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# Eye for The Wild sweeps Calgary this spring

*Calgary Wildlife inspires wildlife conservation through month-long photo competition*

**Bella Coco**, News Editor & **Aiden Johnner**, Photo Editor

On Dec. 13, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed March 3 to be World Wildlife Day. More than 10 years later, Calgary Wildlife honours World Wildlife Day with Eye for The Wild: a local wildlife photo competition that takes place throughout March and April.

Calgary Wildlife has been working as the only wildlife veterinary hospital in the city of Calgary since 1993. Working alongside Calgarians, Calgary Wildlife is dedicated to conservation efforts and the rehabilitation of over 400 animal species.

To further promote conservation and awareness of Calgary’s wildlife and ecosystems, Calgary Wildlife implemented Eye for The Wild.

## What is Eye for The Wild?

Eye for The Wild 2025 is Calgary Wildlife’s seventh annual amateur photo competition. The photo competition runs from March 3 to April 15 and allows photographers from around Alberta to send in photos for a donation of \$15.

All of the proceeds go directly toward the rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife in Alberta. This allows all of the participants to play a part in helping the health of the local environment.

Prizes are provided for contestants who land in first, second, and third place, as well as a public choice award. These prizes range from being highlighted in the Calgary Wildlife newsletter, included in social media posts, and a feature in the Calgary Wildlife 2026 calendar. Photos of any Alberta wildlife may be submitted, as long as they are not domestic animals, such as dogs, cats, or zoo animals.

Beki Hunt, the executive director of Calgary Wildlife, says that since she joined the

team, the Eye for The Wild photo entries have grown over the years, and so has wildlife awareness around the city.

“The bits about more and more animals ending up on COSWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) list, as endangered or threatened, is definitely...really important,” says Hunt. [It] raise[s] awareness about [the] conservation status of animals that are becoming more and more endangered.”

Eye for The Wild also aims to provide wildlife awareness to the competitors by implementing these National Geographic photography guidelines:

### 1. Do no harm

Do not destroy or alter habitat for a better view or scene.

Let animals go about their business. Do not seek their attention or interaction.

Take special care at breeding season.

Know the signs of stress of your subject species.

### 2. Keep it wild

Do not feed the wildlife.

Avoid habituating wild animals to humans’ presence.

### 3. Follow the laws

Laws vary by location and species.

Laws vary depending on the purpose and method of photography.

### 4. Caption with honesty

Be transparent about how a photograph was made.

### 5. Reputation is everything

Word travels fast in the wildlife photography community, and fakery or harmful field practices can be readily exposed. These days, it’s not just editors and other photographers that are on the lookout; increasingly, viewers on social media are too, speaking up when things appear suspect.

Hunt explains that during 2024’s Eye for The Wild competition, a judge helped bring these rules to attention.

“Not all photographers are super ethical in their

practices and can do things like baiting—[when] you put food out to have a bird, a raptor, fly towards you or disrupting wildlife in their natural habitat, which obviously is not okay,” Hunt says. “For us, really making sure that participants are being really mindful of that and not disrupting wildlife in their wild spaces and capturing those photos without disturbing them.”

## Eye for a winner

With an interest in the outdoors and nature, Jamie Bussey has been pursuing photography for the last 12 years. After teaching himself the ins and outs of wildlife photography, Eye for The Wild fell onto Bussey’s radar in 2023.

“I follow all the local wildlife rehabilitation centres, and I try to donate to them regularly,” Bussey says.

When he saw that the admission fees for the Eye of The Wild photo contest go directly toward the efforts made by the rehabilitation

centre, he loved the idea and knew he had to participate.

“I know where my money is going, it’s staying local, it’s going to a good cause,” says Bussey.

And when it comes to getting the shot, Bussey goes all in. He says that he has travelled through Jasper, the Yukon, and even the U.S. with up to 50 pounds of gear.

Bussey explains that in the warmer months, there is a lot of daylight so he finds himself waking up anywhere from 4 a.m. to 4:30 a.m. and heading out to Kananaskis or Banff. He typically works until 11 a.m. and then finds somewhere to take a nap—whether that be in his car, the trees, or on some rocks. Afterward, he works through the rest of the evening and heads home around 10 p.m. just to repeat the routine the next day.

After submitting his photo entry of a porcupine, Bussey felt confident but was caught off guard by an Instagram direct message announcing his Eye for The Wild win.

“I knew the photo I submitted was strong. You never know if something is going to win a competition,” Bussey says. “You don’t know what the judges are looking for.”

“It just felt good in my heart. It’s sometimes really hard to separate emotional attachment to what is a really good image because you have so much memory surrounding that entire experience.”

Bussey’s advice for anyone participating in Eye for The Wild is simple yet effective: finding the extraordinary in the ordinary.

“If you have a regular everyday animal, you need an extraordinary moment or behaviour to make it stand out. Or if you have a rare animal, almost any photo of a rare animal looks amazing,” Bussey explains.

Those interested in submitting photo entries can head to the Calgary Wildlife website and register for Eye for The Wild until April 15.



This photo of a porcupine won the 2023 Eye for The Wild photo contest. Photo by Jamie Bussey

# Chat, is this real? How to push back against AI misinformation

Acacia Carol  
Staff Writer

If you're a news consumer in 2025, you've been berated about identifying, verifying, and pushing back against fake news, misinformation, and disinformation. From Facebook rants to press releases, no form of media should be treated as safe because human error is undeniable.

In a healthy news system, there are checks and balances to ensure that consistently getting the facts wrong is met with swift corrective action.

But what happens when the human element is removed? What role does artificial intelligence (AI) play in the conversation of misinformation and fact-checking, and what are these tools' roles in creating a healthy, reliable, and even somewhat trustworthy news landscape?

The Pew Research Center released a poll in 2023 saying that 52 per cent of Americans feel "more concerned than excited" at the prospect of AI being integrated into their daily lives. It is hard to argue against that anxiety.

The University of Waterloo also released a study that concluded that only 61 per cent of participants could correctly identify an AI-generated portrait.

It can be scary to think that the problem could be staring us in the face and we might not even recognize it.

So, what exactly makes AI so hard to spot? Well, for one, AI's learning pace makes it harder to develop sufficient strategies to fight against AI misinformation.

Take an article from McGill, which is only one year old, for example. The tools and strategies they recommend are solid, but arguably already outdated. While AI still has issues generating eyes, lighting, and hands, and still struggles with minor artifacting errors, the pace at which these models have grown and improved in just a year is startling.

It's also flawed to hold onto the idea that AI is going away anytime soon—Mark Zuckerberg announced earlier this year that Meta plans to invest over \$65 billion in AI projects. Jeff

Bezos and Elon Musk are following suit.

So, what's the solution? Are we doomed to live in a world of AI slop, fake movie trailers, and subpar voice imitations of Peter Griffin singing Hozier's "Take Me to Church?"

Well, yes, and no. There are tools and ideas for fighting against this type of misinformation, but they are useless without consistent effort on the consumer's end.

One such tool local to Calgarians is the **M R U n d e r s t a n d i n g Misinformation** page. The site is a faculty-created tool that outlines different strategies for spotting misinformation by using the same tools that investigative journalists use in the field.

The 'Sift' method has news consumers (S)top, (I)nvestigate, (F)ind better coverage, and (T)race the claim to debunk dubious statements.

But also consider looking to another form of intelligence when you feel unsure about the validity of a piece of media. Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) uses publicly available tech and databases, like Google Maps, to analyze the validity of a claim. This can be great if you want to investigate an issue, claim, or a story that doesn't feel right.

The issue with these methods is that they work best when you have reasons to believe that what you are seeing hasn't been significantly doctored and is being posted for benevolent reasons. What happens when a photo looks real enough at first glance?

This is where generative AI specifically becomes a tricky place for journalists and news consumers to navigate. Unfortunately, this is where news consumers must ultimately shoulder some responsibility for pushing against AI misinformation.

Consider searching laterally when looking at a claim. Who is publishing this article? When was their account created? What sort of replies does the post garner? Is the publisher forthcoming about where

they got their information from and what steps have they taken to ensure validity? In short, leave no stone unturned.

However, AI isn't inherently problematic as seen in the ways it's being used in medical technology by estimating if breast tissue contains tumours and if they are likely to grow into cancer.

AI and its applications also aid in creating better accessibility for disabled people in academia.

We must accept the good with the bad that comes from AI and its integration into everyday life.

Musk recently fired thousands of federal employees hoping to replace their roles with AI—a decision that two U.S. judges overturned.

As more and more businesses integrate intelligence programs into their user systems and websites, there is a genuine risk for AI to become a tool that abuses workers for a cheaper bottom line.

Whether that's being fired so that a learning model can take over your role, or

creating misinformation to make it harder for everyday users to spot when they are being deceived, it's clear that

regulations and guidelines only have so long until they are entirely unable to protect their human counterparts.



Elon Musk is one of many tech billionaires who has invested in the world of AI. Photo courtesy of Framtida

## MRU introduces new chancellor

Khaoula Choual  
Staff Writer

Mount Royal University (MRU) has introduced its new chancellor, Arlene Strom, following the board of governors' approval. As chancellor, she will represent MRU's public interest and become the ceremonial head.

A search committee, directed by the President and Vice-Chancellor of MRU, Tim Rahilly, including members of the board of governors, alumni association, and students' association, recommended Strom for the role. The board of governors unanimously approved her appointment.

"Arlene's values align with the mission of MRU, making her an excellent fit for this important role. Arlene's professional experience,

belief in the value of post-secondary education, and passion for community connection, including her dedication to supporting the Indigenous community, are why we are excited to welcome her as an ambassador for the university," said Chris Lee, the chair of the MRU board of governors.

### What does the chancellor do?

The chancellor actively participates in university and community activities. The job entails representation in formal occasions displayed by the university, such as leading convocations and granting degrees to graduating students of MRU.

Nominations for this role include someone interested in higher education and the relationship between universities and communities, someone who has a strong connection to Calgary and Alberta, and someone who will outstretch Mount Royal University's purpose, vision, and values to everyone. The chancellor also needs to be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident with expertise and experience in ceremonies and protocols, as well as a high level of comfort in public speaking.

This field is measured in reputation, contributions,

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and a record of excellence. Strom’s role as chancellor would be to connect the university to the community by serving a dynamic economy, environment, and society.

“For decades, MRU has been building strong citizens who contribute to our community health, spirit, and economy from needed health care professionals to pilots to entrepreneurs,” said Strom.

This role is a four-year term, and, under provincial legislation, Storm can only serve one term. This role is a volunteer position with a reimbursement of travel expenses.

Strom will work closely with Rahilly, as an ex-officio member of the board of governors. An ex-officio is someone who serves on a board because they have another position.

Strom has replaced Dawn Farrell, MRU’s first chancellor, who was appointed in 2020.

Who is Arlene Strom?

With a long career in the oil and gas industry, Strom is seen as an accomplished leader in business and sustainability.

Strom has a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Trinity Western University and a law degree and master’s degree in political science from the University of British Columbia. In 2024, Strom spent a year at Harvard University as an initiative fellow in advanced leadership.

Her list of accomplishments includes serving as the chair of the Alberta Lieutenant Governor’s Arts Awards Foundation and the Energy Transition Centre. She is also a member of the board of Nature Conservancy Canada and the advisory board of Portage Energy. Before her role at Suncor, she practiced corporate and securities law in Calgary.

She serves her commitment to post-secondary education to build relationships in the community.

She retired from her position as chief sustainability officer in late 2023, and she has served as general counsel and corporate secretary for

Suncor.

“MRU is preparing students to be innovators, collaborators, and relationship builders. I am committed to MRU because of its commitment to building strong relationships with its students and to being a major contributor to the prosperity of our community,” said Strom.

**What’s next?**

Strom will be formally installed as chancellor

during MRU’s convocation ceremonies in June.

“MRU prepares students to become lifelong learners and active global citizens. As we build on our strong partnerships off campus, Arlene will deepen our community engagement and act as a sage advisor. She is a dedicated changemaker who values building relationships, which are qualities that will help MRU take bold steps over the next four years to reach its goals,” said Rahilly.



Serving a four-year term, Arlene Strom hopes to continue aligning her goals with MRU and keep on building relationships within the post-secondary community. Photo courtesy of Mount Royal University

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MRU class constructs a new language

Karra Smith  
Staff Writer

Language, whether spoken, signed, or written, is a fundamental form of communication for all humans. With the constant developments and ever-changing rules, it’s hard to imagine where one would begin with the invention of a language. However, a linguistic anthropology class at Mount Royal University (MRU) is tackling that challenge this semester.

“A constructed language is a language invented by a person or a group of people rather than being

naturally developed within a certain culture,” says Dusan Nikolic, a professor teaching Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology. “Some of the most popular examples of constructed languages are Esperanto, Dothraki (Game of Thrones), and Klingon (Star Trek).”

Nikolic says he tasks students with this project because it provides a practical and creative scenario for students.

“Language is part of everyday life and communication of every

human culture and society,” says Nikolic. “Which means that when students try to create a language, they think of all the aspects one language could have.”

The project began by dividing the class into four groups—phonology, morphology and syntax, writing systems, and design features.

The division of students into these four categories provided an extra challenge.

“These teams are not allowed to communicate with each other for the exercise,” says Ben Taylor, one of the students tasked with design features.

Earth, it’s one point three (1.3) times Earth’s radius so there is slightly stronger gravity. The star is stable, but it’s a bit cooler than our sun. The planet has a little less biodiversity but they’re much more technologically advanced,” says Budge. “So Dusan had really given us the baseline of this world and told us ‘these are your parameters, other than that, go crazy.’”

Taylor explained that his group was in charge of figuring out the biology of the planet’s inhabitants, which gave them the most room for creativity. While the others focused on choosing consonants and similar details, his team was more focused on specifics.

Rachael Budge, one of the students focused on morphology—the general study of words—and syntax—the study of how words form—says that besides the framework of where this language would be spoken, the students had complete creative control.

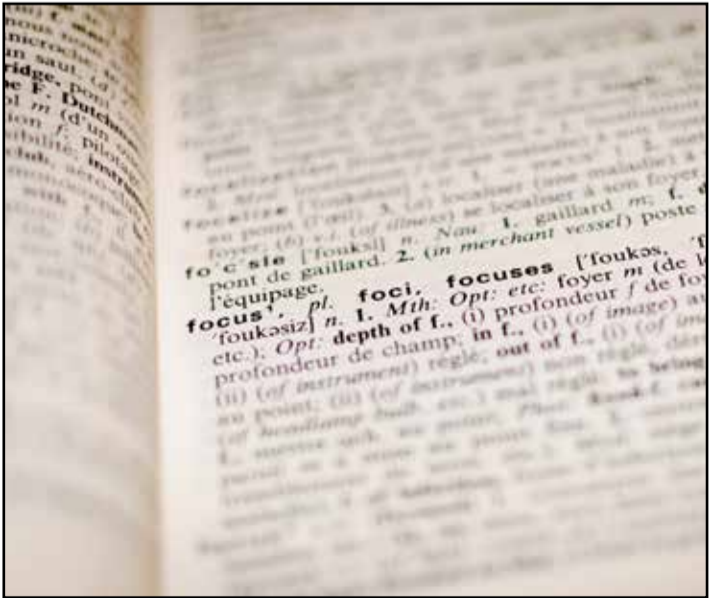
To help create the language, Nikolic also outlined the fictional world in which this language would exist to give students more background information to work with.

“It’s a habitable, earthlike planet located in the habitable zone, breathable atmosphere, larger than

Despite the challenges that arose with the project, both Budge and Taylor enjoyed the process of the exercise.

“It’s very interesting, and I think it’s a good way to put into practice what we’re learning,” says Budge.

“When you get to put it into a little bit more of a theoretical, especially like a fictional fantasy setting, it makes it a little bit more of a fun thing that you get to play with, rather than feeling like [you] work so much.”



Working in teams, MRU students worked on constructing their very own language within their fictitious world. Photo courtesy of NU Sci Magazine

the reflector

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## The power of the ‘aunty’

*A new art exhibit at MRU celebrates the ‘aunty’ as a figure of kinship, resistance, and truth*

**Isabella West**

Publishing Editor



**Rachel Snow, guest speaker for the launch of the Aunties/Anti Art Exhibition shares the true meaning of ‘aunty.’ Photo by Isabella West**

Walls that were once lined with images of Mount Royal’s early years are now adorned with locally curated and created works of art as part of the Aunties/Anti Art Exhibition.

On Friday, March 7, a new exhibit was installed on Main Street at Mount Royal University (MRU). The exhibit features works created by MRU students Alaskan Manywounds and Avery Follett, as well as the Jellybean Collective (Jaime Waucaush-Warn, Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane, Gloria Pérez-Rivera, and Celeste Pang).

Encapsulating ‘big aunty energy,’ this exhibit opened just in time for International Women’s Day and serves as a compelling tribute to the wisdom, kinship, and guidance found only in the

warm yet blunt embrace of an aunty.

Aunty is more than just blood relations—“Auntie is mood. Auntie is spirit. Auntie is medicines. Auntie is dream. Auntie is hope. Auntie is smarten up. Auntie is feeling. Auntie is encouragement. Auntie keeps going. Auntie has no gender. Auntie saves lives,” as written by Edz’iu and featured as a centrepiece at the exhibition.

In most Indigenous communities, the idea of an aunty transcends the traditional meaning of the word. Aunties are often the knowledge keepers, mentors, and individuals to turn to. The word ‘aunty’ is not only given to someone because of genealogy but rather, it is given based on relationships.

This exhibition celebrates aunties across cultures

and channels ‘big aunty energy’ as a presence, a demand, and a statement for inclusion in narratives from which Indigenous women, racialized people, and queer individuals have historically been excluded—with the ultimate goal of rewriting history from their perspectives.

Alaskan Manywounds, one of the artists featured in the exhibit, resonated with this vision through her work, which offers a new perspective on a familiar story.

Now in her second year of a child studies degree at MRU, Manywounds began her journey in art through the Indigenous Arts of North America course taught by Jaime Waucaush-Warn. What started as a class assignment soon became

something more.

“I was a first year student, so I did it all in one night,” joked Manywounds. “I was like, ‘okay, at least it’s gonna get me a C or D...anything to pass.’”

But Manywounds didn’t receive a C or D grade. Instead, she received praise from her professor and a dedicated space at MRU for her art.

One of the most notable pieces in Manywounds’ collection, now on display, is *Crawl Home to Her*. This piece is inspired by the story of the wife of Chief Bullhead of the Tsuut’ina Nation.

Manywounds is half Cree and half Tsuut’ina, having grown up on the Tsuut’ina Nation. When tasked with the assignment to create art reflecting Indigenous culture in Waucaush-Warn’s class,

she was caught between choosing which side of her heritage to represent. After some reflection, she chose to highlight the Tsuut’ina Nation, recognizing how little her community had been represented. Her inspiration came from the film *Gunasi*, directed by her relative, Eren Manywounds. The film tells the story of a time of great hunger on the Tsuut’ina Nation due to the restrictions and injustices of the Indian Act and the Indian agent. On the brink of war, Chief Bullhead’s wife consoles him and convinces him not to fight—changing the history of the nation forever—yet, as Manywounds noted, “to this day, her name and identity

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remain undocumented.”  
“In the film, Bullhead’s wife was the whole reason why they didn’t go to war,” explained Manywounds. “She changed the course of every generation on my reservation.”

Aunty in action

Waucaush-Warn, an assistant professor of Indigenous studies at MRU and a member of the Jellybean Collective opened the exhibition with her definition of ‘aunty.’ For Waucaush-Warn, the word aunty itself connotes love, truth, and protection.

“My aunties laugh through me. They laugh a laugh that you recall when you fall asleep as a child. This laugh calls home to me at times when times are tough, the laugh heals me,” said Waucaush-Warn. “It is a kind of laugh that not everyone gets to hear, but the kind that comes from the belly and the heart.”

By spotlighting the concept

of ‘aunty’ in this project, the creators also examine the term ‘anti’—as in anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and anti-oppression.

In doing so, they frame the aunty as more than just a role; she becomes an idea, a force of resistance and resilience.

“My aunties, who are like my moms, who are a force, they also represent love, support, [and] a blunt truth that only aunty can deliver in a loving way,” said Waucaush-Warn. “I have always thought that my aunties represented anti-establishment, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism, so maybe you didn’t know it, but maybe you’re an aunty too.”

On display at MRU until August 2025, the exhibit’s next destination remains uncertain as the creative team considers its future. For now, it stands near the East Gate entrance on Main Street, inviting visitors to experience the true meaning of ‘aunty.’

View the full article on our website [thereflector.ca](http://thereflector.ca).



Students Alaskan Manywounds (left) and Avery Follett (right), are congratulated on their debut at the launch of the Aunties/Anti Art Exhibition on March 7 at MRU. Photo by Isabella West

# Brewing up excitement: SAMRU announces new student-run coffee shop

Liam Rockliffe

Features Editor

With Good Earth leaving Wyckham House, a bean-shaped void was left in every student’s heart. Come fall 2025, however, SAMRU plans to open up their own student-run coffee shop.

Bringing coffee back into Wyckham will help those early 8:30 a.m. classes, and also those late nights writing essays you should’ve started a month ago. But SAMRU’s coffee house comes with even more bonuses for students.

Miranda Czaja, operations manager at SAMRU, shared some information on the up-and-coming cafe.

Czaja recognizes that students want their fresh brewed pick-me-up in the morning, but don’t want to have to pay \$7 for a cup of coffee.

“We can operate on a cost recovery model. We

can provide students with extraordinary value. So it’s that same premium product, but at below market pricing,” said Czaja.

Like everything at SAMRU, the cafe is going to be completely student-run. Come May, job postings will be posted on the website, inviting students to apply in the hopes of being selected to have an interview with the food and beverage manager.

The cafe is going to run in a similar way to Starbucks, where customers can come up, make their order and be on their way. Along with coffee and lattes, teas and ‘coffee house favourites’ will also be available.

Czaja says they also plan to offer some bakery options, but they “want to focus on doing a few things very well instead of having a huge

menu.”

The main thing that separates SAMRU’s cafe from the others will be the low pricing, since they only plan to “break even” from the costs required to run the coffee house, SAMRU will be able to offer coffee at a price that can’t be beaten anywhere else.

As for the name, SAMRU hosted a competition inviting students to give their best suggestions and while they recieved a ton of responses, the final name reveal has to wait until the end of the month or early April.

“I really hope that students enjoy the space. A lot of time and consideration has gone into making it something that students will find desirable and that they’ll use the service,” said Czaja. “We are for students by students.”



SAMRU’s new coffee shop promises premium coffee at unbeatable prices, opening fall 2025 in Wyckham House. Photos by Cathrine Roy

# Abortion in Canada and the right to obtain one

*Campus protests are among other pro-choice restricting efforts*

**Sarah Palmer,** Staff Writer & **Mia Smith,** Staff Writer

Universities have forever been at the heart of transformative change and strong beliefs. Change is the driving factor that challenges thoughts and perspectives, but where do students draw the line?

The Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform (CCBR)—casually regarded by students as the “anti-abortion protesters”—have made themselves very comfortable in the halls of Mount Royal University (MRU).

Doing so has sparked growing concerns about why in a place of higher learning, students are being faced with such graphic imagery and polarizing views—bringing MRU to repeatedly grapple with the question of whether or not to leave their doors open to everyone’s beliefs.

Cameron Côté, the Western outreach director for CCBR, says that they intend to spread a message of information to expand people’s minds.

“We want them to intentionally reflect upon the question, can we kill an innocent human being to solve even the most challenging of problems?” Said Côté.

CCBR claims that they approach all of their protesting and education on a note of compassion and kindness. But the query of whether or not this message is being relayed to the students remains.

Côté relates their message to what Canadians would do in the case of toddlers.

“I mean what would we be doing if a hundred thousand children were being decapitated and dismembered every year in Canada?” Asked Côté.

## What students think—And why it matters

Some students have expressed discomfort with the presence of the CCBR in the halls of MRU.

During a demonstration on March 11, one student—Hailey Robitaille—expressed her exasperation with the CCBR’s choice to include images of developing fetuses on their posters. Primarily,

she said, because there is a preschool down the hall from Wyckham House—the site where volunteers of the CCBR assemble most often.

“When you want to talk about the wellbeing of children in regards to abortion, you are showing photos that are graphic for shock and awe,” said Robitaille. “There are children walking around the halls...they are the ones who are going to bring those photos home with them.”

Robitaille looked at a poster allegedly showing the growth of a fetus at nine weeks. She shared that she had experienced a miscarriage at that same gestation period and said “the photos are a lie anyway.”

Robitaille isn’t the only one, as other members of the student body have participated in confronting volunteers of the CCBR between classes on Tuesdays.

“I think it’s messed up because you do not know what someone is going through,” said MRU student Ash McConnell. “I think school should feel safe.”

However, the topic of abortion extends beyond the student body. Since 2022, when Roe v. Wade’s overturning ended federal protections for abortion in the U.S., Canada has seen a rise in pro-life demonstrations—making the CCBR just one example.

## Abortion in Canada: A brief history

Fifty-six-years-ago, obtaining an abortion was a criminal offence—punishable by two-year imprisonment for the woman herself, and life in prison for the medical practitioners responsible.

Amendments to the Criminal Code in 1969 permitted abortion only in instances where sustaining pregnancy endangered the woman’s life. However, abortion in any other circumstances remained illegal under Section 251.

Nearly 20-years-later, doctors prompted further amendments to be made to



**Abortion protesters are always polarizing, but in the hall of MRU do they have a right to polarize? Photo by Mia Smith**

abolish the criminalization of abortion. According to court documents, they believed that “a woman has an unfettered right to choose whether or not an abortion is appropriate in her individual circumstance.”

In one instance, a medical doctor named Henry Morgentaler served time for conducting unapproved abortions and brought his case to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Finding that criminalizing abortions violated Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Supreme Court ruled to overturn R v. Morgentaler in 1988—effectively decriminalizing abortion on the basis of a woman’s right to “life, liberty and security of the person.”

In the 1990s, former Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney—among other provincial and municipal representatives—attempted to re-criminalize abortion. Nevertheless, the medical procedure remains legal and publicly funded today.

But with no law having replaced R v. Morgentaler to solidify the right to an abortion, this means the topic remains open for debate—efforts not foreign to several Members of Parliament (MP).

## Rising threats and political push-back

In 2019, former-leader of the Federal Conservative Party (CPC), Andrew Scheer, announced his pro-life stance which resulted in a drastic loss of voter support.

The current leader, Pierre Poilievre, has vowed that if elected, the CPC will not implement policies infringing on abortion access. But, as a result of his Harper-era political admiration, Poilievre has continually allowed private members to introduce anti-choice bills.

In January 2023, Saskatchewan MP, Cathay Wagantall, suggested amendments to the Criminal Code when proposing Bill C-311—the Violence Against Women Act. The bill specified that when someone knowingly assaults a pregnant woman, sentencing procedures should consider this aggravated assault.

Four-months-later, a branch of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA)—made up of over 37,000 lawyers, students, and academics representative of the country’s legal field—wrote a letter to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth expressing their opposition to Bill C-311.

In the letter, the Women Lawyers Forum wrote that they believed Bill C-311 to be “a misguided attempt to interfere with abortion access and destabilize abortion rights, by effectively giving

separate legal status to the fetus.”

In June 2023, the bill was read a second time, and 318 total votes were collected. Despite every Conservative MP voting in favour of the bill, they were outnumbered and the bill was defeated.

## How secure are abortion rights?

Despite the stability of abortion rights in Canada, they have continued to be challenged in recent years—raising questions about a woman’s right to bodily integrity.

Even with newly named leader, Mark Carney, resurrecting the Liberal Party’s support, the CPC are dominating poll projections, according to a March 9 update by 338 Canada.

As the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada explained in a November 2024 document, it’s not unlikely for anti-choice bills to be passed in the event of the CPC winning a majority government—despite Poilievre not proposing the legislation himself.

Still, according to a May 2024 survey by Leger, 80 per cent of Canadians consider themselves in favour of a woman’s right to choose—making support for anti-abortion policies highly unlikely.

View the full article on our website [thereflector.ca](http://thereflector.ca).

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# What does it mean to be indie?

*Defining one of the most commonly used terms in modern music*

**Jillian Zack**  
Contributor



**Car Seat Headrest, a modern staple of indie rock, supposedly recorded their first album *Twin Fantasy* in their closet. To read more, visit [thereflector.ca](http://thereflector.ca). Photo courtesy of Instagram/@notcarseatheadrest**

Indie. People use this word all of the time to describe music in one way or another—but what does it actually mean?

The proper definition of indie is: (a pop group, record label, or film company) not belonging to or affiliated with a major record or film company.

Indie is shorthand for “independent” which is a broad term characterized by creative freedom, low-fidelity—also known as the subgenre of lo-fi—with a ‘do-it-yourself’ (DIY) approach to music creation, which comes with support from independent record labels.

Part of indie is also aesthetic, and if you think back to the over-exposed Instagram feed of 2020, you will remember baggy pants, shag haircuts, and Mother Mother blasting from every speaker.

Emerging from underground scenes, indie music

originally defined itself through the rejection of mainstream norms with diverse and experimental sounds. It encompasses a wide range of music that is produced independently apart from commercial major record labels.

**Genre or lifestyle?**

Since indie describes a band’s outlook more than their musical style, independent musicians can range from the electronic soul style of Frank Ocean to the lyrical and melancholy sounds of The Smiths. In the indie scene, the DIY style of music is common and it tends to be more sonically adventurous and experimental.

There are different subsections of indie like indie rock or indie pop. Bands and artists like MGMT, The Smiths, alt-J, Mac DeMarco,

The Strokes, Vacations, Tame Impala, and the Arctic Monkeys are all in a Spotify-created playlist under the title “Indie Rock.”

While each of these bands have a unique sound from one another, they are all considered popular due to their innovative approaches to music and distinctive soundscapes.

Lots of these bands have long outgrown the DIY scene, but they still carry the indie label. Why?

After bands sign to a major label, they are often met with criticism from heartthrob fans hoping they don’t change their sound. Considering the indie sound is characterized by having minimal production, a major label is the antithesis of this style.

However, major labels notice the popularity of raw music, and have begun to replicate the indie sound by signing with artists who

mimic the DIY aesthetics while not actually being independent.

**Independent versus indie**

The band MGMT is not independent, in fact, they are signed to five different record labels. MGMT is labelled as indie pop, synth-pop, psychedelic pop, indie rock, psychedelic rock, neo-psychedelia, and electronic rock. Listeners and critics alike find it hard to pinpoint which genre they belong in.

Their genre-fluid catalogue defies categorization. Genres of music are there to help people find other bands or artists with similar sounds that they like. But does indie really do that nowadays?

Perhaps it used to, but in its current state of genre-fluidity, it’s not really helpful when searching for new music.

Calling an artist “indie” today signals a specific sound or vibe, regardless of their actual independence. Sounds with dark somber lyrics are becoming increasingly popular in mainstream music as artists are shedding light on things like personal struggles and mental health.

The line between the technical definition of indie and the sound of indie, creates confusion among music lovers. Take Billie Eilish for example. She is considered indie despite having nine Grammys.

Maybe it’s because her earlier music sounded low-budget, and matched the tone and vibe of struggling singers in their bedroom. But really, we see Spotify’s algorithm-driven playlists prioritize vibe over independence, allowing artists like Billie Eilish to

be branded as indie despite major label ties.

**Record labels**

The main difference between indie and major labels is money—the major labels have made a heavy profit over the years and therefore have the funds and means to support their signed artists by providing services like PR management and marketing, alongside industry-leading studios and equipment.

Meanwhile, indie labels are a lot smaller in comparison, and the lower budget translates to signed artists not receiving the same amount of financial aid.

**The indie lifestyle**

The ‘90s marked the point when indie began shifting away from strict independence and more toward an attitude. This decade shaped indie’s profitability, turning it into just another product for major labels, clothing retailers, and the media to sell.

Now, indie means something different.

It can be fashion or even an aesthetic. What began as a rebellion against corporate control has transcended its original meaning of independence, changing into a paradox of aesthetic rebellion and mainstream commercialization.

So what does it mean to be indie?

Maybe it’s liking The Smiths, maybe it’s carrying around a skateboard and not knowing how to ride it. One thing is for sure, the definition is broad. And without indie, we wouldn’t have much of the great music that we consume today.

## OUT’N ABOUT

**Easter eggstravaganza**  
Celebrate Easter the right way with chocolates, food trucks, horse rides, and free pictures with the Easter bunny. On April 19 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Marda Loop Community Association is transforming into a family friendly Easter market. More information on [www.familyfuncanada.com](http://www.familyfuncanada.com).

**Calgary Underground Film Festival**  
Returning for its 22nd year, the Calgary Underground Film Festival is a must-see for movie lovers. Located at the Globe Cinema from April 17 to 27, this non-profit festival aims to enrich Calgary’s culture and showcase local talent. Single tickets or bundle packages are available on [www.showpass.com](http://www.showpass.com).

**Zero Proofs Given Mocktail Festival**  
For the entire month of April, 25 restaurants all across the city will be sampling zero-proof cocktails to help raise money for the Calgary Food Bank. For every dollar donated, the food bank can distribute three dollars worth of food to those who need it. Visit [@whatsupalberta](https://www.instagram.com/whatsupalberta) on Instagram for more details.

**Spring market**  
Step into spring at the Deerfoot Inn and Casino with their third annual market. On March 30 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., visitors can browse through 90 vendors selling everything from food to fashion. Admission and parking is free, and more information can be found at [www.thedowntownmarkets.ca](http://www.thedowntownmarkets.ca).

# Stepping into the world of watercolour

**Farheen Agoro**  
Contributor

With the end of the year wrapping up, it's nice to look for ways to relax. Art can offer more than just an avenue of creative expression—it also grants “the opportunity for self-connection and self-awareness” and grounds us in our busy lives.

Personally, watercolour is one of the most enjoyable types of paint. It's easy to set up with its portable palette of colours and paintbrushes. In addition to this, watercolour is also the cheapest option for painting.

As rewarding and beautiful as painting is, it can be equally as overwhelming to approach.

## So, where do you start?

Watercolour, like most other paint brands, has a quality system called an “art grade.” The grade can range from student to professional quality, which indicates the target audience, the quality, and the budget of the paint.

For beginners, I recommend

watercolour brands like Prang and Crayola, both of which have approachable sets that are washable and reasonably priced.

Regardless of what watercolour brand you choose, I suggest looking for watercolour sets that offer around twenty colours or fewer in the beginning. Watercolour sets can have very expansive palette options, so starting small can help you understand what colours you like to use.

While most watercolour sets come with brushes, depending on the set, the lifespan of these included brushes may not be very long. You may find it worthwhile to use different types of brushes in your painting.

The recommended types of brushes are flat, round, and angled. The material of the brush depends on your budget. Brushes made of natural hair, such as sable, can hold more water than synthetic or faux hair brushes, but they are also more pricy.

For colour theory, begin by swatching colours on the paper. To “swatch” means to apply a sample of each colour on the paper by painting a small square of each colour and labelling as you go.

Swatching is a common practice when testing out paint colours in general. Sometimes, a colour may look different than how it appears on the palette, so swatching will give you an idea of what the colour shows up as.

Even professional artists will use this method when they are using a brand-new watercolour palette.

## How do I know what to do?

The internet offers many sources of water painting tutorials, from free YouTube videos to paid courses.

Should you continue in your watercolour pursuit, you will find specific canvas and paper that bring out the quality of your painting. The nature of watercolour relies on using specific paper for

painting.

Printer paper often has issues with clots, tearing, and warping when applying water. While watercolour paper is an option, you can also look for general sketchbooks that support watercolour or wet media.

It's easy to critique ourselves along the way, and the path to improvement can be a long one.

Always make sure that

when studying or learning an aspect of watercolour, you give yourself opportunities to paint your way. If you approach watercolour painting because something inspired you, like a character illustration or background, then listen to your heart and pursue it.

Why endlessly practice painting circles when you can try painting the moon instead?



Watercolour painting is the most beginner-friendly form of painting. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



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# Restore an item, restore a life

The powerful story behind Next 2 New

Rylie Perry  
Staff Writer



Located on Edmonton Trail, Next 2 New sells upcycled houseware and clothing with a mission to raise awareness about addiction. Photo by Emma Marshall

A single conversation can change a life.

It was a moment that only lasted 45 seconds, but it was pivotal for a man who had nearly given up on himself.

“People always told me if I kept up with my drinking, I was gonna end up in jail. So, when I ended up in jail, I felt I had proved them all right,” said recovering addict and co-founder of Next 2 New (N2N). “The prison psychologist walked over. He said, ‘I’m just trying to figure out what you’re doing here because as far as I can see, you don’t belong here.’ And I began to think... maybe I am more than this.”

That simple, yet powerful interaction planted the seed of possibility that is now N2N, a social enterprise that spreads education and awareness regarding addiction.

More than just a business, N2N is a lifeline for individuals trying to rebuild their lives after addiction—due to the sensitive nature of this story, some sources have requested to remain anonymous.

“Can you imagine all of the trauma and brokenness

people have to walk through to get back to some form of happy ever after. Most don’t make it, that’s just reality,” said N2N co-founder.

Located on Edmonton Trail, they are a second hand boutique that restores and resells furniture.

“We are here, and we are a lighthouse. If I feel anything for certain, I feel that we have been called to be that light,” said N2N co-founder. “And so, what’s the story there? Restore An Item, Restore A Life.”

Although they are not a triage centre, N2N has nonetheless been serving the community in all capacities. It is their belief that when you are called on, you serve in any way you can.

Take Gordon, for instance, a recovering addict and valued member of the N2N team.

“Gordon spent 15 years on the street, sleeping outside in tents all winter. That is hard for anybody to imagine. It’s hard for people to imagine him freezing his fingers and toes off. It is horrible out there. And now he works at our woodshop and he’s about 15 months clean,” said N2N

co-founder.

Even with the support they provide, N2N stresses the personal work and time that goes into restoring your life after active addiction, as Gordon did.

“I want everybody that works and comes through our organization to understand that recovery is not free. You have to work for it, because it’s the only way that you’re going to get purpose in your life,” said N2N co-founder. “This is all about getting a hand up, not a handout, right?”

Above all, N2N is about education and awareness.

The social enterprise believes it is the younger generations that will enact meaningful change that addresses issues such as addiction at the root of the problem.

“Addiction crosses all boundaries. It doesn’t care what race or colour you are, it doesn’t care what language you speak, it doesn’t care what sex you are, and it doesn’t care how much money

Continues on Pg.12



On Feb. 21, Tate McRae released another unskippable album. Since she dropped last year’s album, *THINK LATER*, fans have been patiently waiting for new songs—and she certainly did not disappoint.

McRae did release a few singles last year, which she then added to the completed album. Compared to her classic break-up songs, *So Close To What* dives into a more seductive direction, giving her music style more variety.

This album feels like healing instead of hurting and radiates confidence compared to heartbreak. “Purple lace bra” for example, embodies that teasing good girl vibe, while “Miss possessive” and “Sports car” are songs that empower her, and give her a sense of

control.

“Sports car” specifically has a unique sound to it compared to her other songs, where it’s more breathy with whispered singing making it sound raspier and all the more sexy. “No I’m not in love” is about being carefree and emotionally detached, staying on the theme of not allowing someone else to manipulate your feelings.

The duet she sang with The Kid LAROI, “I know love,” gives her new album a wholesome song to balance out the more promiscuous ones. “Nostalgia” reminds me of “calgary” from *THINK LATER* with the tone and memories she incorporates into her lyrics, which wrapped up *So Close To What* beautifully.

—Daria Orth



On March 7, Lady Gaga released *MAYHEM* which really reminds me of some of her early 2000s albums. She channels her iconic pop star music we all know and love, making this another dance-floor-worthy album. Her previous singles leading up to the album, “Disease” and “Abracadabra” got me excited for what other new bangers she had in store.

My personal favourite songs from *MAYHEM* are probably “Garden Of Eden” and “Shadow Of A Man” which very much feel appropriate for a good car karaoke session. “Zombieboy” and “Perfect Celebrity” are top-tier examples of her edgier side of music writing. “Blade Of Grass” feels more heartfelt, and definitely a little bit emotional, but in a sad romantic way.

“The Beast” gives off dark romance energy, and is something I can picture in a movie soundtrack. Her vocals,

as usual, are unmatched, and overall this album touched my soul the same way *The Fame* did when I heard it for the first time.

I’m convinced that Lady Gaga is incapable of releasing a bad song, and her newest music only made me more convinced that that’s true. When her album dropped, I locked in and listened to the entire thing as I did homework, though it was slightly distracting because I found myself getting lost in her upbeat tunes.

—Daria Orth

Continued from Pg.11

you have. Addiction takes everybody. So when it comes to addiction, there are no barriers, it is not prejudice,” said N2N co-founder.

They therefore aim to reach everyone within the community, creating an organization that not only targets the issue on a financial level, but also provides a welcoming environment that relates to the struggles endured by mothers, fathers, siblings, and spouses.

“If addiction can take root in a family, it’ll destroy the whole family. It can erode and destroy everything below and near it,” said N2N co-founder. “So when young people are looking for a purpose today, I say, what greater purpose could you have than to create awareness?”

At this stage, N2N is a for-profit organization that reinvests all money made into their cause. They are self supporting and refuse to take financial donations away from other organizations.

They will, however, accept donations of furniture or pieces that can be reworked by the talented staff at their woodshop, such as Gordon.

Although N2N was only founded two years ago by

Hillary Hopkins and her husband, they have already opened a second location on Macleod Trail, which is a testament to the continuing support they have received from the community.

“Our biggest donors are people that we go out and meet in the community,” said Hillary’s husband, aka N2N co-founder.

Coupled with community support, they also work alongside other organizations, such as Teen Challenge, which offers in-residence rehabilitation programs across Canada.

They are further in the process of building a non-profit global society that will expand beyond Calgary to leave a lasting impact on communities around the world.

They expect the project to take off within the next six months to a year.

While N2N values the big impacts they have made, it is the small successes that have been essential to continuing its mission.

Kendra Saydee, social media director for N2N, lost her mother to addiction. While she stumbled upon the store by chance, Saydee found a network of people who intimately understood her grief.




A selection of products that Next 2 New sells. From jewelry to furniture, all of their products are quality checked by the tight-knit team behind this store. Photo by Emma Marshall

“When you love somebody in active addiction, you love the hope of them getting sober; the hope of them growing out of it and getting better,” said Saydee. “So when somebody dies in addiction, that hope has


nowhere to go. It’s just there and it sits with you. When I found Next 2 New, I found a place for that hope to go.”

Motivated by the hope to turn grief into education, the N2N team values community, support, and understanding.

“All of the people that weren’t there to support my mom, the people that weren’t there to tell her that she was okay, and that she deserved something,” said Saydee. “I get to be that person now.”



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# MRU Rugby Club is pushing the boundaries of women's sports

**Khaoula Choual**  
Staff Writer

Women's sports are undergoing a major game-changing transformation, drawing more viewership than ever before. Women's rugby is at the forefront of this movement, as it has quickly gained popularity and is defying long-held gender stereotypes in sports.

Female rugby players were once marginalized in the male-dominated sport, but today, they participate at the highest levels, from the Rugby World Cup to the Olympics, demonstrating their power, resilience, and talent on the field.

Women's sports, especially rugby, are finally gaining the traction they deserve with players like Ilona Maher, an American rugby player who has stolen the hearts of many young girls by breaking stereotypes in women's sports.

"Ilona Maher, she is just a beautiful icon that helps set up what it is about women's rugby and what it is to be a woman and support women," said Robin Roelofs, a seasoned veteran with the MRU Rugby Club.

As a role model for young girls, Roelofs and other members of the team advocate for women to embrace their femininity and tackle hard.

"We can get really into our feminine side and look really nice. But when it comes down to it, we are ready to go," said Katelyn Watts, the MRU Women's Rugby team captain.

Canadian women's rugby is currently ranked second globally, outranking the 23rd-placed men.

Rugby not only represents women on an international

scale, but it also represents them on a local scale. The MRU Rugby Club helps women in Calgary "fight like a girl."

"We are fighting like girls, and we do a hell of a job," said Watts.

Although the rugby team at MRU is not a varsity team, they still play against clubs across Western Canada. This season, the girls placed third as they made a real case for a Cougars varsity rugby program. The team was full of energy every minute of every game, even feeling the excitement of the game from the sidelines.

"So much adrenaline pumps through you, and you're not even playing. So you could just imagine how much adrenaline is on that field," said Watts.

A new generation of female athletes is being inspired to embrace their strength and potential by the increasing number of women participating in rugby. Whether they are rookies or veteran rugby players, they are women who play rugby, a sport in which they feel they belong.

"I want to play as high as I possibly can because I want to be a role model for those younger girls to show that you can be strong and look beautiful and you can run fast and play these rough sports and still dress up nice," said Roelofs. "These sports are not just for men."

Despite being a veteran rugby player, Roelofs says that she is also learning more about the sport of rugby.

Beyond the game itself, rugby instills qualities such as teamwork, perseverance, and self-confidence and has



**Rugby is one of the most physically daunting sports to play, but for the MRU Women's Rugby Club, it's a chance to embrace their individuality while coming together as a group to inspire the next generation of female athletes. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@mruwrugby**

helped many young girls with body image.

"I've struggled with my body image for a while, and rugby's also hugely helped me with that because there's just so many girls that are just so different," said Roelofs.

Playing rugby is a great way for women to improve their confidence, allowing them to release energy and intensity. It creates an environment in which hitting hard and being aggressive can be channelled productively, allowing emotions to be released in a way that is both empowering and rewarding. The game's competitive aspect instills a sense of drive and strength, making for an intense and satisfying experience.

"We're all starting to come together as a community to support each other. And I think it's so nice to see the true talents of women...and it's not boring to watch," said Roelofs.

Despite being a competitive sport, the MRU Women's Rugby Club is for everyone—regardless of experience and skill level.

For players like Danamay Maneso, this is her first year playing rugby. Although she has played sports before, she wanted the aspect of community that sports offer now as a university student and has always been told that she should play rugby.

"As soon as I saw that MRU had a club and anyone could join, I was really missing... the community aspect... So I thought it'd be great to join," said Maneso.

"We are such a good community. We want more people to join," said Roelofs.

While barriers exist, the future of women's rugby appears bright. Increased participation and growing fan involvement show that women in sports are not just participating, women's rugby is leading a movement.

"You can be tough and strong, just like any man," said Maneso.

#S

16

consecutive wins by the Cleveland Cavaliers before losing to the Orlando Magic, which was the longest win streak of the 2024-25 season

31

assists by Cougars defenceman Clay Hanus—the most of any player in U SPORTS this season

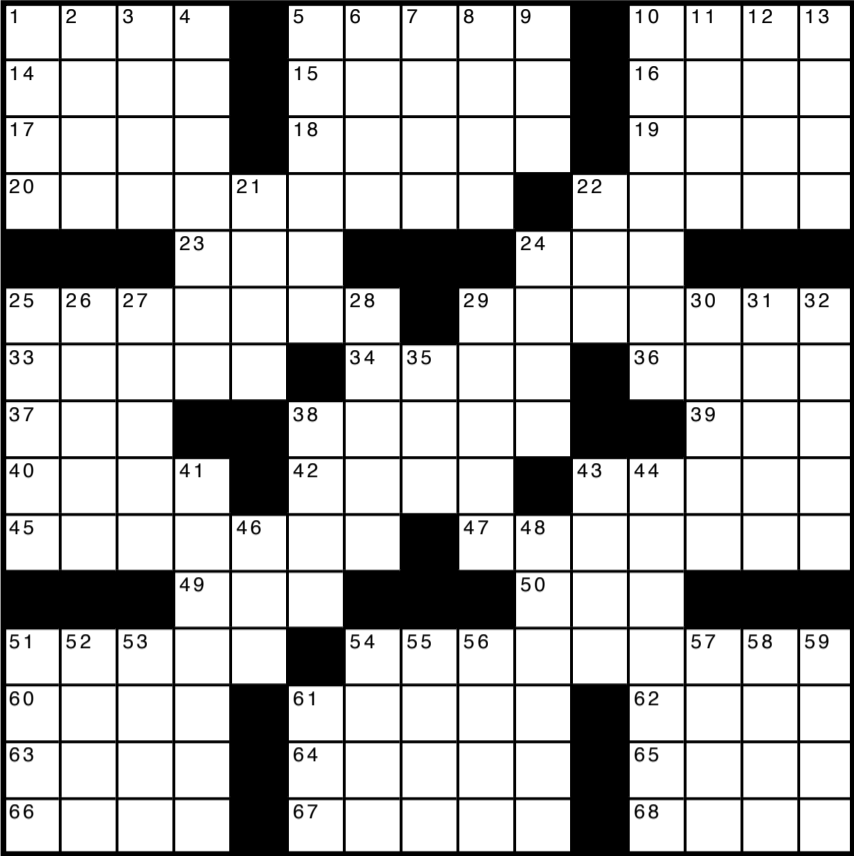
23

kills by Raya Surinx led the Manitoba Bisons to a 3-1 win over Montreal in the U SPORTS Women's Volleyball Gold Medal Game

38

points for former Cougar Nate Petrone in the Dinos' 109-96 Canada West Gold Medal Game win against UBC

# THE REFLECTOR CROSSWORD



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

- ACROSS**  
1. Intersects  
5. Sponge gently  
10. Expose  
14. Internet writing system that popularized “pwn3d” and “n00b”  
15. Low-budget prefix
16. French summers  
17. Butter substitute  
18. Kofi of the U.N.  
19. Purina competitor  
20. Mollifying  
22. Squeeze  
23. The Way  
24. Hula hoop

25. Doctors  
29. Person who rows  
33. Circular  
34. Small horse  
36. Circle overhead?  
37. Completely  
38. Stories  
39. Cooking container  
40. Soviet news service  
42. \_\_\_ even keel  
43. 1957 hit for the Bobbettes  
45. Charms  
47. Wife of a duke  
49. Kimono sash  
50. Kung \_\_\_ chicken  
51. Divisions politiques  
54. Farthest aft  
60. Foolhardy  
61. Snapshot  
62. Big cheese  
63. Microscopic arachnid  
64. Look after  
65. Do \_\_\_ others...  
66. Banned apple spray  
67. 1978 Nobel sharer  
68. Backtalk
8. Med school subj.  
9. Large amount  
10. Surly  
11. Salt tree  
12. Workout count  
13. Those, to Juan  
21. Hog fat  
22. For each  
24. Puts down  
25. Angry  
26. Pitcher Ryan  
27. Home of Oral Roberts University  
28. Bridges  
29. Without a break  
30. Sap tree  
31. Emollient-yielding plants  
32. Short messages  
35. Pay ending  
38. Amos or Spelling  
41. Suffocate  
43. Thom of footwear  
44. Equilateral parallelogram  
46. Delivery room docs  
48. Dig out the whole plant  
51. Columnist Bombeck  
52. Follow  
53. Nick and Nora’s pet  
54. Queens stadium  
55. Pigeon- \_\_\_  
56. Jazz singer James  
57. Geraldine Chaplin’s mother  
58. Retired fliers  
59. General \_\_\_ chicken

See answer grid at bottom of page

**DOWN**

1. Lump of earth  
2. River to the Ubangi  
3. Swarm  
4. Fatten  
5. Church official  
6. Complexion woe  
7. Beethoven’s birthplace

## WATCH THE COUGARS

**MHKY:** MRU Cougars vs Toronto Metropolitan University Bold in Ottawa (U SPORTS University Cup)

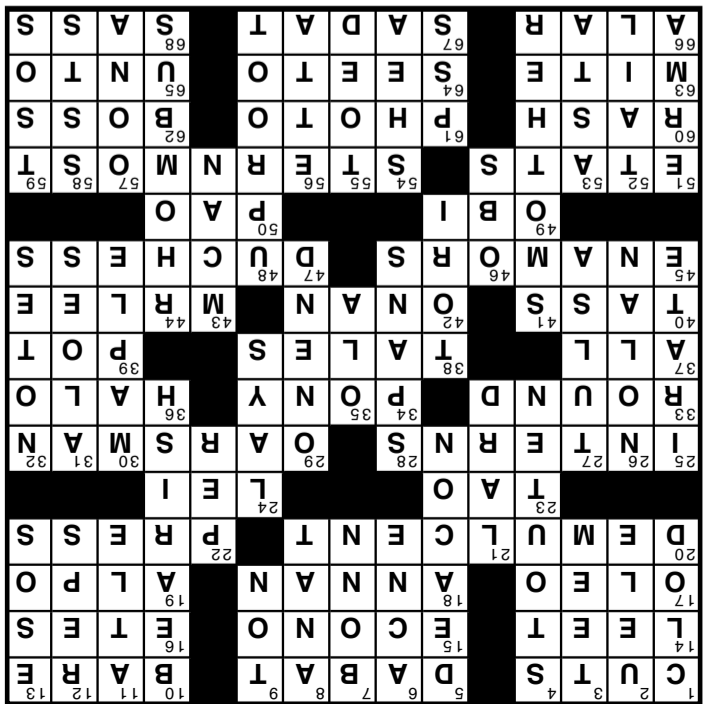
Thursday, March 20 @ 11 a.m. on CBC Sports

## PLAYERS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Forward: Josh Tarzwell - 4 goals in CW Playoffs (most of any skater)

Defenceman: Clay Hanus - 43 points (led all skaters in CW), 31 assists (leads all skaters in U SPORTS)

Goalie: Shane Farkas - 14 wins, 4 shutouts (both most in CW)



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# Lacrosse: Canada’s forgotten national sport

**Manveet Waraich**  
Staff Writer

Most Calgarians have been to Scotiabank Saddledome at least once—whether it was for a Flames game, the ‘Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth,’ or Justin Bieber’s Purpose World Tour—it’s an arena of Canadian culture. Yet, there’s another event that brings in a stadium full of cheering Canadians but is almost always overshadowed. As a proud Canadian myself, I am ashamed to admit that not only was I ignorant to our second national sport, but also its incredible Indigenous origins: lacrosse.

My ignorance was swept away during winter break when I was taken to the Calgary Roughnecks’ home opener game as a surprise. I wasn’t expecting much as someone with little interest in watching sports and knowing basically nothing about the game. But all it took was a single goal to completely switch the narrative. The crowd erupted alongside the goal horn, singing, “bang, bang, bang, vamonos, vamonos, bang, bang, bang, vamonos vamonos,” from Clutch’s “Electric Worry.”

The energy in the arena was electric and by the next goal, I was jumping from my seat to join the quirky dance. After all was said and done, I wondered whether I was the only one living under a rock, completely unaware of the fast-paced sport and its Canadian connection. However, I soon learned that I was not alone and that there was so much more than meets the eye when it came to the historic Indigenous sport of lacrosse.

## Indigenous roots

Lacrosse as we know it today is an adopted and adapted European version of an Indigenous game that had been played by the Haudenosaunee long before any colonists arrived on North American shores. Originally named baggataway, meaning “Creator’s game,” it has significant cultural and spiritual significance, serving as a training for war and medicinal rituals. Jonas MacLaurin, an Indigenous lacrosse player involved with the Indigenous Lacrosse Initiative across Alberta explained that the sport helped tribes deal with conflicts without having to suffer the consequences of war.

“Lacrosse was also used as

a form of warfare in a sense,” MacLaurin said. “Instead of going to war with tribes and suffering through all of the negative stuff, it was a form of mediation.”

As a result, lacrosse became a way for many of its players to deal with any other issues in their lives, using it as a way to express their emotions in a positive way.

“When you play that sport, it’s supposed to heal you in a sense, even though it’s very aggressive. It’s a really healthy outlet,” MacLaurin said.

Baggataway was much rougher than the modern-day sport of lacrosse—which is still a physically challenging game to play today—with some versions spanning hundreds of miles across unmarked fields, hosting thousands of players, and continuing for days on end for a single game. The variations all held a single rule in common: no hands can touch the ball. After witnessing the intense game, French Jesuits in the 1600s made the first written observation of the sport and related the stick to a bishop’s crozier or staff, le crosse, effectively establishing the new name.

Observations soon turned to appreciation, and by the 1840s, the first games of lacrosse were played between the Haudenosaunee and the townsfolk of Montreal. This ignited the formation of clubs across the nation, and by 1859, lacrosse was declared the national game of Canada. But, as was the trend, settlers began to feel the need for structure in the game and by 1867 had established the National Lacrosse Association and the strict set of rules in which lacrosse operates today.

Lacrosse has always been deeply tied to Indigenous communities, but MacLaurin and many others grow up without knowing that history. There is still strong Indigenous representation in the sport, but most pro-level players continue to come from Eastern Canada. That’s starting to change as more programs focus on creating opportunities for Indigenous youth, like the one on the Kainai Nation, where some athletes have gone on to play nationally for Team Canada. When it comes to reconciliation in lacrosse, MacLaurin believes it’s about exposure—making sure people recognize the sport’s Indigenous roots and engage with Indigenous



The Calgary Roughnecks, pictured, offer attendees the chance to enjoy a sport just as gritty and physical as hockey at a fraction of the cost. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@nlroughnecks

communities. It’s not just on Indigenous athletes and families to push for change; MacLaurin believes organizations should take the lead by incorporating cultural elements, whether that’s bringing in drummers and dancers at tournaments or building a more inclusive approach to the game.

## Lacrosse vs hockey

Even with lacrosse having such a deep history and origins, hockey has dominated the sports culture scene in Canada—going as far as to become one of the most recognizable aspects of Canadian identity.

While lacrosse had a head start over hockey, it struggled due to internal disorganization and exceeding competition with other summer sports such as baseball and soccer, whereas hockey benefitted from a lack of alternative winter sport options. Many of the issues that started the decline of lacrosse in the 1900s remain prevalent to this day. John Lintz, a Calgary Roughnecks defenceman, social studies teacher, and youth lacrosse coach, echoes those sentiments.

“We’re constantly competing against indoor soccer or hockey,” Lintz said. “It becomes a huge challenge. Ultimately, you need to build a lacrosse-specific facility that has availability and that requires finances and people that care.”

Lacrosse’s venture into professionalism was also met with strong resistance from its own governing board,

whereas hockey’s investors embraced the shift early on, leading to a large funding difference. Finances are a two-way street; it’s not only the quantity you have, but how it’s being used.

“Lacrosse, like a lot of sports, has gone in the direction of an elite model,” Lintz said. “A lot of our resources, time, and expertise is devoted towards a pretty small pool of athletes.”

Instead, Lintz believes resources should be spread more broadly to attract more participants, allowing late-developing athletes to thrive and ultimately strengthening the sport.

“The more you can convince people to play the game and allocate those resources across a bigger space, the more the game will grow,” Lintz said.

Additionally, lacrosse had a higher risk for escalating violence on the field due to inconsistent regulation of the rules across regions, whereas hockey had a very specific and strict set of rules for body checking. Lastly and potentially most importantly, lacrosse failed to develop minor leagues to sustain a talent development path toward its amateur and professional leagues, whereas hockey was played in most schools and universities. Lintz believes that the growth of the sport must begin with getting the youngest generation involved.

“The goal would be to grow the grassroots. The more participation you have—it will lead eventually, hopefully, to more demand down the road for things like

a post-secondary program.”

## Lacrosse at MRU

Lacrosse’s absence as a varsity sport at MRU is a perfect example of its slow progression. According to Karla Karch, director of the Mount Royal University Cougars Athletics and Recreation, MRU has never had a varsity lacrosse team, with financial and logistical barriers making its introduction unlikely. Unlike hockey, which is firmly embedded in U SPORTS and Canada West’s conference structure, lacrosse lacks a dedicated league, making it difficult for universities to justify funding a program.

Additionally, there has been little to no student demand for lacrosse at MRU, further reducing the incentive to establish a team. Budget constraints, facility limitations, and staffing shortages also prevent expansion, and without a clear pathway to national championships, lacrosse remains an impractical addition to varsity athletics.

While other Canadian universities may support lacrosse at the club level, MRU would require significant student-led interest and regional institutional support to consider adding the sport. For now, any lacrosse presence at MRU would have to exist as a club rather than a varsity program, reinforcing the broader struggles lacrosse faces in sustaining its competitive structure at all levels.

View the full article on our website [thereflector.ca](https://thereflector.ca).

# MRU men's hockey team make history with legendary Canada West playoff run

**Naomi Campbell**

Staff Writer

For the first time in Mount Royal University Cougars hockey history, the men's team was set to take on the University of Saskatchewan Huskies in the Canada West Finals. Over the span of three days, the Cougars were fired up to get a chance at the Canada West gold medal but ultimately conceded defeat to the Huskies.

## How the tables have turned

Game one took the MRU Cougars and their fans through a rollercoaster of emotions. Starting off strong, the first three goals of the game all came from MRU, starting with captain Kyle Walker, followed by fourth year Josh Tarzwell and capped off by Canada West All-Rookie team member Justin Lies. After the first 20 minutes of gameplay, the Cougars held a strong 3-0 lead against the Huskies.

In the second period, though, the Huskies scored two goals to cut the Cougars' lead to make it a one-goal game. Heading into the third period, MRU needed to hold strong to keep their lead and earn the win, but could not prevent the Huskies from rallying together as they conceded four unanswered goals, leading to a 3-6 Cougars loss.

Even though MRU captain Walker scored the first goal of the game only eleven seconds into the first period, the Cougars were ultimately stumped by the goaltending of Roddy Ross, who made 38 saves on 41 shots in the opening game of the series.

## The cats came back the very next day

Winning game two was crucial for the Cougars to stay alive in the finals and force a third game. With their season on the line, MRU showed Canada West hockey fans just



**Josh Tarzwell, pictured, scored four goals in a regular-season game against Regina on Feb. 7 to help his team win 9-0 at home and will be a key factor if MRU hopes to win their first National Gold Medal at the 2025 U SPORTS University Cup. Photo by Liam Richards**

how aggressive university hockey can get, especially when the two sides are fighting for a championship.

The Huskies got off to an early lead in the first period with a goal from Trevor Wong. The game stayed 1-0 through the entire second period, as well as the majority of the third. Then, at the 15:16 mark in the third, Walker shot the puck from the blue line, but couldn't capitalize. Luckily, Teague Patton was standing to the right of the Huskies' goalie and was able to tap the puck into the net on the rebound, helping to tie the game at a goal apiece.

The rest of the period was scoreless, leading them into a sudden-death overtime (OT). At almost the halfway point of the 20-minute OT, All-Star defenceman Clay Hanus rifled the puck from the boards to the left of the goalie, scoring the golden goal to keep the Cougars alive in the finals.

This win would not have been possible without MRU goalie Shane Farkas, who was on the ice for 68:52 and only

allowed one goal against, saving 23 out of 24 shots on net. Farkas stood on his head the whole game and was a vital part in the Cougars winning game two.

## It's all so bittersweet

Going into game three, it was now or never for the men to win that championship title. The first period of play was slow, with no goals or penalties from either team. The second period started to pick up, with a couple of penalties, yet no goals by the end of 40 minutes of play.

The final period continued on this goalless pace until Huskies player Vince Loschiavo opened up the scoring. Ethan Regnier followed suit four minutes later to give the Huskies a 2-0 lead and with their season on the line, MRU pulled their goalie to attack six-on-five. Unfortunately, they couldn't complete the miraculous comeback and conceded an empty-netter, falling 3-0 to the U of S Huskies and

heading back to Calgary as the first MRU men's hockey team to win silver medals at the U SPORTS level.

## U SPORTS University Cup

Don't lose hope Cougars fans, because even though the men lost in the Canada West Finals, they will be heading to Ottawa to compete against the best collegiate teams across Canada in the U SPORTS University Cup for the first time ever. The Cougars and Huskies will be representing the Canada West conference, alongside six other teams from various other conferences: two teams from the Atlantic University Sports (AUS) Division, three teams from the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) Division, and the host team—the Ottawa Gee-Gees.

The Cougars have a realistic chance at winning the U SPORTS Cup but will have to fight for their lives against the other teams. Heading into U SPORTS, the odds are in favour of the

University of New Brunswick (UNB), seeing as they have won the title the last two years, and are the best team across U SPORTS with their undefeated regular-season record. MRU will also have to defeat their Canada West rivals, the U of S Huskies, to secure a U SPORTS National Championship. MRU has had an insane season, so playing aggressively and harnessing their offensive firepower will be the key to success.

Fans will have their eyes on stars like Hanus, Bouchard, Lies, and Farkas, but tournaments of this magnitude will require the whole team to step up their game. Keep an eye out for graduating senior Zafir Rawji, whose physicality and mental fortitude make him a menace in high-stakes games. Patton and Tarzwell have proven to be offensive powerhouses this season, supplementing the Cougars' offence with precise passing and accurate shooting, as has defenceman Remy Aquilon. Fans of hard body-checking should keep their eyes on Michael Ladyman, who also brings fearless shot-blocking every time he steps onto the ice, a valuable skill when it comes to facing the best teams in the country at the 2025 University Cup.

## On to the national stage

Losing in the Canada West Finals was a tough blow for the Cougars, but fans should revel in the fact that they made it to the Finals and qualified for the U SPORTS University Cup. This alone is an amazing accomplishment for the team all on its own, as well as for every Cougars fan to be proud of. With the men heading to Ottawa, you can cheer them on from home by watching U SPORTS on CBC Gem, CBCSports.ca, CBC on YouTube, or through the CBC Sports app for IOS and Android.