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# Reflecting on referendum scaries (pg. 2)

News Editor
Karra Smith
newseditor@thereflector.ca

# Sense of community sparked amidst referendum confusion

## *For some Albertans, passion for the province brings connection*

**Jarod Lechadores,** Contributor




**Prime Minister Mark Carney tells Albertans to "Vote like Canada depends on it" at the Forever Canadian rally in Calgary on Oct. 15. Photo by Jarod Lechadores**

On Sept. 22, NDP MLA Lizette Tejada hosted a town hall at the Winston Heights Mountview Community Association for interested citizens to discuss the Oct. 19 referendum.

At the town hall, many expressed concerns about the complex wording and people being unable to answer the questions on the ballot.

Annie Wong, a member of Chinese Canadian Connections, a community-led organisation designed to increase Chinese civic participation in Alberta, expressed her frustration with the phrasing of the referendum questions.

"The ten questions on this referendum are so complicated that non-English speakers do not understand how to answer the questions," says Wong.

To address this issue, town hall attendees were given a document that breaks down the meaning of each question.

Tejada says these explainer cards are necessary to help voters understand exactly what the referendum is and how the process works.

"People are asking a lot about the mechanics of voting, how they'll vote and what each of the questions means," Tejada says. "They're asking a lot about the process and worried that their answers won't be validated."

Daniel Smelsky, a University of Calgary student from Ontario, expressed his concerns about question two, which addresses the ability of non-permanent residents to access social services such as healthcare.

"I wonder how that would carry over for someone coming from Ontario," Smelsky says. "And how this would affect others that have either come from different countries or other provinces."

Despite these concerns, Smelsky is hoping to become a permanent resident of Alberta in the near future.

*The Reflector* spoke with two voices in the crowd who shared the separatist sentiment.

A pair who identified as "Al Bertan" and "Vicky Bertan" shared their thoughts on why they believe voting option two is necessary to address issues in Canada.

"Everything needs to be blown up and redone," Al says. "We have no choice but to vote to separate, and that will open up the constitution so we can actually have a conversation about fixing Canada."

Vicky added that she doesn't feel that there should be concerns around the referendum.

"I don't understand the fear around a simple question," she says. "This is a question of should we actually sit down, do we have problems that we need to look at and fix?"

A similar opinion is also shared by UCP MLA Jason Stephan.

"My reason for preferring option two, which I have had that position for a long time, is I would love nothing more than for Canada to fix itself," Stephan told CBC News. "Currently we do not see that happening."

Despite the frustrations and fears around the referendum, Albertans have managed to find silver linings within this difficult time.

Gordan Ross, a veteran Forever Canadian volunteer, says getting out to gather signatures has had a positive impact on his social life.

"I was kind of an introvert . . . my girlfriend has said this [volunteering] has turned me into an extrovert over the past 16 months," Ross says.

Additionally, Tejada highlighted the community-building she's seen throughout the process.

**"We have a lot of people who want to help, who want to be well informed because they want to help others in this process," she says.**

"People are doing their civic duty . . . lots of people doing information sessions, doing them in different languages and getting as many people as informed and motivated to get out there and vote."

Akshat Jaswal, a recent Mount Royal University graduate, echoes this passion for civic duty by taking a gap year from his studies and cites the referendum as a core motivator for that decision.

"For a while, I wanted to go straight into law school, but when I heard this referendum was coming up. . . and I saw that people weren't taking it seriously, I thought it would be a great opportunity to stay back home," says Jaswal.

In a Calgary Herald article, Doug Griffiths, chief executive of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and a former Alberta cabinet minister, noted his concerns with referendum talks during this politically confusing time.

"Just having these conversations is chilling the brand, the story, the reputation and the potential of this province, by distracting us from what's really important," Griffiths said.

*The Reflector* reached out to the UCP for comment, but did not receive a response.

# The history of the Palestinian genocide

## *Breaking down decades of mistreatment of Palestinian people*

**Anais Loeppky,** Web Editor

In the last three years since the Oct. 7 attacks, the world's eyes have been on Israel and Palestine. However, conflict between the two countries started long before the initial Hamas invasion.




**Students at MRU showed a demonstration in support of Palestine in the Riddell Libraray and Learning Centre on Oct. 20. Photo by Karra Smith**

### How it began

Israel officially became a country in 1948, shortly after the end of World War II. In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which proposed partitioning Mandatory Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

This led to a civil war in Palestine. When the regional war ended in 1949, Israel controlled 77 per cent of the territory of Palestine. More than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes. Many of these displaced people ended up in the narrow, 140-square-mile area we now know as the Gaza Strip.

The Gaza Strip was then placed under Egyptian military administration. Palestinian refugees became trapped there due to Egypt's refusal of citizenship and Israel's decline of re-entry to their homes.

### Occupation and the blockade

In 1967, the Six-Day War took place, during which Israel captured the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Israel placed Gaza under military rule and began constructing settlements within the territory.

This continued until 2005, when Israel withdrew its troops and dismantled its 21 settlements inside the Gaza Strip.

In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections and therefore took administrative control of Gaza. In response to Hamas taking power, Israel and Egypt imposed a strict land, air and sea blockade. Israel justified the blockade as a necessary security measure to prevent Hamas from acquiring weapons, while international bodies and human rights organisations heavily criticised it, often describing the locked-down territory as an 'open-air prison.'

### Modern conflict

On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas and other armed groups launched an attack on southern Israel, entering more than 20 communities and killing people in their homes. One of the hardest-hit locations was the Nova Music Festival, where more than 350 young people were killed while trying to escape. The attacks also resulted in 251 people being taken hostage and brought to Gaza.

An estimated 1,200 people were killed that day in Israel. The events left families and communities devastated and marked a turning point in the conflict.

These attacks prompted the beginning of what the United Nations has confirmed to be a genocide. Since that day, Israel has killed more than 74,000 Palestinians.

Continually deteriorating living conditions in Gaza have also contributed to a declining life expectancy, with the median age in Palestine being approximately 20 years old, compared to 42 in Canada.

Following the Oct. 7 attacks, Israel began a full siege of Gaza, restricting access to electricity, fuel, food and water. Israel then ordered more than a million Palestinians in northern Gaza to evacuate their homes and head south as bombings began.

In November 2023, Israeli forces entered Gaza's largest hospital, Al-Shifa. This was one of the many incidents that raised serious concerns about potential violations of international humanitarian law.

In February 2024, more than 100 Palestinians were reported killed as crowds gathered around an aid convoy in Gaza City.

In May 2024, Israeli forces expanded their operations into Rafah, where large numbers of displaced Palestinians had sought shelter. Evacuation orders forced many people to flee.

### Ceasefires

A ceasefire began on January 19, 2025, allowing hostage and prisoner exchanges and increased humanitarian aid. It broke down in March, when Israel resumed large-scale military operations and once again blocked aid from entering Gaza.

In 2025, famine and starvation also became central concerns. Severe food shortages, displacement and restrictions on humanitarian assistance pushed Gaza into worse conditions. In August, famine was confirmed in Gaza Governorate by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

In 2026, the genocide is still going on. More than 74,000 Palestinians have been reported killed. An estimated 10,000 people remain trapped beneath the rubble, and an estimated 60 to 70 per cent of the victims are women and children.

## Here's some good news...

### Carey Mulligan and Marcus Mumford raise $7.65 million for Children in Conflict

The pair hosted their annual benefit in Los Angeles, drawing in A-list celebrities such as Viola Davis and Emma Watson and garnering record-breaking support for the event.

"This is more money than we have ever raised before," Mulligan told Variety.

*Source: Variety*

# Staring at the sun: Astronomy outside the classroom

## *Why astro at MRU is taking teaching to infinity and beyond*

**Karra Smith,** News Editor

It's not very often people are encouraged to look at the sun, let alone with a magnification device, but that is exactly what MRU students on the East Gate lawn were invited to do on Oct. 8.

The 2026 Sustainability Fair took place on campus from Oct. 5 to 9, and one of the booths set up to educate about our world and the cosmos was the astronomy class booth.

Stephen Jeans is a professor of earth and space sciences at MRU and a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC). Jeans serves as the coordinator for this sun-gazing event, as well as several other space-focused opportunities both on and off campus.



**Astronomers from the RASC bring their telescopes and volunteer during MRU's Sustainability Fair. Photo by Karra Smith**

Clear conditions on Oct. 8 gave campus goers the opportunity to look at sunspots, with the help of student volunteers, professors from the department of chemistry and physics and astronomers from the RASC.

This is a phenomenon that Jeans describes as "acne" for the sun, where magnetic loops on the sun's surface are wound up as the sun spins and pop out, leaving temporary dark spots visible to the human eye with the correct telescope.



**Scientists use sunspots to track the sun's position within it's 11-year cycle. Photo by Karra Smith**

Jeans says that over the next few years, these blemishes will be less visible or numerous than they've been previously, as the Sun moves out of its 11-year cycle—which is exactly why he took this opportunity to show off the spots to more than just astronomy students.

"Why not show everybody, some of the future students, and some who might not even take science or astronomy, so that they can get a little experience of what nature's all about, and help to connect them better with nature and understand the world around them," Jeans says.

For Jeans, hosting this demonstration during the Sustainability Fair also provided a chance to educate people about using space in a way that does not harm astronomy, "as opposed to causing damage wherever we go."

Jeans added that these events also could not take place without the help of the MRU community, including assistance from the Facility Management team, MRU Communications and parking services.

By taking the learning beyond the classroom, Jeans has reignited one student's passion for space and the galaxy.

Growing up, Graeme Ellis–a journalism student at MRU–would frequently borrow his mother's telescope and became fascinated with astrophotography—but he slowly fell out of this passion as he grew older.

While he was previously familiar with RASC, Ellis was drawn back to his love of space after taking a class with Jeans and learning about the professor's role within the RASC.

Ellis says that by learning in a more hands-on, practical manner, people are becoming more motivated to study astronomy and our solar system.

"It's one thing to see pictures of the sun or of Saturn. But when you actually see it with your bare eyes or just through a telescope, it's like this almost surreal experience," says Ellis.

"It's literally a new way of seeing the world that we live in."

## What's next?

Sun-spotting is far from the only on-campus opportunity to gaze into space.

On Oct. 22 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., the astronomy sections are hosting a Star Party at the East Gate Parkade. Attendees will be able to view the moon, Saturn and stars alongside Jeans and other RASC astronomers.

The event is free to attend and open to the public, with parking available in the lower levels of the parkade after registration.

Jeans will also be speaking at the Telus Sparks Science Centre on Oct. 24.

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**EDITORIAL STAFF:**
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**Staff Writers:** Lacey Holowaty, Nadoo Abaagu

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**the reflector**

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

# creatures

Features Editor
Emma Voelpel
featureseditor@thereflector.ca

# Spectre-sighting sociology

## *What's behind the ghost stories*

**Lacey Holowaty,** Staff Writer



**Despite disputes, many people still claim to have paranormal experiences. Photo by Lacey Holowaty**

The existence of spiritual apparitions has been consistently debunked by the laws of physics and sceptics alike. And yet, many people insist they have witnessed ghost encounters first-hand.

According to David Aveline, an associate professor of sociology at Mount Royal University, this reveals a broader paradox.

If ghosts don't exist, then why have so many people seen them?

### Goosebumps

Anchored in the sociological framing of the Thomas Theorem, Aveline says the legitimacy of the alleged accounts is irrelevant—what really matters is the fact that people do believe ghosts exist, and that the belief itself has an effect on the believers' lives.

In 2017, Aveline set out on a journey across Canada to conduct interviews with people who believe they've seen ghosts at some point in their lives.

While Aveline himself doesn't believe in ghosts, he approached his interviews with knowledge of Grounded theory—that is, he walked into the interviews with as few assumptions as possible and only based his conclusions on the collected data.

The study included 38 participants who in total described 215 different apparitions.

Some of the participants said they had been seeing ghosts since they were young children, while others' experiences seemed to be out of nowhere.

One participant, who had previously been a sceptic of paranormal occurrences, claimed to see the infamous Sam the Bellman while staying at the Fairmont Banff Springs hotel.

Aveline says the stories that stand out most to him are the ones that seemed physically impossible, such as levitating beds and objects flying across the room.

"There was a man who tried to get rid of a ghost in a child's bedroom," Aveline says. "He prayed to the archangels Gabriel and Michael, and they descended from the ceiling, enveloped the ghost in their wings, and brought him back up the ceiling in a cloud of smoke."

Another story involved a man who was a long-time alcoholic and smoker who described being visited by an apparition that resembled his grandmother, who told him to give up his vices and become an "example to the youth of our community."

According to the account, the man gave up drinking and smoking the next day and has been sober for 25 years.

### Tales from the sceptic

Collecting the first-hand testimonials was quite easy, says Aveline, as most of the people he talked to seemed relieved to have someone lend an ear for them to share their tales.

What proved to be difficult, however, was keeping his own biases at bay.

Aveline found himself subconsciously trying to deduce a plausible explanation for the ghostly instances despite his intent to remain objective in his research.

"But I found that rather arrogant in myself," he says. "Who am I to say what was really going on there?"

Throughout his research, Aveline has been able to make many conclusions about ghost sightings.

### The sixth sense

Ghosts often appear to people through four of the five senses — sight, hearing, touch and smell —but in some cases, people say they can feel a ghost's presence through a clairvoyant sixth sense.

During the sightings, people have reported ghostly activity across four areas: activities with no physical disturbance, activities directed towards the observer, physical disturbances — or Poltergeists — and violence or physical intrusiveness.

Ultimately, Aveline intended to investigate why people see ghosts, especially given the lack of empirical evidence on the subject.

At the end of each interview, Aveline asked participants how they justified their beliefs despite science saying otherwise.

He concluded that there are three different orientations: some say the existence of ghosts should be further explored scientifically and others either completely discredit the validity of the scientific debunking or deem the subject a matter of opinion.

### Don't be afraid of the dark

Among many reasons, Aveline says the idea of ghosts provides a sense of continuity to people, as many see it as proof of an afterlife.

"That's a very attractive thing to feel," he says.

From a sociological lens, he says the possibility of ghosts' existence lends itself to a more optimistic and broader picture.

"As we become more technologically advanced and ruled by technology and bureaucracy, we lose something in the world," Aveline says. "We lose this sense of adventure and enchantment and discovery."

Aveline's research will contribute to the book he's been working on regarding the sociology behind ghost sightings, which is currently in the late stages of editing prior to being published.

## *Horror - scopes*

**Deya Mirkov,** Contributor

**Aries** *(March 21 - April 19)*

It isn't just your outfit that's changing on Oct. 31— your self-esteem, view on relationships, and vulnerability will change too.

**Taurus** *(April 20 - May 20)*

Look no further for your costume this year; with the Sun emerging in Scorpio, you'll become the very person you strive to be.

**Gemini** *(May 21 - June 20)*

Your innate ability to communicate stories makes you the perfect messenger of spooky tales.

**Cancer** *(June 21 - July 22)*

If ghost stories don't scare you, your indecisiveness about the future just might!

**Leo** *(July 23 - Aug. 22)*

While the werewolves are howling at this full moon, be wary of the realisations and truths coming your way by moonlight.

**Virgo** *(Aug. 23 - Sept. 23)*

There is no need to put on a costume this Halloween; your determination makes you frightful enough.

**Libra** *(Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)*

Keep hunting for your costume partner this year; we know how much a solo project staggers your creativity.

**Scorpio** *(Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)*

The scariest thing about your October will be your inability to look past any buried feelings.

**Sagittarius** *(Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)*

While all of your friends are changing into witch hats and devil horns, look out for the changes that you will face internally.

**Capricorn** *(Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)*

Are you stuck on what to be for Halloween this October? Don't worry–it isn't you–that's just Mercury in retrograde… again!

**Aquarius** *(Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)*

You have much more than just ghosts and goblins to fear this October; your wit may get you into some trouble.

**Pisces** *(Feb. 19 - March 20)*

It's not only time to question why you watched that horror movie, it's also time to question your goals and responsibilities. Decide what really matters to you.

# Is lab-grown chocolate the next Frankenstein?

*How geopolitics is shaping the trajectory of your Halloween chocolate*

**Rylie Perry,** Arts Editor



**Many candy companies are investing in lab-grown cacao start-ups that use AI to create authentic cacao ingredients. Photo courtesy of Towfiqu Barbhuiya / Pexels**

If our favourite Halloween friend was made in a lab, why can't chocolate be?

Lab-grown chocolate, also known as cell-cultured cocoa, is a process by which samples of cocoa plant cells are grown, replicated and harvested in a cultivator. It is a form of rapid indoor farming that uses specialised bioreactors to accelerate the agricultural process from months or years, to mere days.

In the bioreactors, which are large, controlled tanks, these tiny cell samples are fed sugars and nutrients that aid replication, while producing the fats and flavour compounds found in natural alternatives.

While this Frankenstein-cocoa is not yet commercialised, lab-grown chocolate is not far from shelves.

## It's alive!

Celleste Bio, an Israeli cocoa-technology start-up, has already produced the world's first lab-grown chocolate bar, backed by its strategic partner, Mondelēz International, the owner of Cadbury Chocolate.

The company created a dozen lab-grown chocolate bars using cell-cultured cocoa butter, produced at Cadbury's Bournville U.K. factory, long considered the heart of the business.

Celleste Bio calls this process its "three-pronged model," which combines BioTech, AgTech and AI to create natural cocoa ingredients and, now, milk chocolate bars.

"Unlike other alternatives, it performs identically to conventional cocoa butter. It's a drop-in replacement… so it has a lot of meaning in terms of production processes for the chocolate manufacturers," said Celleste Bio's chief executive, Michal Beressi Golomb, to the Financial Times.

Celleste Bio further claims on their website that they "will produce more with less," removing the industry's dependence on cocoa production, which has continued to become an increasingly volatile market.

## No forest required

According to Forbes, cocoa is one of the world's most climate-sensitive crops, and its commercial-scale cultivation near the equator, known as the cocoa belt, is heavily influenced by irregular rainfall, wind patterns and extreme heat.

Climate change has also been cited by CBS News as the primary threat to cacao production in West Africa, which accounts for almost 70 per cent of the world's entire supply.

Other lab-grown chocolate start-ups, such as California Cultured, located in Sacramento, point to an estimated 50 per cent of cacao farmland becoming unfit for production by 2032 as a motivating force behind finding cocoa alternatives.

The start-up completed its first successful production run with a reusable custom-built bioreactor earlier this year, which can be reused thousands of times before needing to be replaced.

"When people see the production costs and the product quality later this year, it will shift the conversation about what plant cell culture can realistically achieve," said Steve Stearns, head of strategy and business development at California Cultured, to AgFunderNews.

While also being a major investor in Celleste Bio, Mondelēz International is improving its sustainability efforts, phasing out single-use plastics and packaging across brands like Cadbury and Toblerone.

As the industry stands, however, these initiatives alone have not been successful in combating the issues faced by climate volatility for cocoa farmers.

## Cadbury dethroned

In 2024, the industry was also affected by Cadbury's sudden removal from the royal list after 170 years, a list first awarded by Queen Victoria in 1854.

Warrant holders are recognised for providing goods or services to the monarchy, and are allowed to use the coat of arms of the royal they are associated with as part of their branding.

Cadbury's warrant, which was dropped in December of that year, follows Mondelēz International's investment in the Israeli start-up in 2022 and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that same year.

In early 2024, the King was urged by the campaign group B4Ukraine to revoke warrants issued to companies that continued operations in Russia following the invasion. The King, however, has not confirmed whether or not this was the sole reason for stripping his endorsement.

## Geopolitical chocolate

In a recent interview with the BBC, the chief executive of Cadbury, Dirk Van de Put, doubled down on the company's decision to continue operating in Russia, citing the loss of thousands of jobs and the possibility of the Kremlin taking control of its local operations as reasons for remaining.

"I think we did the right thing for our people in Russia," Van de Put said to the BBC. "Can we be criticised for that? Yeah, of course..."

**"We pay taxes in Russia that help the war. I'm not pleased about that."**

As a result, Russia has generated sales of between $1 billion and $1.4 billion a year for Mondelēz International since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

However, Mondelēz International also operates two manufacturing plants in Ukraine, asserting that it has agreed to continue rebuilding to keep investing in the country, which has already cost the company tens of millions.

Alongside concerns about sustainability, companies like Mondelēz International continue to control the manufacturing of chocolate and confectionery goods, thereby geopolitically driving industry production into the future.

A future which, for industry leaders like Cadbury, may just mean lab-grown chocolate in our trick-or-treat baskets next year.

# The black squirrels' story

## *From caged to conquering Calgary*

**Brook Van Ham,** Contributor

Eastern grey squirrels have had a journey to the prominent role they now hold in Calgary. Beginning with an unexpected escape from the zoo, developing with a melanistic variant, leading to the bushy black creatures found all over the city today.

### Cargo to cages to city streets

Tom Baines, the Calgary Zoo's first curator, brought the eastern grey squirrels as an attraction in the 1920s. This squirrel is native to eastern North America, but has been widely introduced elsewhere.

Eastern grey squirrels are considered some of the most invasive species in the world.

The squirrels escaped by the 1930s, marking the beginning of their urban population in Calgary.

This squirrel favours deciduous trees as well as evergreens, but it thrives in urban environments, often with access to many of its necessities.

### Genius genes?

Most of these squirrels in Calgary are black, carrying the mutant gene found in eastern grey squirrels. Although the gene is random, in Calgary's cold winters, a darker coat would retain more heat. The black colouring also offers better camouflage in an urban environment.

Melanism is common in the eastern grey squirrel species; it has been reported especially in northern Calgary.

### The impact on Calgary

Erik Johnson, founder of Grove Eco-friendly Pest Control, weighed in on the number of squirrels they are evicting from client homes.

"Around 80 per cent are eastern grey squirrels, and the other 20 per cent are other types of squirrels," says Johnson. This type of squirrel is physically much larger than other squirrels in Calgary, contributing to the dominance of the eastern grey.

The squirrels do well here. However, native squirrels, red squirrels and ground squirrels, may compete with the eastern grey squirrel for food, territory and shelter.

These squirrels can damage infrastructure, homes and gardens.



**Eastern grey squirrels escaped the Calgary Zoo in the 1930s, they are now seen all over Calgary. Photo by Serena Kanji-Ramji:**

When it comes to removing squirrels, the most humane method is to block all entry points and install a one-way door, so that the squirrels can get out but not back in to their home.

This time of year and moving forward, getting rid of squirrels can leave them without enough food for winter and proper shelter. As squirrels do not fully hibernate, they use their shelter to store food to get through the winter and to stay sheltered during extreme weather.

Squirrels are high-anxiety and do very poorly with trapping and relocation. In cages, they often harm themselves from running around and then continue to run in search of their familiar home, resources and shelter after relocation.

"They are not going to be like, 'oh, I guess this is my new home,' they just keep trying to find their way back home all the time," says Johnson.

### Squirrel importance

This critter tends to get overlooked; many forget the reasons squirrels benefit our environment and daily lives. They are a part of the food web; they are prey species for many predators and help cycle nutrients by collecting pine cones, among other beneficial habits.

Also, squirrel watching can be quite entertaining.



**The Eastern grey squirrel's darker coat makes Calgary's cold winters more bearable. Photo courtesy of Alex Ohan / Pexels**

### What stops the spread?

For as invasive as the eastern grey squirrel is, it is surprising that many nearby areas have none.

"They don't do that well in the prairies, where there are no trees," says Johnson.

Johnson reminded that feeding squirrels will always lead to negative outcomes. Forming negative associations between humans and squirrels not only reinforces bad behaviours but also artificially increases the area's squirrel population.

For concerned homeowners, ensure your house is well sealed, trim nearby branches and stay aware of what is around your home.

### Scope out the squirrels

In Calgary, this squirrel has become an icon for many, especially visitors who have never seen black squirrels before. With Halloween approaching, they could serve as a fun representation for the season.

**"The more old trees in the area, the more squirrels there's going to be," says Johnson.**

These squirrels can be seen throughout Calgary but are more common in tree-covered areas.

Currently, places such as Fish Creek Provincial Park and Weaselhead Flats Natural Environment Park have dense squirrel populations.

The eastern grey squirrel population in Calgary may be descended from zoo escapees, but these furry creatures now play a definite role in the city and there are no concerns about them remaining in the area.

However, as time passes, it is possible that random melanistic variants could take a Charles Darwin turn, leaning into the benefits of a dark coat in the Calgary area.

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# arts

Arts Editor
Rylie Perry
artseditor@thereflector.ca

# *Smudge the Blades* hits the ice

## *The Indigenous independent film that closed out CIFF*

**Rylie Perry,** Arts Editor

In an era of hot and heated hockey adaptations, one Indigenous film cuts through the noise.

Closing out the Calgary International Film Festival (CIFF), *Smudge the Blades* follows the Treaty 6 Blades, a struggling U-18 hockey team, as they battle to find a place amongst the Northern Alberta hockey leagues.

Led by their begrudging coach, played by director Cody Lightning, the Treaty 6 Blades are the underdog team that just won't quit.

Rather than shying away from the challenges faced by Indigenous communities, the film illustrates the ups and downs that accompany life on the reservation, bringing a raw hilariousness to a harsher reality.

The second feature film from Lightning, who made his debut with *Hey, Viktor!* in 2023, *Smudge the Blades* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in September before making its way to Calgary.

This year, CIFF ran from Sept. 24 to Oct. 4, with *Smudge the Blades* marking the festival's end. The film was among a number of special Spotlight+ films that accompanied the festival's typical lineup of short and feature films.

### Filmmaking on home turf

Lightning, a member of the Samson-Cree First Nation in Treaty 6 territory, considers his sophomore film an amalgamation of his experiences, both good and bad.

"This one really came from personal home experience," Lightning says. "I'm a hockey player, and I coached for years, and that's where a lot of the characters, the storyline and everything came from."

Filmed on Treaty 6 territory, the film is as much an ode to hockey as it is to Lightning's community, which, for him, includes many of the young, first-time actors who starred in the film.

"I help these boys (the cast) the same way that people helped me and my family when I was growing up, and that's now my job too," he says.

**"I was given this gift of storytelling and filmmaking, and I use it, and then I have to give it back."**

### All roads lead to hockey

For Lightning, the film's authenticity is rooted in a real depiction of sport, which was a non-negotiable part of the filmmaking process.

"I cast hockey players before acting, so they're all hockey boys," Lightning explains. "I didn't cast actors and teach them how to play hockey, but anyone that knows sports knows that if you can coach a sport, you can coach acting as well."

River Rayne Thomas, who plays the enforcing defender Damon Buffalo, is a fellow member of Treaty 6 territory from the Saulteaux First Nation and a hockey player through and through.




***Smudge the Blades*** **cast and crew celebrating CIFF's closing night screening on Oct. 4.**
**Photo courtesy of Rylie Perry**

Also known for his work in the 2024 film *Rez Ball*, Rayne Thomas cites the most fun and rewarding part of this filmmaking process as becoming a family with the rest of the cast through hockey, which, for them, was a daily part of shooting and integral to the storytelling.

Logistically, however, the process of getting the cast into skates and onto the ice for 10 hours a day was more than they bargained for, says producer Kyle Thomas.

"We wanted the hockey to be real in this movie, and we didn't want to have to bring in stunt doubles. But if I were to do this again, I'd probably get a physiotherapist," he jokes.

### No holds barred

Hockey aside, Rayne Thomas explains that the heart of the film lies in its storytelling through a real Indigenous lens, which is refreshing in today's film landscape.

**"We tell our own story, no holds barred," he says. "Some audiences may say it's too negative, but that's our story. It is going to be an uncomfortable truth for a lot of people."**

# OUT'N ABOUT

### Horizon Drive-In

This Halloween, enjoy classic spooky films with Horizon Drive-In. Located in the Badlands Parking lot, Horizon Drive-In presents a Halloween-themed weekend on Oct. 22 to 24, featuring films like *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Beetlejuice*, *Hocus Pocus* and more. For more information, visit horizondrivein.ca

### Halloween on 17th

17th Ave is set to transform into a carnival of curiosities this fall. On Oct. 23 and 24, dress up and enjoy two days of Halloween fun, including live music, roaming performers, trick-or-treating from more than 40 participating local businesses and more. For more information, visit 17thave.ca

### Oktoberfest 2026

Presented by the German Canadian Club of Calgary, Oktoberfest is back for another year of festivities. Enjoy three days of live music, traditional German dancing, cold beer, Swiss yodelling and more from Oct. 23 to 25. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit calgarygermanclub.ca

### Murder Mystery at Lougheed House

Lougheed House invites Calgary to a town hall unlike any other. On Oct. 24, join Lougheed House for a Halloween-themed murder mystery dinner, featuring cocktails, a three-course meal and an interactive evening of storytelling. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit lougheedhouse.com

# Calgary hosts Music Cities at the National Music Centre

*Industry professionals and policy-makers gather to discuss the importance of local music*

**Lacey Holowaty,** Staff Writer

The Alberta Music Cities Convention brought hundreds of delegates from around the world to the National Music Centre in September 2026.

This year's conference marked the 11th year of the program, which has been held in numerous countries worldwide.

The purpose of the conference is to bring together music industry professionals and policymakers to discuss the importance of musicians and the local economy, according to Shain Shapiro, founder and chairman of Sound Diplomacy, which is the organisation behind the event.

## Pandemic limitations

In early 2022, Music Cities initially selected Calgary and Edmonton as convention hosts for that year, but due to pandemic restrictions, they pivoted to a fully virtual program. Despite the shift, the convention drew over 550 delegates from around the world.

Shapiro says the virtual edition of the conference just "wasn't good enough," so Sound Diplomacy, in partnership with Calgary's West Anthem, decided to host the event in Calgary once again.

## Back and better

The event took place from Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, and since the convention coincided with the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Shapiro says they decided to begin with a morning dedicated to Indigenous economic issues.

The convention officially kicked off on Wednesday, Sept. 30, with an opening prayer and song led by Siksika Nation Elder Bryan Little Chief, highlighting the importance of Truth and Reconciliation Day.

David MacLeod, CEO of Native Communications Inc., then gave a presentation about Indigenous representation and recognition in Canada's music industry. According to MacLeod, over 90 Indigenous artists were nominated for last year's JUNO awards, but he also spoke about the importance of policies that commit to promoting Indigenous inclusion in the industry.

"There's so much vast richness and beauty within our community," he said during the presentation. "I've met so many artists over the years and heard their stories—it's beautiful."

## Calgary takes the stage

Calgary Mayor Jeromy Farkas appeared at the convention and took the stage to talk about the importance of fostering Calgary's success as a staple music city in Canada.

"Great music isn't created by City Hall," Farkas said during his speech. "It's created by people. It's created by community. It's made from hard work and passion. It's a craft."

According to Farkas, the music industry contributes around $2.5 billion to Alberta's GDP and supports more than 23,000 jobs that generate $5 billion in annual economic output.

In an interview following the morning programming, Farkas says employment opportunities for younger talent have transformed from something Calgarians would deem nice to have to something that citizens now need.

**"Calgary is about to compete [in the music industry] at a level we've never competed at before," Farkas says.**

He also says that to ensure Calgarians have access to a "great quality of life" and "affordable communities," Calgary needs to support artists with both physical spaces to enjoy music and sustainable operating funding.




**Mayor Jeromy Farkas acted as the host to the first in-person Music Cities Convention and focused on the importance of music tourism. Photo courtesy of Serena Kanji-Ramji**

According to Farkas, Calgary's return on artist investment is at an incredible high.

"Other cities are begging for that type of return on that type of investment," he says. "If we don't act now, we stand to lose the most."

## Premier(ing) at the convention

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith also made an appearance to describe how she's supporting emerging Albertan artists, by creating and appointing Alberta's first Music Commissioner, Jennifer Venance.

She cited Nashville's development over the past few decades as evidence of the potential Calgary holds as a music city, and has coined the term "Nashville North" as a new moniker for the city.

Smith highlighted five "key things" the Alberta government intends to do to support artists in the province.

The first was to "build the musical ladder," where Smith intends to create places for musicians to play at each stage of their careers — whether that be smaller, medium or larger-capacity venues.

Secondly, Smith said the government needs to "create places where music and city life come together." This includes lively neighbourhoods where people can walk from a restaurant to a small music venue or a larger show, and then to a bar or cafe.

Smith's third point aims to ensure musicians can actually afford to live and work in the province.

"If artists can't afford housing or rehearsal space, or studios, or commercial space, they'll go somewhere else," she said.

Smith said the fourth item on the list was to connect music to tourism and noted that Calgary already has an advantage.

"And finally, we need to make music part of Calgary's identity," Smith said. "Imagine someone in Toronto, or Vancouver, or Los Angeles, or London hearing the words 'Calgary, Nashville North,' and immediately knowing what that means."

# Fashion politics and the price tag on trends

## *How socioeconomics influences the clothing in your wardrobe*

**Aydin Atush,** Contributor

Have you ever considered that what you wear every day is a socioeconomic statement?

Well, fashion trends often fluctuate due to economic and political changes, causing consumer habits to evolve over time.

Mainstream clothing trends, hemlines, shoes, hair and silhouettes are replaced when a shift in the economy occurs, which directly reflects the political landscape's impact on everyday consumers.

### Post World War I fashion

The 1920s were a decade of economic growth and vital innovation that changed consumer tastes. It may not seem as though the development of automobiles would impact the fashion world—but you would be surprised.

Produced from 1908 to 1927, Henry Ford's Ford Model T was revolutionary for its accessibility and affordability for middle-class Americans.

This new technology inspired roaring 1920s fashion, including Coco Chanel's long-sleeved, drop-waist little black dress called 'The Chanel Ford,' which was featured in Vogue magazine in 1926.

Other characteristics of 1920s fashion included short, sleek bobs and short hemlines that upended the strict floor-length skirts popularised in the 1910s.

Art Deco also became a staple of the period, and the movement acted as a direct reaction to post-WWI traditionalism. The Art Deco style was characterised by its liberating geometric shapes, which were particularly inspired by Ancient Egyptian and African architecture.

World War I, which had seen heavy repercussions for everyday civilians, cost the United States $32 billion—approximately 52 per cent of the gross national product.

The economic boom following the war, however, encouraged a wage increase for middle-class Americans, popularising disposable income and allowing average Americans to consume more often.

Clothing also became significantly cheaper with the introduction of fake silk, also known as rayon, which was popular with clothing manufacturers because it required only two to three metres of fabric.

Styles therefore began to adapt, with the common silhouette moving from a strict hourglass shape of the 1910s to a square, more relaxed boxy shape.

Fashion ultimately took on a more unrestricted and expressive style compared to the traditional styles of the previous decade.

### History and hemlines

**Continues on Pg. 12**



**The Chanel Ford was described in the October 1, 1926 issue of Vogue Magazine as being "especially chic." Photo courtesy of Vogue Magazine Archives**




Lizzy McAlpine's first studio album, *Give Me a Minute*, was released at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It didn't make a huge splash, but it definitely found its audience. The album was recommended to many across platforms like YouTube, which also boosted McAlpine's song covers.

Her career bloomed during this time, and she found recognition for her talents. However, her career really took off with the release of her second studio album, *Five Seconds Flat*.

The eighth song on the album, "Ceilings," went viral on TikTok, starting a trend that only grew her following. *Give Me a Minute*'s unpolished pop evolved into *Five Seconds Flat*'s flourishing, structured indie pop, which became the sound McAlpine would come to be known for.

However, with *Angel*, her fourth studio album, McAlpine may be finally outgrowing the title of indie darling.

Like all of McAlpine's music, she sings of love, loss, heartbreak, intimacy and everything in between, but the spirit of the music in *Angel* is very different from anything she's done before—indie pop has turned to folksy musings.

I would describe *Angel* as an untethered album, where McAlpine is a wandering spirit in her songs. She sings of love and loss, but nothing is concrete, and so much seems out of reach for the main character of her songs.

The songs rise and fall, but often end abruptly. McAlpine feels like a traveller in *Angel*, passing through her life and her songs.

No song best describes this than "Soldier of the Road," the ultimate traveller's anthem. The song features Fleet Foxes, an American indie folk band, and evokes a lost nomad. It is a standout song on the album.

*Angel* has many of the hallmarks of McAlpine's best work. It is still the indie pop that makes you want to dance and cry at the same time, but McAlpine leans more folksy in her melodies and song composition.

The music is transparent and a little less produced. In many songs, you hear the instrumentals on the surface, and they often take the focus away from the lyrics. This album wears its heart on its sleeve, open-hearted and pulsating.

We saw glimpses of a more folksy side of McAlpine in her third studio album, *Older*. That album struck a wonderful balance between instrumentation and lyrics, showcasing a new and developed side of McAlpine.

*Angel* continues that legacy. It's a new sound from McAlpine, and it's experimental, but I don't think it's strong on its feet just yet.

I am excited to see how McAlpine develops this new sound. Her voice is as profound as ever, and her lyrics are just as piercing. McAlpine is evolving, but if you want to cry, laugh, reminisce and shout, she is still a great musician for that.

From *Angel* you'll get everything you love from McAlpine, and I think a lot more.

As for some standout songs, "Soldier of the Road," as previously mentioned, as well as "The Moon," "Mason's Song" and, of course, the titular "Angel".

—Nadoo Abaagu

**Continued from Pg.11**

The 'Hemline Index' is an economic theory that uses the length of women's skirts to indicate the state of the economy.

When the economy is doing well, hemlines increase, and the mainstream experiences much shorter skirts.

On the other hand, an economic downturn results in skirts being much closer to the ground.

Although this economic indicator is heavily debated by economists, research shows that fashion retailers can utilise national GDP forecasts to strategically introduce certain products.

In times of economic prosperity, retailers may introduce more expressive, colourful clothing styles, whereas in economic downturns they may introduce more muted, traditional styles.

The index is also debated as a possible tool for determining if an economic recession is approaching. Fashion is largely culturally driven, and trends can serve as socioeconomic indicators when popular styles shift from bolder to more muted ones.

A great example of this is the introduction of over-the-knee skirts in the 1960s, which eventually evolved into the miniskirt.

The 1960s were also a period of economic growth, with an increase in employment and consumer spending. Consumers, with more disposable income and the influence of growing social movements, were the main drivers of hemline increases.

Although the accuracy of the 'Hemline Index' is disputed, the correlations between the economy and mainstream fashion trends are nonetheless evident in retrospect.

## Well, what now?

The fashion industry has changed significantly in the last few decades, and the economy's impact on it has shifted too.

Economic uncertainty is becoming more prominent, with Canadian unemployment rising to 6.5 per cent this month and a greater need for recovery following the 2025 U.S. tariffs.

Consumer confidence is in a sharp downturn as a result, which impacts the fashion industry and emerging consumer trends.

In 2025, minimalism made a comeback, but fashion trends for late 2026 are moving towards maximalism, with an abundance of texture, patterns, distinct silhouettes and a focus on longevity.

A popular skirt choice is the midi skirt, which sits right about the knee, offering a timeless, even classical appeal. The midi skirt trend speaks most to longevity, as it is an item that can be paired with anything you already have and remain part of your rotation for a long time.

This need for longevity in fashion is further rooted in economic uncertainty and in seeking stability through clothing choices.

The current fashion fads revolve around intricate beading and textures, which promote individuality as a sign of financial unrest.

Pieces made with intention and higher-quality materials are increasingly sought after, as personal expression for building a long-lasting closet becomes more desirable.

While periods of economic downturn often bring forth traditional fashion styles, there is a current push for individual expression and maximalism unlike historical patterns.

These trends ask us if this is a permanent cultural shift, or a mark of the consumer influence that continues to alter the fabric of the cycles we see over and over again.




**"La Femme du Jour" was one of the four important silhouettes for Vogue Magazine's debut of the Winter Mode. Photo courtesy of Vogue Magazine Archives**

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# sports

**Sports Editor**
**Julia Finot**
**sportseditor@thereflector.ca**

# Intramurals: Just for fun, or is it?

*The hidden competitiveness of staying active at MRU*

**Keira Solomon,** Contributor

Forget the multi-million dollar contracts and the packed stadiums; real competitive action happens away from the cameras and the fame. Instead, it takes place on a Tuesday night under fluorescent gym lights. It's called intramural sports, and it's a way for non-collegiate athletes to play with other university students.

The goal of intramurals is to keep students active, and the games often become competitively intense, going beyond simply being a way for university students to keep in shape.

There are five intramural sports offered at Mount Royal University (MRU)—hockey, volleyball, basketball, dodgeball and futsal—each offering a unique sense of competition.

Each sport is categorised into three different skill levels—recreational, intermediate and advanced. They occur once a week, held either at Kenyon Court or the Stanley Gym, with the exception of hockey, which is at the Flames Community Arena.

## An outlet for competition

Intramurals allow for students to participate in competitive sports while growing their social circle.

Many of the students who joined have played organised sports before. MRU student Lorelei Brown played sports in high school and is now involved in intramurals.

"Going from playing that level to nothing was kind of hell," she says.

She credits intramurals with helping her to stay active, and although it is not the same athletic level she is used to, she enjoys the opportunity to be competitive.

Troy Strome—who plays volleyball—joined intramurals to change up his regular workout regiment.

"I wanted a new way to stay active, rather than just going to the gym, because that gets stale after a while, and by having something that's a bit more competitive, and has other people involved, it keeps it fresh, and it's just more fun to bring in other people," says Strome.

The goal of intramurals is to offer a wide range of competitive opportunities at MRU, opening the door for students who love sports and want to stay active while on campus.

"I was looking for a fun outlet. I've always been into organised sports, and I'm not playing at a university level," says volleyball intramurals participant Olivia Engles.

## Finding community in sport

MRU recreation opens their doors to everyone on campus; unfortunately, not many students are aware of the opportunity.

Some students are hesitant to join intramurals because they find it daunting to be part of a team with students they have never met before. But according to Brown and Strome, who joined intramurals without a team, the people participating are extremely welcoming.

"I've always found sports are a good way to make community easily," Brown says.

Intramural matchups involve healthy and friendly competition. While there is solid competition on the floor, everyone shows support for each other. They also show good sportsmanship by high-fiving each other and sharing words of encouragement.

There have been instances when Brown has made a mistake, and her team has been right there to encourage her.

"They'd come over, and they're like, 'hey, hey, it's okay, it's okay. Next one, next one, you got this,'" she says.

## More than just a game

Intramurals foster a safe environment for students to grow, meet new people, and learn about the importance of physical health and well-being in their academic journeys.

According to Mount Royal's player handbook, participants are expected to act in ways that create a respectful and inclusive environment. There is a human rights policy and several additional procedures in place to discipline individuals who don't play in a respectful manner.

Additionally, MRU intramurals have a fair play point average, a score each team receives based on their sportsmanship during each game. The points are used as tiebreakers if necessary.

The fair play point creates an advantage for teams, encouraging competition between teams while inspiring participants to be good teammates to one another.

Most of the time, students exemplify high standards and seem to uphold sportsmanship. Mostly because people who enjoy playing sports actually like the competitive aspect.

## The competitive atmosphere

Intramurals were created to provide MRU students with an athletic outlet, regardless of skill level. Brown expected the recreational level to be less competitive, but she is impressed with the level of competition in her league.

The friendly competition adds to the enjoyment of the game, as it heightens gameplay and camaraderie on the court.

"I was really glad to see everyone else being pretty competitive despite just being in a rec league," Strome says.

Regardless of the academic stressors you might face tomorrow, spending a few hours competing in some friendly intramural matchups down in MRU rec might give you the physical break you need to succeed in the classroom.

## COUGAR OF THE WEEK



Photo courtesy of Tamara Djurisic

### *Tamara Djurisic*

Attacking Midfielder
Captain of women's soccer
4th year Physical Literacy

**Tamara Djurisic is *The Reflector*'s Cougar of the Week!**

Through eight games, Djurisic has been a consistent offensive force, averaging a point per game with five goals to start the season. On Oct. 4, Djurisic brought the heat against the University of Regina Cougars, netting a hat trick, leading the team to 5-0 victory.

Congratulations to Djurisic on a season full of impressive performances!

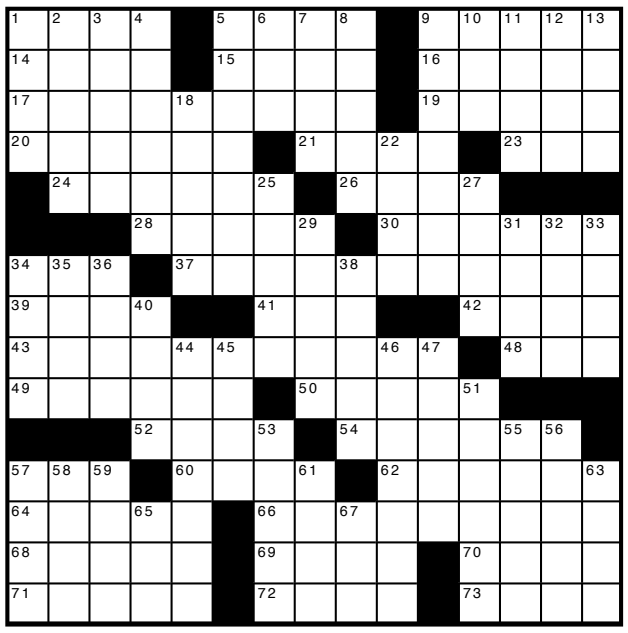
### Q&A

**Describe yourself as a player in three words** *Technical, Creative, Passionate.*

**What is your ultimate career goal?** *My ultimate career goal in soccer is to play professionally and represent the Serbian Women's National Team. It's a dream that motivates me to keep working hard and pushing myself to become the best player I can be.*

**What's one thing no one knows about you?** *One thing no one knows about me is that I'm really passionate about coffee! Two and a half years ago, I had the BEST coffee ever in Cuba, and ever since then I've been so interested in learning everything I can about coffee, especially espresso-based drinks. I've taught myself how to make all kinds of drinks, make my own syrups, and even do some pretty good latte art!*

# REFLECTOR DIVERSIONS



**ACROSS**
1 Jr.'s exam
5 Former Virginia senator Charles
9 Swan-like aquatic birds
14 Patron saint of sailors
15 Fall birthstone
16 Actor's parts
17 Republic in N Central America
19 Personal quality of material belonging
20 Nero's tutor
21 Apple computer
23 Chances ___
24 Crooner Vic
26 Kazan
28 Slant
30 Monetary unit of Panama
34 Unconscious
37 Eternal
39 Zwei cubed
41 Extra-wide shoe size
42 "Song of the South" song syllables
43 Glowing
48 Attention
49 Get down
50 Forest makeup
52 Florida's Miami-___ County
54 Aquanaut's base
57 ___ in Charlie
60 Queue after Q
62 Stage plays
64 Sharp
66 Interpret
68 Oktoberfest vessel
69 Exchange premium
70 Siouan speaker
71 Exhausted
72 Spanish muralist
73 Intellectual faculty

**DOWN**
1 Clothes-pins
2 Swung around
3 Radarange maker
4 Clan emblems
5 Imperial dynasty of Russia
6 ___-Locka, FL
7 Indonesian island
8 Hold responsible
9 Thank you, in Mexico
10 Goddess of dawn in Greek mythology
11 Movie lioness
12 Fortuneteller
13 Ferrara family
18 French school
22 Goya's "The Duchess of ___"
25 Tools for duels
27 Utah ski resort
29 Standing up
31 Linger
32 Most draftable
33 Antiquing agent
34 Clods
35 Arthur Ashe's alma mater
36 Dull sound
38 Dirty looks
40 Mary ___ Lincoln
44 Hindmost part
45 Finishes
46 Is unobliged to
47 Eye drops
51 Zigzag
53 Kett and James
55 Fine fiddle
56 Twirler's stick
57 Play group
58 Play start
59 Plaintiff
61 Driving force
63 Bird feed
65 Father's Day gift
67 Show

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

# SUDOKU

**EASY**

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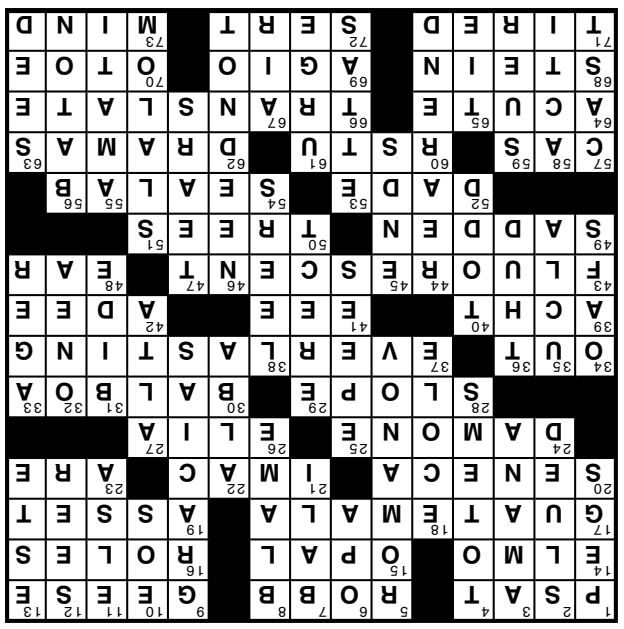
# WORD SEARCH

**HALLOWEEN**

E H U N T I N G Z C O H B K F S H S Y B
I A F Y L G W B P Z P R S D M A K D E N
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APPLES
BRAINS
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CASPER
CAULDRON
CHAINSAW
CHOCOLATE
CLAWS
COBWEBS
COSTUMES
DECORATIONS
DRACULA
EYEBALLS
FALL
FANGS
FRANKENSTEIN
GHOSTS
GOBLINS
GYPSY
HALLOWEEN
HAUNTED
HUNTING
MAKEUP
MASKS
MONSTERS
MOON
NIGHT
OCTOBER
ORANGE
PARTY
PRANKS
PRINCESS
PUMPKINS
SCREAMS
SPOOKY
TREAT
VAMPIRES
WEREWOLVES
WITCHES

**CROSSWORD PUZZLE SOLUTION**



# ‘If you’re not cheating, you’re not trying’

## *A modern look into rule-breaking among professional sports*

**Zafir Nagji,** Contributor



**Kawhi Leonard spent seven seasons playing for his hometown team, the Los Angeles Clippers, before being traded back to Toronto. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @ kawhisklawse**

World Wrestling Entertainment legend Eddie Guerrero’s iconic theme song gave the sporting world one of its most iconic quotes of all time, exposing the dark side of the highest level of competitive sports:

“If you’re not cheating, you’re not trying.”

The sports world was reminded of this often, as two of the most scandalous financial fiascos in professional sports history were exposed: one involving one of Canada’s most beloved basketball players and another involving the seventh-most valuable soccer club in the world.

### Kawhi not?

Last year, acclaimed journalist and podcaster Pablo Torre found evidence that suggested the Los Angeles Clippers unlawfully paid Kawhi Leonard more than they were allowed under the National Basketball Association’s (NBA) Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) through no-work contracts with multiple companies, including Aspiration—a tree-planting company under investigation for federal tax fraud.

The NBA delayed its investigation during the 2025-26 season, despite Torre continuing to reveal the information from his own investigative work on his podcast, “Pablo Torre Finds Out.” Over the course of summer 2026, the NBA deepened its assessment of the situation, finding the Clippers guilty. Leonard and his uncle, who is also his agent, were also found guilty of negotiating the illicit deals.

Leonard was fined $700,000, and his uncle was banned from conducting business and/or engaging with NBA teams, players and entities for five years, but the Clippers franchise received the most severe punishment of all.

They lost five first-round draft picks and were fined $30 million, and owner Steve Ballmer received a one-year suspension from all NBA activities. Their presidents of basketball operations also received suspensions, and the team is now subject to a five-year compliance and monitoring program overseen by the NBA.

Leonard signed a two-year, $115 million max contract extension in Toronto immediately after the trade and now has a chance to bring the Raptors their second-ever NBA title, while the Clippers have one of the grimmest futures of any NBA franchise as they serve their punishment.

### Red card, yellow card, credit card

Many soccer fans identify Manchester City by their near-unprecedented ability and willingness to acquire and pay high-value players. However, the Union of European Football Associations’ (UEFA) Financial Fair Play regulations (FFP) were designed to prevent teams from spending more than they earned in light of massively rich foreign ownership groups spending exorbitant sums to acquire multiple high-value talents, which made City’s ability to do that seem suspicious.

In 2017, Man City fell victim to a phishing scam, leaking files to a Portuguese hacker that were later investigated and revealed by the European Investigative Collaboration (EIC), which claimed that the documents showed 'we can do what we want' business practices.

UEFA conducted its own investigation and found City guilty of breaching its FFP rules, banning the team from participating in the UEFA Champions League for two years, but the club successfully overturned the ban by appealing to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

The English Premier League (EPL) also has its own set of rules, similar to UEFA’s FFP regulations, called the Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR). At the same time as UEFA’s investigations, the EPL conducted their own inquiry into City’s possible subversions, and in 2023, the club was charged with 54 counts of failure to provide accurate financial information, 14 counts of failure to provide accurate details for player and manager payments, seven counts of breaching the Premier League's PSR regulations, five counts of breaching UEFA's FFP regulations and 35 counts of failure to cooperate with league investigations.

In September of this year, the club was found guilty on 114 of the 115 charges, and while the Premier League Judicial Panel is determining an appropriate punishment, Manchester City has denied all wrongdoing and intends to appeal the decision.

### Money is the root of all...

In some cases, teams cheat the rules and regulations of sports, such as when Ferrari cheated Formula One’s fuel-flow regulations to produce extra horsepower. In other cases, teams illegally spy on their competitors to obtain secrets and gain a competitive advantage—see Canada’s soccer team spying on its competitors at the Paris Olympics with drones.

However, the Leonard case and the Manchester City case, among other dollar-based debacles, are a reminder that in professional sports, cheating doesn’t always happen on the field of play. With so much money involved in pro sports, much of the cheating happens in boardrooms and offices, with exorbitantly wealthy owners and investors adopting Guerrero’s sentiments as they try to maximise their competitive advantages and returns on investment by cheating the financial systems that govern their respective sports.

The NBA’s harsh verdict on the LA Clippers sent a stern message to the rest of the league’s owners, urging them to stop committing similar violations. All that remains now is to see if the EPL and UEFA follow a similar philosophy as they decide an appropriate punishment for Manchester City, potentially setting a global precedent to prevent financial cheating in professional sports.



**Manchester City is one of the most beloved football clubs in the world with an estimated global following of 390 million fans. Photo courtesy of Instagram / @mancity**

# The cheapest seat in motorsport might be at the desk

*How Sim Racing is opening a narrow door into pro motorsport*

**Mustafa Imran,** Contributor

The world of sim racing has become a genuine pathway into top-level motorsports within the past 15 years. Many automotive manufacturers have funded it through different disciplines, such as endurance racing, GT3 and sportscars.

Sim racing has received its fair share of public support and criticism. Some argue that it is cost-effective and offers more opportunities, while others argue that it's 'only a game' and that the skills are not transferable to top-level motorsports.

## From the desk to the driver's seat

Senior figures in motorsport, such as Lewis Hamilton and Toto Wolff, have criticised the cost of entry-level motorsport and backed sim racing for its affordability.

The starter kit for sim racing is simple. Racers need a playing platform—either PC or console, the racing game of their choosing and a basic controller set-up consisting of a steering wheel and pedal set.

Advanced racers also use a profiled chassis or racing body to sit in. A basic sim racing setup starts at only a few thousand dollars. Real-world motorsport is far more expensive.

In a report by Speedcafe, the cost to compete in a karting league starts at $250,000 per season. A seat in Formula 4 (F4) is $500,000, while drivers in Formula 3 (F3) must pay a minimum of $1 million.

Four-time Formula 1 (F1) World Driver Champion Max Verstappen is trying to make sim racing a real pathway into professional motorsport. Verstappen created a GT3 driver development program, which grew from the talent from his sim racing team, Team Redline.

The first graduate of Team Redline was Chris Lulham. In 2021, he joined Verstappen's Team Redline in 2025, he switched to the GT3 team and went on to win a race at Germany's Nürburgring Nordschleife alongside Verstappen.




**Sim racing set ups can start as low as a couple thousand dollars and they don't require any prior racing experience. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Borba / Pexels**

Verstappen has not been the only figure to provide racers with an alternative option. GT Academy, a Nissan-funded program, has developed drivers from sim racing into various forms of motorsports. Lucas Ordóñez and Jann Mardenborough have been two big successes from the GT Academy program.

The International Motor Sports Association (IMSA) has also launched a sim racing program in 2022 called the IMSA Esports Global Championship. The league features its own multi-class racing, featuring races every second Sunday from September to November. When it was launched, it was pitched as a way for drivers to build relationships with teams and grow their skills. It is not a guarantee that the driver will make the switch.

Formula 2 (F2) is no stranger to sim racing. Back in 2017, Turkish driver Cem Bölükbaşı raced in the official Formula One esports series—a professional video game competition sponsored by F1. In 2022, he became the first driver from the series to race in Formula 2.

Those who support sim racing as a way to compete professionally in motorsport argue that the skills they develop carry over to the car because modern simulators use laser-scanned tracks and realistic physics.

Drivers are also equipped with knowledge of the circuits, racing lines and the ability to read data before they ever set foot into a team's garage.




**GT3 racing, such as GT Academy, is one of the disciplines of motorsport where successful sim racers have driven in. Photo courtesy of Phillip Fahlbusch / Pexels**

## Not so fast

Over the years, many sim racing programs have disappeared, like the GT Academy. The program initially worked for drivers like Ordóñez and Mardenborough due to it bridging the economic gap in the world of motorsports. But after numerous setbacks such as GT Academy winners being banned from the Pro-Am category, it was shut down.

Racing sims fail to recreate the G-forces drivers will experience in a car. Drivers, like GT Academy alum Mardenborough, had never driven a high-performance car before coming to the academy.

Nissan put him through an extensive training program and enrolled him in national races so he could earn an international licence to compete. Drivers who naturally make their way up through the ranks earn their license as they get better, but sim racers are forced to do it all at once.

Some of the drivers coming from sim racing had already gained racing experience. Brazil's Igor Fraga won the FIA-certified Gran Turismo Nations Cup in 2018, and by then he was already the Brazilian F3 champion. He had also won New Zealand's Toyota Racing Series, where Red Bull signed him to its Charouz Racing System in 2020. It was difficult for Fraga to transfer his skill set into F2. Fraga left his F2 team halfway through his rookie season in late August 2022 due to poor results and disagreements with the team.

There is no doubt that professional motorsports is one expensive uphill battle, and while many people want to make their racing dreams a reality, the cheapest seat in motorsport may really be the one at a desk.

## #S

**55** goals scored by the Calgary Cavalry in 2026, setting a record for the most goals scored by a team in a single season in the Canadian Premier League

**47** seconds into the second round, Canadian Lightweight fighter Mandel Nallo knocked out American fighter Nate Landwehr at UFC Fight Night Edmonton

**3** natural hat tricks in three straight games by the Florida Panthers, becoming the first team in NHL history to record a milestone without the contribution of an empty net goal in any of the games

**59** career points for Trinity Western University's Sophie Crowther, becoming the Spartans all-time leader in career points, ranking fourth in Canada West history