete individually across short- and long-track speed skating, building impressive skating resumes that include Olympic medals and world championship titles.

The trio come together at one event where their collective strength has proven to dominate—the women's team pursuit.

As the reigning Olympic gold medalists from the 2022 Beijing Winter Games,



**Steven Dubois earned Canada's first-ever individual short-track medal at Milano Cortina, taking home gold in the 500m category. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @teamcanada**

the Canadians once again matched their performance, capturing gold for the second consecutive time.

Maltais celebrated her outstanding Olympic career as one of Canada's flag bearers at the closing ceremony.

## Courtney Sarault

Courtney Sarault took the short-track speed skating world by storm in Milano Cortina.

After making her Olympic debut back in 2022, she left Beijing without a medal to show, with her best result placing her fourth.

The Moncton, N.B. native arrived at the game with momentum following her gold and silver medal performances at the ISU World Championships in 2025.

Sarault competed in four events this year—500m, 1000m, 3000m relay, and 2000m mixed relay.

She skated away earning a medal in each of her events, two silver and two bronze, making her the

most decorated Canadian in Milano.

## Steven Dubois

Steven Dubois entered Milano as one of the short-track speed skating contenders after he made his Olympic debut in 2022.

Since he started competing internationally in 2017, Dubois has consistently topped the ranks in men's speed skating events.

At the Olympics, he competed in two events: the men's 500m, where he won gold and the mixed team relay, where he won silver.

Apart from his undisputable on-ice success, he shared his Olympic experience with Valérie Maltais, fellow Canadian short-track speed skater.

Alongside Maltais, Dubois was the other Canadian flag bearer at the closing ceremony.

## Team Jacobs

Canada's men's curling team found themselves at the centre of the Olympic drama in Milano with some of the

most intense matches in the sports history.

A controversial moment arose against Team Sweden, who accused the Canadian team of touching the stone twice during their throws.

Despite the controversy, the Canadians showed strong competition against the best teams in the world. In a nail-biting final against Great Britain, the Canadians set up perfectly and captured the gold.

Brad Jacobs, Marc Kennedy and Ben Hebert all secured their second Olympic gold medals.

For Brett Gallant, it was a special Olympic appearance. He celebrated winning his first gold and shared the Olympic stage with his family. He represented Canada alongside his wife, Jocelyn Peterman, in mixed doubles curling, and the pair brought their son to the game.

## Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier

Milano Cortina marked the third Olympic appearance for

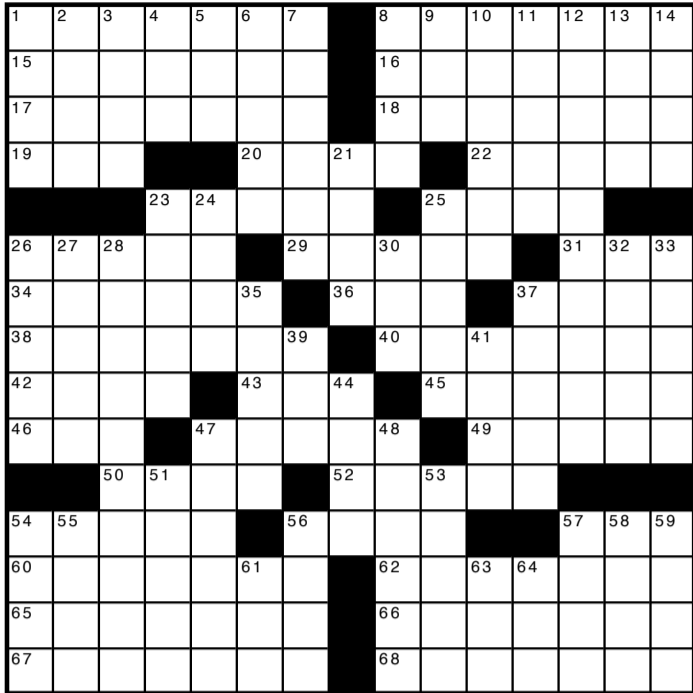
ice dancers Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier, and they came to Italy with a lot to prove, having never won a medal at the Games.

The highly decorated pair opened their Olympic program with an upbeat rhythm dance to "I'm Too Sexy" by Right Said Fred and RuPaul's "Supermodel."

However, it was their emotion-free dance skate that won the hearts of the figure skating world. Performing to "Vincent," the duo delivered a captivating skate, leaving figure skating fans visibly moved.

The pair secured their first Olympic medal, winning bronze. Reports have suggested that following the Games, though no official announcements have been made, the pair may retire from international competition.

# REFLECTOR DIVERSIONS



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**ACROSS**

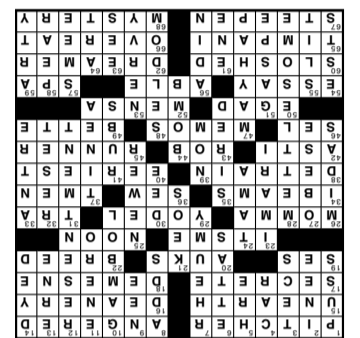
- 1 Ewer
- 8 Made irate
- 15 Dig up
- 16 Where the head of Humanities lives, e.g.
- 17 Give off
- 18 Lord's estate
- 19 Paris possessive
- 20 Diving birds
- 22 Cultivate
- 23 "Who's there?" reply

- 25 High time
- 26 Mell Lazarus comic strip
- 29 Alpine song
- 31 Sung syllable
- 34 Construction pieces
- 36 Work with needle and thread
- 37 Revenuers, for short
- 38 Exit a railroad conveyance
- 40 Most strange
- 42 \_\_\_ spumante
- 43 Hold up
- 45 Skate blade
- 46 Poivre's partner
- 47 Office notes
- 49 Davis or Midler
- 50 Old-fashioned exclamation of surprise
- 52 Brainy org.
- 54 Blue book filler
- 56 Up to it
- 57 Health resort
- 60 Drunk
- 62 Unrealistic person
- 65 Kettledrums
- 66 Stuff oneself
- 67 Raise a grade?
- 68 Puzzle

**DOWN**

- 1 Cat
- 2 Arrow poison
- 3 Gumshoes
- 4 Elevator unit
- 5 Charlemagne's realm: Abbr.
- 6 Kett and James
- 7 Having a runny nose and eyes
- 8 Totals up
- 9 Formerly known as
- 10 Frolic
- 11 Diciembre follower
- 12 Pique
- 13 Fish-eating eagle
- 14 Like Easter eggs
- 21 Greek island in the Aegean
- 23 Japanese porcelain
- 24 Writer Janowitz
- 25 More recent
- 26 King with a golden touch
- 27 Like Santa
- 28 Courageous
- 30 Gidget portrayer Sandra
- 32 Bowler's button
- 33 Cave

- 35 Begat
- 37 Fungal infection
- 39 \_\_\_ de plume
- 41 Massages
- 44 Explosive weapon
- 47 Perhaps
- 48 Rarely
- 51 Quebec's \_\_\_ Peninsula
- 53 Hardly shy
- 54 Ballpark figs.
- 55 Narrow cut
- 56 Score after deuce
- 57 Hook's mate
- 58 Fleishy fruit
- 59 Pretentious
- 61 U-turn from WSW
- 63 Some M.I.T. grads
- 64 Skill



# SUDOKU

**Easy**

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

**Medium**

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

**Hard**

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

# WORD SEARCH

**Spring**

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

BASEBALL      PICNIC      WATER  
 BLOOM      PLANT      WEED  
 BUTTERFLY      PUDDLE  
 CATERPILLAR      RAINBOW  
 CHICK      SEASON  
 CLOUD      SHOVEL  
 DAFFODIL      SHOWER  
 DIG      SPRING  
 EARTH      SPROUT  
 EGG      STORM  
 GARDEN      SUNSHINE  
 INSECT      THAW  
 LEAF      TUPLIP  
 LILAC      UMBRELLA  
 MARCH      VIOLET

# How F1's latest rule-set is shaping upcoming season

*The ultimate preseason guide to this year's single-seater circus*

**Mustafa Imran**

Staff Writer

The 2026 F1 season hasn't even seen its first green light, yet the paddock is already vibrating.

For the first time since 2014, the slate is wiped clean as the sport enters a new era with new rules and constraints for the cars.

But don't let the 'reset' talk fool you. While some are still fumbling with the new blueprints, the elite are already sprinting.

This season is the first in a brand-new era with a new car philosophy. Gone are the big, heavy tanker cars, back are the lighter, nimble cars.

Weighing 30kg less than the previous era's cars and measuring 200mm narrower and 100mm shorter, the new F1 cars are designed to facilitate close-quarters racing, something fans have complained went missing over the past few seasons.

## Mechanically different

The electric part of the hybrid powertrains now generates 50 per cent of the overall power output. F1's famous drag reduction system (DRS) is now a thing of the past, replaced by constantly adjustable active aerodynamics that switch between X mode for straights and Z mode for corners.

Previously, drivers had to wait until they reached designated zones and were within one second of the car they were attempting to overtake to deploy DRS, which flattened the rear wing, reducing aerodynamic drag and giving up to 10 km/h of extra speed.

The modes will automatically change in the correct zones on each track, giving the driver more focus during heated wheel-to-wheel battles and further penalising those who overdrive their machines.

Boost from the electric motor can also be deployed at any time, provided the batteries are charged, allowing drivers to perform overtakes without waiting for a DRS zone.

Cars will run softer and higher off the ground, making them more efficient and reducing the need to "lift and coast" to save fuel mid-race.

With energy deployment more in the driver's control, it is now more of a strategic game.

All of this, combined with the reduction in downforce, should mean less "dirty air," allowing the drivers to push flat out and race wheel-to-wheel.

New concepts and cars also bring new testing troubles, as seen in this year's Bahrain pre-season testing period.

## F1 forecast

Ferrari is emerging as a way-too-early frontrunner thanks to its clever, fully rotatable flipping wing and smaller turbocharger, allowing the engine to generate power faster and get off the line for race starts more quickly.

Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc look more comfortable in scarlet than they did last year already, showing the pace they set in simulation runs can translate on the track.

Red Bull and Mercedes aren't too far behind the boys in Rosso, but Mercedes might fall further behind if their latest engine trick is banned.

## Comparing engines

The FIA's new ruleset for F1 limits the compression ratio—the ratio of air-to-fuel in the engine's combustion chambers—when the engine is at its resting temperature of 130 C.

Since they only measure it at that temperature and F1 engines routinely cross the 2,000 C mark during races, Mercedes designed and 3D-printed engine parts that expand the combustion chambers at high temperatures.

BBC Sport's F1 correspondent Andrew Benson reported earlier in the month that rival teams were lobbying to shut down Mercedes' exploit of the loophole, but Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff insisted that the FIA inspected and ruled that their engines were legal.

The teams that seem to be struggling the most are Aston Martin and the new kid on the block, Cadillac.

Now engaged in an exclusive engine partnership with Honda, Aston Martin's

AMR26s have been plagued with problems, most of which come from the new power unit.

Their battery is inefficient compared to rivals, and mechanical issues during testing limited the team to less than 250km of on-track testing per day.

In contrast, Mercedes averaged over 600km per day, according to The Race.

The team's lead driver, Fernando Alonso, has been known to be temperamental with unreliable and slow racecars.

He's already started to show signs of frustration as his car was reportedly over four seconds behind and up to 50 km/h slower at the Bahrain International Circuit than it was last year.

## Looking ahead

American F1 fans were excited about Cadillac, but after Michael Bay lodged a

breach-of-contract and fraud lawsuit against them over a Super Bowl commercial, their first season has only gotten worse.

After hiring hundreds of people, building a base in Silverstone, and designing a chassis, all in just one year, their car has been over six seconds slower than the fastest car on the grid, and plagued with technical issues.

They have also suffered from supply chain issues, leading to aerodynamic problems and forecasting upgrade delays for the season.

The only silver lining is that the team has stated that 2026 is a learning year—their pace fits that.

With their technical innovations, Mercedes and Ferrari look like early contenders. Both have good aerodynamic bases to build on, along with strong engines and driver lineups to deliver

the results.

Audi's decent pace through testing could mean they will be a dark horse contender in this year's midfield and consistently score points, especially with their driver lineup of Gabriel Bortoletto and Niko Hulkenberg.

Aston Martin looks to be the favourite for last place, but with billionaire Lawrence Stroll, aerodynamicist Adrian Newey, and respected driver Fernando Alonso, anything is possible.

New rules, new cars and a few new drivers are set to make the upcoming F1 season one for the ages.

The unpredictability of these new cars means there will be something new happening every race weekend for the next 24 races.



After a disappointing debut with Ferrari last season, Lewis Hamilton will be hoping his SF-26's clever rear wing can help him produce better on-track results. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @f1

# Ball comes to life at Calgarian Jurassic Park

*The ultimate U SPORTS national basketball tournament playbook*

**Zafir Nagji**

Sports Editor



**Few other rookies are as composed as Dinos guard Mrigendra Dhaliwal, who scored 35 points in his first two playoff games, earning an All-Rookie selection. Photo courtesy of Instagram /@dinossmbb**

For the first time in nearly 50 years, the University of Calgary Dinos will host this year's U SPORTS National Basketball Championship Final 8 Tournament from March 6-8. The best university players on the best university basketball teams from across Canada are set to convene in the Blue Sky City for a winner-takes-all three-day tournament for nationally recognised bragging rights, a chance to be scouted by professional teams and the prestigious W.P. McGee trophy.

## The battlegrounds

The University of Calgary hasn't hosted this tournament since 1980, in which the University of Victoria (UVIC) Vikes claimed a 73-65 win over the Brandon University Bobcats to win a national title. That happened seven

years before the Jack Simpson Gymnasium, where this year's tournament will be played, was even opened, making this the gym's first-ever national tournament.

Most of the tournaments since then have been hosted by Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ), Ontario University Athletics (OUA) and Atlantic University Sports (OUS) in cities like Quebec City, Ottawa and Halifax, respectively.

Over the same period, Canada West (CW) universities have hosted three national tournaments, with the University of British Columbia hosting two (2016, 2025) and the University of Alberta hosting one (2022).

## The rules of engagement

Eight university teams from across the country will

compete in the tournament.

As hosts, the Dinos are guaranteed a tournament berth, as are the champions of all four conferences. One other medalist from the CW and OUA conferences will also receive a tournament berth, with the eighth and final tournament berth going to a team selected by a U SPORTS-appointed committee.

Each round is a single-game elimination, similar to the NCAA's March Madness college basketball tournament and meaning that winning just three consecutive games yields a national championship.

## Canada West's revenge

Canada's eastern half has long reigned as the country's basketball mecca, but the western half has since made

up some ground. Team Alberta swept the men's and women's basketball gold medals at last year's Canada Summer Games, and five of the last nine U SPORTS national tournament championship final games featured a CW team in the final game.

The Victoria Vikes won last year's national championship, the Saskatchewan Huskies made a final appearance in 2022, losing to the Carleton Ravens, and the Calgary Dinos made three final appearances, including their 2018 national championship victory over the Ryerson Rams.

## Formidable foes

The Dinos enter as the eighth and lowest seed after their early CW playoff elimination. As a result, they match up against the CW championship-winning and highest-seeded team in the tournament, the UVIC Vikes.

In the same cluster, the AUS championship-winning Acadia Axemen are the tournament's biggest underdog and hold the fifth seed in the tournament. They match up against the Bishop's Gaiters, who earned the wildcard berth after losing in the RSEQ final to Laval.

One spot above them are the UBC Thunderbirds, who hosted last year's Final 8 tournament and are the definition of a sleeping giant. They take on one of the tournament's heavy favourites, the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Bold, in what could be the most exciting and closely contested first-round matchup.

Occupying the sixth seed, the Carleton Ravens have the most U SPORTS titles of any Canadian university, having won 17, eight more than second-placed Victoria. After losing in a closely contested OUA Final to TMU, they face

the RSEQ Championship-winning Laval Rouge et Or to round out the other cluster.

## Predicting the unpredictable

Forecasting a champion in a single-game elimination tournament like this is nearly impossible at best, but the numbers can help make for some well-informed guesses.

In the first cluster, Victoria is heavily favoured to beat Calgary, which would match them up against the winner of Acadia and Bishop's. Acadia's statistical proficiency just doesn't stack up against Bishop's, who also play in a tougher conference, setting up a matchup between the Vikes and Gaiters, which Victoria should be able to win.

In the second cluster, UBC and TMU are, at best, a coin toss, but for the sake of supporting the CW, I'm picking the Thunderbirds to advance. Carleton should be able to handle business over Laval, and against UBC, the Ravens' championship experience and voracious interior defence is likely to prevail.

That sets up a cross-country matchup between the Victoria Vikes and Carleton Ravens for the U SPORTS national championship. Both teams are incredibly close in a variety of statistics, but as a CW homer, I'm going with the Victoria Vikes to win back-to-back W.P. McGee trophies.

Tickets are still available on the U SPORTS website. With every team just needing three consecutive wins to claim a national championship, all eight squads will be looking to cut the nets at Jack Simpson Gymnasium, especially the hometown Dinos.

For the full article, including an in-depth statistical analysis of each team, check out the online version at thereflector.ca and on The Reflector app.

# #S

**5** goals scored by Macklin Celebrini at the Olympics, the most of any men's hockey player at this year's tournament

**23** points scored by MRU Cougars rookie Jacob McLellan in his first-ever Canada West playoff game, which MRU lost 76-68

**2** goals scored by Justin Lies as MRU men's hockey triumph over the Dinos in the CW semifinals, securing a spot at this year's University Cup

**61** kills by Cougars Kale Orr in his first three CW playoff games, as MRU lost to UofC 2-1 in the first round